

## WHERE NEXT IN RURAL HISTORY?

# The archaeology of peasant protagonism: new directions in the early medieval Iberian countryside

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### Abstract

The inherent complexity of early medieval rural society is now widely recognised by scholars; this is in no small part thanks to the transformative effect that archaeology has had on our understanding of many aspects of peasant life. Yet it is only in the last twenty years that an archaeology of peasant society of early medieval Christian Iberia has emerged to challenge the supremacy of deeply entrenched historiographical motifs, explored in detail herein, which underplay peasant agency, confine peasants to familiar contextual paradigms (poverty, risk-aversion, resistance), and treat the peasantry as an undifferentiated mass of largely passive ‘recipients’ of History. This article focuses upon a case study – early medieval northern Iberia – to show that, far from an auxiliary discipline used to bolster or reject interpretations founded upon documentary analysis, archaeology now underpins our efforts to understand complex aspects of the society and economy of the early medieval countryside.

### Introduction: a distinction without a difference

It is broadly accepted that two competing visions of peasant society dominated Spanish historiography in the twentieth century. Until the 1970s, the most familiar feature of the historiographical landscape was the free peasant proprietor – the small-scale cultivator of his own patch of hard-won terrain, hardened by the seasons, a life of toil, and the demands of the frontier.<sup>1</sup> For Claudio Sánchez-Albornoz, the free peasant proprietor embodied something of the spirit of *homo hispanus*: independent-minded, pioneering, a proto-typical *conquistador*, tasked above all else with the need to win back his homeland from the Arab-Berber conquerors who had taken control of much of the peninsula in 711.<sup>2</sup> Such conditions called for hardy frontiersmen, not serfs confined to the classic great estate of the manorial paradigm. It followed, for Sánchez-Albornoz, that Spain could not have incubated the violent hierarchies of the feudal social order: peasants might be poor, but they were largely free, and they would see their freedoms confirmed in the charters of franchise known as *fueros*, which proliferated from the eleventh century. In contradistinction to this view, which has now been largely abandoned in academic circles, was the counterblast offered by Abilio Barbero and Marcelo Vigil in the 1970s.<sup>3</sup> These authors contended that the Cantabrian Mountains, instead of sheltering the remnants of the Romano-Visigothic aristocratic class that would later coordinate the repopulation of the Duero basin, were peopled by quasi-tribal societies that had escaped the imprint of Romanitas. What is more, the indigenous peoples of the northern fringe would follow their own path to feudalism, the result of the slow creep of private property relations and the social inequalities that followed in their train; against this background, the free peasant proprietor would face no choice but to alienate his land and enter into dependency.

These apparently very different characterisations of early medieval Iberian society were in one crucial respect more alike than many have assumed. Both celebrate the significance of the peasantry while simultaneously failing to afford sufficient agency to peasants themselves. Both, in fact,

reflect ‘an intrinsic pessimism’, in which the passivity of the peasantry in the face of greater forces is its most notable quality.<sup>4</sup> This is all the more unfortunate when one considers that the details of peasants’ lives can be tracked quite closely in the thousands of charters of sale or donation that survive from the tenth century, as Wendy Davies has shown.<sup>5</sup> And while much remains unknown, it is no longer tenable to see the early medieval peasantry as the heroic colonisers of the Albornocian canon, or the defenceless victims of lordly predation, persons of interest only insofar as we can trace their putative subjection. Neither of these depictions does justice to the complexity of peasant society as it has been revealed to us in archaeological excavations of recent years. This article intends to offer a brief investigation of the historiographical treatment of the Iberian peasantry in the early Middle Ages, before underlining the significance of archaeology in broadening our horizons, especially when it comes to understanding the socio-economic dimension of peasant existence.

### Laying the ground

Exaggeratedly primitivist depictions of early medieval peasant societies, particularly with regard to their economic development, are not restricted to Spanish historiographical contexts, but we can adduce three principal reasons why such views held sway in Spain for so long. The first of these we can diagnose easily enough: as the leading practitioners of a now-flourishing field testify, Spanish archaeology was underdeveloped until the 1990s.<sup>6</sup> Such interventions as did take place were infrequently focused on or indeed interested in early medieval contexts. Second, before the last third of the twentieth century, Spanish historians working on the early medieval peasantry focused on trying to understand its juridical status, in particular insofar as it could be linked to late Roman, or – even better – Visigothic, legal categories.<sup>7</sup> For if normative legal provisions warning of the obligations (and potential dangers) of *rustici* could be said to find parallels in documents of practice – charters, say, in which ‘persons of inferior rank’ are seen committing infractions against private property before succumbing to the long arm of the law – then the peasantry could be classified and categorised accordingly.<sup>8</sup> Inheritance practices, loan instruments, debt repayments and the like were treated in the same way: if they appeared in written law and also cropped up in outwardly similar form in the charters, then these latter were to be understood as ‘fuentes de aplicación de derecho’.<sup>9</sup> This somewhat circular view was challenged, and rightly so, in a series of landmark studies of monastic lordship that began to see the light of day around 1970, almost all of them based upon a return to the charters and shaped by the notable influence of French historical writing.<sup>10</sup> Marc Bloch’s extraordinary *La société féodale* (1939–40) was clearly of fundamental import for many, but so too were Georges Duby’s inherently more pessimistic readings of rural economy.<sup>11</sup> It is perhaps for this reason that in Spain the socio-political construction of lordly power was privileged over its strictly economic dimension; there was, quite simply, little room for the humdrum business interests of the peasantry in Duby’s analyses of rural society, nor would there be much room for them in his later attempts to define the medieval *imaginaire*.<sup>12</sup> To some extent, this is not surprising: expansive, diachronic retellings of the peasantry’s past, centred on the enduring rhythms of the seasons and the fixity of geographical setting, could not but emphasise the constraints that framed peasant life at the expense of variety, dynamism and agency. Change, when it came, would be dramatic and top-down, and it would only come, in France, when Duby’s castellans began to subvert public courts and despoil the lands of peasants around the year 1000.<sup>13</sup> The disintegrative effects of feudal revolution would usher in a new ruling class, but the day-to-day life of the peasantry, we are left to intuit, remained a predictably stolid affair.

The third reason why detailed studies of the dynamism of peasant society and economy emerged late, and then only fitfully, in Spain, concerns the concept of feudalism, which underwent rehabilitation in Spain at precisely the moment that (for better or worse) it was being jettisoned by scholars elsewhere, particularly in the United States.<sup>14</sup> The timing was crucial here.<sup>15</sup> The decade

from 1975–85 saw many Spanish historians, brought up on a steady diet of *Annaliste* and radical history writing and now relishing the scholarly freedoms previously denied them by Franco's regime, embrace an understanding of feudalism inspired by Marxist notions of class struggle.<sup>16</sup> British academics devoted to a historical materialist analysis of social conditions before the late medieval triumph of agrarian capitalism also found an audience in the Spanish universities in the 1970s and 1980s.<sup>17</sup> Those embracing these varied and intellectually potent influences deliberately (indeed self-consciously) drew from insights derived from across Europe, and this broadening of horizons was wholly positive. Scholars at the vanguard in Spain at this time offered a necessary corrective, in methodology as well as in some of the conclusions they reached, to the declamatory tales of Castilian exceptionalism rehearsed by Claudio Sánchez-Albornoz, for whom the invasion of 711 had curtailed the proto-feudalism of the late Visigothic kingdom, precluding the possibility of a mature, European, feudalism taking root in the tenth century.<sup>18</sup>

### Floreat feudalism

On the home front, Spaniards turned to the work of Abilio Barbero and Marcelo Vigil, whose *La formación del feudalismo en la península ibérica*, which appeared in 1978, inspired and guided a whole cadre of younger historians, some of them very formidable indeed.<sup>19</sup> In its methodology, overtly Marxist framework, and rejection of institutionalist paradigms, not to mention its conclusions, their work could not have offered a more iconoclastic retelling of the Spanish early Middle Ages. It attempted to dismantle Sánchez-Albornoz's thesis wholesale, conjuring a hitherto unthinkable vision of a society that followed a path to feudalism that would begin in the mountainous north of 'Green Spain' among kin-based (*gentilicio*) peoples, bypassing the Latin-Christian inheritance almost entirely.<sup>20</sup> The work of Barbero and Vigil soon became the new orthodoxy in university History departments (a sure sign that change was needed), and it would not be controversial to say that studies of the processes by which regional societies underwent *feudalización* have shaped the dominant conceptual framework of early medieval Spanish history for the last forty years or so.<sup>21</sup> Yet rather than attempt to chronicle abrupt changes – the favoured Francophone approach to explaining the onset of feudal social relations and institutions – Spanish historians, from about 1980, became increasingly interested in 'transition'; from rural settlements composed of peoples of relatively uniform, quasi-tribal socio-economic status, to *comunidades de aldea* (village communities), characterised, by the tenth century, by 'the extension of individual ownership and internal social differentiation'.<sup>22</sup> Both Marx and the *Annalists* were influential in the shaping of this new research agenda, whereas institutionalist analyses of feudo-vassalic bonds fell precipitously out of fashion in Spain in the last quarter of the twentieth century, having only ever really interested a handful of Sánchez-Albornoz's (extremely learned) acolytes.<sup>23</sup> We might surmise that ties between lord and vassal seemed redolent of the starchy, narrowly juridical studies that many historians now wanted to leave behind; Blochian visions, on the other hand, of an entire social order, a feudal society composed of intricate connections between all of its interlocking parts, held a much broader appeal in what was, after all, a newly democratised country.<sup>24</sup>

Taking inspiration from Bloch, Spanish historians would return to the charters to uncover social change in feudal Iberia. The patchy and uneven (though rich) collections of records from across Spain made gauging the profundity and scansion of change difficult, but no matter, for an explanation was at hand: *feudalización* operated with different intensity across the northern half of the peninsula in the ninth to eleventh centuries, but – reassuringly – always resulted in the same outcome. As society was feudalised at different speeds in different places lords acquired and consolidated a bundle of seigneurial rights at the expense of peasant society, overseeing a top-down reorganisation of agricultural labour, structured to their own advantage.<sup>25</sup> Lords, it turned out, were the prime mover of causation, for it was their demand that would stimulate changes, including a more stringent and exploitative agricultural regime, which, in turn, would drive economic growth. Tellingly,

there was not a Spanish Feudal Revolution or Crisis of the Year 1000 in sight (west of Catalonia, at least). What this appeared to show was that French historiographical influence in Spain was profound but not total: revolutionary change *à la française* gave way to slow-burning transformations in non-Catalan Iberian contexts, and kings retained more than a semblance of genuine power there whereas royal authority had reached its nadir in late tenth-century France. But even these realisations were beside the point: the direction of travel was the same everywhere in northern Christian Spain, from Castile to Galicia, and León to Navarre.

The approaches sketched in outline above are intellectually stimulating in all sorts of ways, but they share a recurrent characteristic: they ask us to content ourselves with a series of answers fixated on processes at the expense of people. Where once ideas of depopulation and *Reconquista*, Sánchez-Albornoz's *leitmotif* ruled the roost, in the brave new world of the 1970s it would be feudalism that would carry all before it. A little later, in the 1990s, a revived *Convivencia*, the putative harmonious living together of Iberia's Christians, Muslims and Jews, would attempt to displace the by-then moribund notion of Reconquest as an all-encompassing expository framework.<sup>26</sup> Proponents of feudalism or *Convivencia* (scholars rarely worked on both) offered competing visions of medieval Iberian society but they were inspired by a shared imperative: Spain was no longer to be Europe's odd man out, nor to have its liminality confirmed by Sánchez-Albornoz's quasi-mystical description of his homeland as an *enigma histórico*, the roots of which – he had opined – were buried equally deeply in the soil of Castile and the psychology of its people. But where did all the peasants go? If not toiling and spoiling on the frontier, where were peasants to be found and what were they found to be doing? Most agricultural cultivators in early medieval Spain, as elsewhere, dedicated a relatively small fraction of their time (and some, of course, dedicated none whatsoever) to the farming of their lord's estates: what were their lives like when they were not doing their lord's bidding?<sup>27</sup>

### A peasantry without peasants

An apparent paradox, or at least a deep irony, presents itself at this juncture. With the rise to paramountcy of Barbero and Vigil's strikingly revisionist interpretation of the Spanish early Middle Ages, historians may well have expected to see peasants move front and centre in the late twentieth century.<sup>28</sup> But they did not. Instead, the free and hardy frontiersmen who once roamed this historiographical landscape, so vividly brought to life by Sánchez-Albornoz, were suddenly denuded of their vital spark and rendered immobile; the trouble is, when robbed of their pioneering spirit and told to stay put, peasants were often depicted as having lost any claim to agency at all.

Peasants themselves, that is, the thousands of examples of named individuals of relatively humble status and means whom we see in the charters, were reduced to a sociological category. Yet the binary distinction between the peasantry and the lordly class ('two pre-constituted social groups with contradictory interests'), a notion critiqued in Anglophone scholarship since at least the heyday of the Toronto School (and indeed accepted as too simplistic a reading by leading Marxist historians of the peasantry such as Rodney Hilton), offered an explanatory framework of surprising durability in Spanish historiography, for reasons explored by Peter Linehan among others, and explained in part above.<sup>29</sup>

Dissenting voices existed but tended to be conciliatory in tone, shifting the emphasis rather than the debate. García de Cortázar, for instance, offered a welcome corrective to zero-sum power games by stressing that landscape, season, and climate shaped the contours of peasant lives quite as much as seigneurial demands.<sup>30</sup> But in the hands of some of his disciples even studies of this kind lost their way somewhat, and taxonomic and classificatory approaches came to pay more attention to the settings in which peasant lives played out than they did to the details of peasant lives themselves (insofar as we can know these details). This is not to deny the significance of geography; after all, what one could grow, what animals one could raise, and the viability of access

to resources, including commons, shaped the possibilities of farming everywhere; one bad harvest could ruin a family (and perhaps one particularly good one could make one). Landscape, in this sense, was indeed important, if not determinative. Nonetheless, work and family, the principal contextual factors framing peasant lives, slipped down the historiographical agenda, unless they could provide a scenic backdrop for anecdotes telling of lordly injustice; peasants not actively involved in ‘resistance’ paid the price for their patent indifference to radicalism.<sup>31</sup> Against this backdrop the early medieval northern Iberian peasant economy would have to wait until the (admittedly late) introduction of (non-Andalusi) coinage in the eleventh century before it could stake a claim for itself as a matter of interest and significance in its own right.<sup>32</sup> Feudalism ‘happened’, it was just a case of finding it. And so it is, therefore, that whether we imagine ourselves marooned on the Meseta or sheltering from showers on the Atlantic coast, the vista that opened up before us until very recently was one of a large region carved up into areas of directly controlled *dominio monástico* on the one hand, and sparsely populated hamlets on the other. Free peasants clung to their landholdings; whatever their status, villagers faced no possibility of improving their lot; and rampant seigneurialism was in train.

But this is far from the whole story, and peasant society deserves to be sketched with much more attention to detail. In very recent times, the work of a handful of Spanish scholars has emerged at the forefront of a new wave of important contributions to debates about the peasantry. These contributions show that peasant lives were fundamentally grounded in everyday routines; but they were not, for all that, fixed and unchanging.<sup>33</sup> By the same token, peasants were of course connected to, sometimes indeed clearly beholden to, supralocal persons and structures; yet these were not the only forces that shaped their lives. Overlapping and intersecting scales of social and political activity brought peasants into contact with neighbours, neighbouring villagers, as well as elites and their agents. Only in the last decade have the dense, multidirectional series of connections that enmeshed peasant activity (and indeed sociability) been developed at the conceptual level, and promising steps forward have been taken, most notably by Julio Escalona and his team at the CSIC, and Juan Antonio Quirós Castillo, at the Universidad del País Vasco.<sup>34</sup>

Complex gradations of social difference, often very fine, are now the object of study; attempts are made to explain them, rather than explain them away. For instance, alongside the dependent peasants who worked some of these lands were small proprietors eking out a living, as well as what Richard Fletcher called a ‘rural middle class’ of farmers.<sup>35</sup> In other words, as Wendy Davies has demonstrated, legal, social and economic status varied from person to person and from family to family; a single village could comprise the destitute, the poor and the middling sort.<sup>36</sup> Looking to the work of Davies and Laurent Feller, others have argued that small but dynamic markets emerged in the tenth century, allowing villagers to seek preferment or advancement by means of the kinds of dealings in private property for too long considered solely the preserve of aristocrats.<sup>37</sup> Peasant recourse to the market is a given in accounts of other parts of early medieval Europe – consider Wendy Davies’ studies on Brittany, the work of Laurent Feller et al. on the Abruzzo, the landmark studies of Pierre Bonnassie and Lluís To on Catalonia, and the more theoretical investigations of Garry Runciman on Anglo-Saxon England – but has not attracted much attention from experts on the northern Christian Iberian kingdoms until very recently.<sup>38</sup>

### The ‘archaeological turn’ for historians

Archaeologists, on the other hand, have bucked this trend somewhat, and in recent years they have shown that it is their discipline that will furnish most of the evidence that will help us to revise our picture. By obliging historians to ponder the material remains of living conditions, fragments of the objects of daily life (coarse wares), and diverse human interventions in the landscape (storage pits, terraces), archaeologists have foregrounded a series of fundamental questions. What size was this community? How did it feed itself? What might the physical layout of the settlement and its

food production and preservation strategies say about social hierarchies? Charters, for all their evident value, can only provide relatively few clues on these particulars. Yet some archaeological studies have taken us further, without falling into the old interpretative traps, by hypothetically reconstructing village settlements peopled by individuals, some perhaps a step or two ahead of peers and willing to coordinate 'infrastructure projects', such as the construction of large storage pits or terraces. How such projects were mediated and carried out, given that the investment in time and labour that they supposed was unlikely to be shared equally among the community, especially if elements of that community were producing more than they needed to sustain themselves in the medium term, are also questions worth posing. One thinks of the example of the village of Gasteiz in Álava, in which an 18 m x 8 m longhouse, inhabited from the mid-ninth century to the early eleventh, has been associated with no less than five 'aligned and synchronous' silos, positioned adjacently.<sup>39</sup> Did these silos belong to a family of superior status to its neighbours? Was the nature of this social superiority fundamentally economic, such families being able to minimise their own risk by storing significant quantities of cereals, thereby consolidating or even gaining leverage over neighbours who were not so fortunate? If we turn the question on its head, further questions emerge. For instance, if silos of unusually high storage capacity were located beside domestic buildings that do not stand out in size or quality of construction from other such buildings, does this indicate that these silos were used by more than a single family, and might we then posit community-level involvement in their construction?<sup>40</sup>

Definitive answers to the questions framed above cannot be given, but a positive consequence of excavations such as those led by Quirós Castillo and Alfonso Vigil-Escalera is that such 'infrastructure projects' are no longer seen as a sure sign of exogenous lordly intrusion; this is as true of Quirós Castillo's excavations in the Basque Country, which suggest that the ninth and tenth centuries saw a reorganisation of villages and productive spaces, as it is of Vigil-Escalera's pioneering work in the Madrid region, which posits, remarkably, fifth- to eighth-century chronologies for the development of stable village communities, at least some of which were involved in exchange economies of some degree of sophistication.<sup>41</sup>

The ability of peasants to shape the internal development of the settlements in which they lived is attested farther west too. Excavations have shown that the village of Villanueva de Santo Adriano, some twenty kilometres from Oviedo (the capital of the leading Christian kingdom in Spain from the second half of the eighth century to the beginning of the tenth), experienced intense settlement nucleation in the ninth and tenth centuries, as well as the reorganisation of agricultural spaces: the presence on the site of 'significant quantities of pottery from Oviedo' indicate that the village was almost certainly producing for exchange.<sup>42</sup> Moving farther west still, large-scale terrace construction has been identified on the edge of Santiago de Compostela in Galicia, occurring in successive waves in the fifth to seventh centuries, and the ninth to tenth centuries; clearly, active intervention in the landscape to improve its productive capacity was a concern of some Iberian peasants throughout the early Middle Ages.<sup>43</sup> For some scholars, the material culture and the architectonic features of related domestic units found at these sites suggest a dramatic break redolent of extraneous elite imposition: but social elites such as there did exist in these contexts were just as likely to have been leading villagers assuming roles of leadership in collective projects. In other words, 'small terraced strips on hillsides with broad sixth- to ninth-century dates could be the result of direct local agency.'<sup>44</sup>

Documents cannot really help us to solve this puzzle definitively because the written record is patchy, uneven in its geographical spread, and rather meagre until after about 900. Admittedly, before this date rent collection and estate management were sometimes recorded in rudimentary scribbles, even in areas as remote as the northwestern corner of the Meseta, as a series of 160 or so slate tablets of sixth- to eighth-century date attests. But to assume that the slates, and the very workaday literacy that they evidence, were created at the behest of lords overseeing local production at village level, is to assume that literacy was only found in elite contexts, an argument that recent studies have called into question.<sup>45</sup> Beyond the Leonese Mountains, in Galicia, charters

from the late ninth-century onwards reveal a world in which transacting in land took place between peasants with great regularity, its normality encoded in the formulaic conventions that appear time and again in the corpus.<sup>46</sup> These transactions were nonetheless anchored in a stable social landscape: privately held holdings, owned by peasant families, were well established, villagers routinely reminding us of the ancient status of their properties, which were delineated by ‘terminos antiguos’.<sup>47</sup> A handful of other excavated sites in Galicia also suggests the stable and long-term occupation of village settlements; furthermore, the continued use in Galicia throughout the early Middle Ages of mixed building techniques, in stone and wood, perhaps points to sharper social hierarchies in Galician villages than we see elsewhere, a view that would fit with the highly articulated nature of social structures in the region that have been said to stand out in tenth-century documents.<sup>48</sup>

To explain regional difference is perhaps one of the challenges facing scholars over the coming years. It is beyond question though, that archaeology is helping us revise our understanding of the protagonism of peasants in their own lives; neither elite pressure *ab extra* nor climate catastrophism need be considered the only possible catalysts of change within peasant communities. Many scholars would now concede that decisions regarding where, when, and how to construct, say, a large silo or an olive press, were taken by peasants, perhaps after consultation with some or all of the members of the settlement (which should not lead us to assume that all parties involved in the decision making process exerted the same level of influence or expected to benefit from the decision equally).<sup>49</sup> Still, these changes must have been felt on the ground. One possibility is that ‘infrastructure projects’ provide a possible context for the development of sharpened social hierarchies within villages, facilitating or even materialising social mobility in a more concrete and indeed visible way. Compelling readings of the archaeological corpus made by scholars in northern Europe have argued to this effect, reminding us that ‘potential diversity in the material reflections of different ranks within the peasantry may have been hugely underestimated.’<sup>50</sup> In his comparative study of a variety of sites from across northern Europe in the early Middle Ages, Christopher Loveluck has called for further investigation of the ‘middling ranks’ of society in tenth- and eleventh-century contexts, ‘local notables and wealthy peasant families, whose existence has already been observed in the archaeological and textual sources of the seventh to ninth centuries’.<sup>51</sup> Here we see peasant agency foregrounded such that we need not classify archaeological markers of difference in wealth, or access to more complex exchange systems, as necessarily indicating elite coordination of such systems.

An interesting consequence of debate on these themes has taken the form of a renewed commitment to scrutinising the theoretical frameworks we take for granted. Top of the list has to be another misleading binary, cooperation and conflict, competing dynamics thought to be constitutive of the social logic of the peasant world. Here we might posit that neither functionalist anthropology nor intrinsically opposed class interest offer a complex enough view of peasant social relations. Where there was cooperation, it was not the natural consequence of a social system innately configured to promote stability; where there was conflict, it was not because members of local society were inevitably predisposed nor psychologically hardwired to object to individuals or groups within the community who were in some way differentiated from others because of economic or political status.<sup>52</sup> On the contrary, cooperation was built by means of the complex intermeshing of varied and overlapping individual and group interests; it was because of its inherent complexity, shaped by the contingent interests of every set of actors in every given circumstance, that it was liable to fracture.

The word ‘community’, omnipresent though it be in the literature since the time of Barbero and Vigil, indeed presents historians with a considerable problem. Community and collective action were, for some historians, the most effective shields deployed by rural cultivators against lords, but how the sociological construct of the ‘natural community’, whose members simply resided in proximity to one another, metabolised into the *comunidad de aldea*, characterised by social stratification and inequality, is far from straightforward.<sup>53</sup> What we might call the ‘feudalising

tendency' has been most often posited by way of explanation, but it is debatable whether this term fits the bill if the change can be said to emerge, *sui generis*, from the heart of the village, the result of the aggregate effect of peasants trying to coordinate their own lives, sometimes in unison with neighbours, sometimes at the level of the family or individual. This does not contradict the possibility of collective action at the community level and I do not wish to argue that such action did not take place. Collective action at the scale of terracing, for example, is certainly impressive. But it is not by definition cooperative, and we should not reject the possibility that it required coordination or coercion, at least in its initial stages, and that this was provided by leading peasants.<sup>54</sup> To admit as much would not undermine the concept of the peasant community, but simply highlight its complexity: after all, collective interests do not necessarily produce collective action.

### New contexts: social complexity, commerce and comparison

Peasant agency in early medieval northern Spain was not confined to the shaping of settlements and productive spaces. Commercial activity also played a part. Agustín Azkarate and José Luis Solaun have shown that low-value pottery, sometimes supplied by 'itinerant' vendors and often produced locally, circulated in the Basque Country in the ninth and tenth centuries.<sup>55</sup> Even a cautious reading of their study must conclude that there was clearly non-elite demand for inexpensive pottery (alongside demand for finer wares) that made use of and fostered market mechanisms to meet that need; excavations in village sites have revealed significant enough quantities of a range of inexpensive coarse wares so as to demonstrate that peasants knew how to access the market in order to obtain the *particular* ceramic ware that they wanted. Indeed, Azkarate and Solaun have suggested that production was relatively complex by the ninth century, household production existing alongside 'individual workshop' production, both supplemented by an 'itinerant' element perhaps motivated by supply-side factors, its producers keen to muscle in on rivals.<sup>56</sup> Itinerant craftsmen of this type, working across the region between Madrid and Toledo in the early Middle Ages, perhaps even 'responded to seasonal cycles of demand'.<sup>57</sup>

Elsewhere in the Christian territories of northern Iberia, several different highly localised forms of coarse ware have emerged from excavations across and within regions, from Portugal to Álava.<sup>58</sup> Localisation has been found to characterise the ever-growing pottery assemblage of the Iberian village world and this pattern holds true wherever excavation has taken place; in other words, there are reasons to suspect that the circulation of low value objects was common enough in many parts of medieval Iberia, and that there was some kind of specialised production in operation aimed overwhelmingly at non-elite transactors. Who made these ceramics? And with what medium of exchange did anyone pay for them? After all, if specialisation becomes more normal once payment in coin itself becomes more normal (people choosing to buy artisanal goods rather than make them), how do we explain the pattern of increasing and increasingly diverse ceramic production emerging from excavations undertaken in a world putatively without coin? One answer might be to think about the productive capacity of peasants to produce ceramics which in range, design, and quality (if not scale), bear the hallmarks of what we more readily call 'specialisation' in monetary contexts.<sup>59</sup> Alfonso Vigil-Escalera has broadened our horizons still further in his study of 'things that travel', bringing to our attention the role that rotary querns, tiles, and textiles played in peasant exchange networks in the Madrid region. As he states, 'the mere fact that goods travelled indicates that production exceeded local needs.'<sup>60</sup> The upshot of such investigations is that archaeologists might hope, soon, to persuade historians of feudal society that production for exchange – indeed, economic strategies beyond subsistence – characterised at least some pockets of peasant society in the early Middle Ages.

Peasant artisans commercially integrated in local networks have been postulated in late and post-Carolingian contexts, including in the Low Countries, where 'industries often had clear regional concentrations, and were almost all located in the countryside'.<sup>61</sup> But such is the



abundance of ceramics (now beginning to see the light of day in meaningful quantities) and other low-value goods (documented in hundreds of Iberian charters), that we need to think harder about their presence in Iberian contexts too.<sup>62</sup> We might also extend our comparative analysis to England, and indeed shift our focus from ceramics to other types of low-level goods, to see further examples of the economic dynamism of the early medieval peasantry. In an article focused on middle and late Anglo-Saxon England, Rosamond Faith has reminded us that ‘the extent to which pottery and high-level crafts dominate the archaeological record has tended to obscure the importance of everyday goods in the rural economy and hence the contribution that peasant surplus may have made to exchange.’<sup>63</sup> Due weight has long been afforded to the role of peasants as innovators and entrepreneurs in English historiography. Although much of this work has concentrated on the centuries after 1200, some historians have examined the earlier period with illuminating results; Richard Britnell, for example, has proposed that the institutional domination of the market by landlords may well have acted as a brake on late Anglo-Saxon commercialisation, rather than a stimulus.<sup>64</sup> In a similar vein, Chris Dyer has proposed that peasant producers were better able to spot ripe conditions for investment and opportunities to increase production than was the lordly class.<sup>65</sup>

These comparanda need not map onto Spanish conditions perfectly – indeed, it would take some explaining if they did. But they do provide food for thought; they remind us that peasant protagonism is the place to start when attempting to understand the fundamental dynamics of the peasantry, production and market mechanisms. They also offer a salutary reminder to historians that this protagonism can only be uncovered if archaeology continues to shape our current and future research agendas, for not only does it provide us with an ever-expanding base of empirical data, it also prompts us to ask new, more penetrating questions of historiographical paradigms in dire need of revision and regeneration.

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## Notes

- 1 C. Sánchez-Albornoz, ‘Pequeños propietarios libres en el reino Asturleonés: su realidad histórica’, *Settimane di studio del centro italiano di studi sull’alto medioevo*, 13 (1966), 183–222.
- 2 For an introduction to the *homo hispanus*, C. Sánchez-Albornoz, *Spain: A Historical Enigma*, trans. C. J. Dees and D. S. Reher, 2 vols (Madrid, 1975), vol. 1, p. 19 (originally C. Sánchez-Albornoz, *España: un enigma histórico*, 2 vols (Buenos Aires, 1957)); see also C. Sánchez-Albornoz, ‘The Frontier and Castilian Liberties’, in A. R. Lewis and T. F. McGann, eds, *The New World Looks at its History* (Austin, TX, 1963), pp. 27–46.
- 3 A. Barbero de Aguilera and M. Vigil Pascual, *Sobre los orígenes sociales de la reconquista* (Barcelona, 1974), and *La formación del feudalismo en la península ibérica* (Barcelona, 1978).
- 4 C. Tejerizo García, ‘Unearthing Peasant Societies: Historiography and Recent Contributions in the Archaeology of the Rural World during Visigothic Times’, in E. Dell’Elicine and C. Martin, eds, *Framing Power in Visigothic Society: Discourses, Devices and Artifacts* (Amsterdam, 2020), pp. 75–108 (p. 76).
- 5 The best place to start is W. Davies, *Christian Spain and Portugal in the Early Middle Ages: Texts and Societies* (Abingdon, UK, 2020).
- 6 J. A. Quirós Castillo, ‘Medieval Archaeology in Spain’, in R. Gilchrist and A. Reynolds, eds, *Fifty Years of Medieval Archaeology in Britain and Beyond* (London, 2009), pp. 173–89.
- 7 Summarised in L. García de Valdeavellano, *Curso de historia de las instituciones españolas: de los orígenes al final de la edad media* (Madrid, 1968).
- 8 In a judicious article on the relevance or otherwise in Iberia of late Roman terminology heralded elsewhere to be crucial to the formation of the early medieval peasantry, see L. A. García Moreno, ‘From *coloni* to *servi*: a history of the peasantry in Visigothic Spain’, *Klio*, 83 (2001), 198–212, in which the author notes that legislators referred frequently to *rustici* and reminds us (on p. 202) that ‘neither the term *colonus* nor any of the synonyms usually associated with it – *originarius*, *tributarius* or *inquilinus* – is attested in any of the laws gathered in the *Liber Iudicum*.’ Note, however, that Visigothic legislators, following Roman assumptions, were in no doubt that country folk were beholden to the law (*LV*, 1, 2, 3): ‘Lex regit omnem civitatis

- ordinem, omnem hominis etatem, que sic feminis datur ut maribus, iuventute conplectitur et senectute, tam prudentibus quam indoctis, tam urbanis quam rusticis fertur.' For the full reference, see K. Zeumer, ed., *Leges Visigothorum. MGH Leges nationum Germanicarum* 1 (Hanover, 1902), pp. 33–456, here LV. On the potential of *rustici* to act as disloyal fomenters of seditious tumult, see the Eighth Council of Toledo, 10, can. 8, in J. Vives, ed., *Concilios Visigóticos e Hispano-Romanos* (Barcelona, 1963). For the interesting reference to 'persons of inferior rank', who, tellingly, were not slaves, see LV, 8, 3, 6.
- 9 A. García-Gallo, 'El hombre y la tierra en la edad media leonesa: el testimonio agrario', *Revista de la Facultad de Derecho de la Universidad de Madrid*, 1–2 (1957), 9–372; J. Á. García de Cortázar and P. Martínez Sopena provide the words quoted here, in their 'Los estudios sobre historia rural de la sociedad medieval Hispanocristiana', in I. Alfonso, ed., *La Historia Rural de las Sociedades Medievales Europeas* (Valencia, 2008), pp. 97–143 (p. 99).
- 10 See, for a precocious example, J. Á. García de Cortázar, *El dominio del monasterio de San Millán de la Cogolla (siglos X al XIII): introducción a la historia rural de Castilla altomedieval* (Salamanca, 1969).
- 11 Two of Duby's works were particularly influential: *L'économie rurale et la vie des campagnes dans l'Occident medieval*, 2 vols (Paris, 1962), which appeared in Castilian in 1968, and *Guerriers et paysans, viiiè-xiè siècles: premier essor de l'économie européenne* (Paris, 1973), which appeared in Castilian in 1976. Reyna Pastor has indeed dedicated an elegant chapter to Duby's influence in Spanish academic milieu: R. Pastor, 'La recepción de la obra de Georges Duby en España', in B. Pellistrandi, ed., *La historiografía francesa del siglo XX y su acogida en España* (Madrid, 2002), pp. 21–40.
- 12 G. Duby, *Les trois ordres ou L'imaginaire du féodalisme* (Paris, 1978).
- 13 Pierre Bonnassie postulated that Catalonia offered a paradigmatic example of Duby's model, its homegrown, castle-dwelling hoodlums a match for anything that France itself could muster – though the period of crisis came later, from 1030–60. Feudal Revolution, in its boldest formulations, did not find much support in Spain outside of Catalonia; see P. Bonnassie, 'Du Rhône à la Galice: genèse et modalités du régime féodal', in *Structures féodales et féodalisme dans l'Occident méditerranéen (Xe–XIIIè siècles)*, *Actes du colloque de Rome (10–13 octobre 1978)* (Rome, 1980), pp. 17–55.
- 14 E. A. R. Brown, 'The tyranny of a construct: feudalism and historians of medieval Europe', *American Historical Review*, 79:4 (1974), 1063–88.
- 15 P. Linehan, 'History in a Changing World: The Case of Medieval Spain', in his *Past and Present in Medieval Spain* (Aldershot, UK, 1992), ch. 1, p. 18.
- 16 R. Pastor, *Resistencia y luchas campesinas en la época del crecimiento y consolidación de la formación feudal: Castilla y León, siglos X–XIII* (Madrid, 1980); Á. Barrios García, *Estructuras agrarias y de poder en Castilla: el ejemplo de Ávila (1085–1320)*, 2 vols (Salamanca, 1983–4). See also the more persuasive arguments, on the late Middle Ages, of J. Valdeón Baroque, *Los conflictos sociales en el reino de Castilla en los siglos XIV y XV* (Madrid, 1975); and, very recently, the highly stimulating contribution of Álvaro Carvajal Castro, who looks to rehabilitate frameworks which are essentially historical-materialist in conception while recognising the inadequacy of treating the peasantry as if it were defined by 'un carácter socialmente homogéneo', in 'Resistencia campesinas en el noroeste ibérico altomedieval: confrontando la tragedia', *Revista de Historia Jerónimo Zurita*, 95 (2020), 13–33.
- 17 R. H. Hilton, *Bond Men Made Free: Medieval Peasant Movements and the English Rising of 1381* (London, 1973) and P. Anderson, *Passages from Antiquity to Feudalism* (London, 1974). Translations into Spanish appeared as, respectively, *Siervos liberados: los movimientos campesinos y el levantamiento inglés de 1381*, trans. A. Martínez Benito (Madrid, 1978) and *Transiciones de la antigüedad al feudalismo*, trans. S. Juliá (Madrid, 1979).
- 18 C. Sánchez-Albornoz, *En torno a los orígenes del feudalismo*, 3 vols (Mendoza, 1942), is rightly considered significant but just as insightful is his *España: un enigma histórico*, ch. 12, 'Inmadurez del feudalismo español'. Note that Sánchez-Albornoz's conviction that Iberian society of the Middle Ages could not be described as 'feudal', nor fruitfully compared to the medieval societies of Spain's continental neighbours, was largely shared by major northern European historians of feudalism and feudal society, including Francois-Louis Ganshof, as Adam J. Kosto reminds us, in 'What About Spain? Iberia in the Historiography of Medieval European Feudalism', in S. Bagge, M. H. Gelting and T. Lindkvist, eds, *Feudalism: New Landscapes of Debate* (Turnhout, 2011), pp. 135–58 (pp. 135–42). Distinction was sometimes made by Ganshof and Bloch between Catalonia and the rest of Spain (Catalonia being to all intents and purposes Frankish or at least within the Frankish orbit, and therefore an honorary member of the Feudal Club), but the overriding impression one gets is that Spain's otherness always made it an outlier in pan-European discussions of feudalism, be it of the feudo-vassalic variety (lords, vassals, rituals), or of the Blochian variety (a description of an entire social order, including in its economic dimension).
- 19 Barbero and Vigil exerted, and continue to exert, an extremely significant influence on Spanish medieval studies, as evidenced by the fact that their work forms the dominant frame of reference throughout the essays collected in M<sup>a</sup>. J. Hidalgo, D. Pérez and M. J. R. Gervás, eds, '*Romanización*' y '*Reconquista*' en la *Península Ibérica: Nuevas Perspectivas* (Salamanca, 1998). See J. Aurell, 'Tendencias recientes del medievalismo española', *Memoria y civilización: anuario de historia*, 11 (2008), 63–103 (pp. 70–2), for a more detached summary.
- 20 The Barbero and Vigil thesis as described in M. E. Álvarez Llopis, 'Introducción a la Liébana medieval', in M. Estrada Sánchez and M. A. Sánchez, eds, *La Liébana: una aproximación histórica* (Santander 1996), pp. 78–92 (p. 82): 'se puede deducir que la población indígena era una sociedad de carácter tribal, de base gentilicia, con una escasa especialización del espacio, colectivo, en el que se practica una agricultura nómada unida al pastoreo.' Over the past twenty years some scholars have been

willing to criticise the empirical shortcomings of *La formación del feudalismo* while simultaneously rallying to the book's defence. Such magnanimous treatment has not been afforded to Sánchez-Albornoz.

21 The best guides in English are Kosto, 'What About Spain?'; and W. Davies, 'The Early Middle Ages and Spanish Identity', in H. Pryce and J. Watts, eds, *Power and Identity in the Middle Ages: Essays in Memory of Rees Davies* (Oxford, 2007), pp. 68–84. A handful of good summaries in Castilian exist; see J. Valdeón Baroque, 'Sobre el feudalismo: Treinta años después', in E. Sarasa Sánchez and E. Serrano Martín, eds, *Estudios sobre señorío y feudalismo: homenaje a Julio Valdeón* (Zaragoza, 2010), pp. 9–25.

22 On *comunidades de aldea*, see C. Estepa Díez, 'Notas sobre el feudalismo en el marco historiográfico general', in Sarasa Sánchez and Serrano Martín, eds, *Estudios sobre señorío y feudalismo*, pp. 77–105 (p. 91): 'una transformación de las comunidades de aldea, mediante la extensión de la propiedad individual y la diferenciación social interna.' Emblematic of this approach is I. 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.

23 H. Grassotti, *Las instituciones feudo-vasalláticas en León y Castilla*, 2 vols (Spoleto, 1969) is an extremely thorough treatise. On the different forms of feudalism, see C. Wickham, 'Le forme del feudalesimo', *Settimane di studi del centro di studi sull'alto Medioevo*, 47 (2000), 15–47.

24 The devotion of some Spanish historians to their French counterparts struck British commentators quite forcefully. Robert Bartlett, in an amusing review of *Les origines de la féodalité: Hommage à Claudio Sánchez-Albornoz* (Madrid, 2000), notes that one of the contributor's chapters focuses on post-Franco historiography, 'which consists mainly of canonization of Marc Bloch's classic Feudal Society.' For the review, see *The English Historical Review*, CXVI:468 (2001), 924–5.

25 On the general patterns, see C. de Ayala Martínez, 'Reinos occidentales, 711–1250', in C. de Ayala Martínez et al., *Economía y sociedad en la España medieval* (Madrid, 2004), chs 1–3.

26 That Spanish identity is the aggregate of strands derived from Christian, Muslim and Jewish cultures was proposed by A. Castro, in his seminal *Espana en su historia: Cristianos, Moros y Judíos* (Buenos Aires, 1948). The concept, revised and reworked, reached a crescendo in M. R. Menocal, *The Ornament of the World: How Muslims, Jews, and Christians created a Culture of Tolerance in Medieval Spain* (Boston, MA, 2002). See also M. Soifer, 'Beyond Convivencia: critical reflections on the historiography of interfaith relations in Christian Spain', *Journal of Medieval Iberian Studies*, 1:1 (2009), 19–35.

27 de Ayala Martínez, 'Reinos occidentales', p. 73: 'un trabajo que raramente excedía la exigencia de 12 días al año.'

28 Barbero and Vigil, *Sobre los orígenes sociales and La formación del feudalismo*.

29 For the quotation (a description by Carvajal Castro of Reyna Pastor's conceptual framework), see A. Carvajal Castro, 'Collective Action and Local Leaderships in Early Medieval North-Western Iberia', in J. A. Quirós Castillo, ed., *Social Inequality in Early Medieval Europe: Local Societies and Beyond* (Turnhout, 2020), pp. 281–99 (p. 284). For a flavour of the 'Toronto School', see J. A. Raftis, *Tenure and Mobility: Studies in the Social History of the Medieval English Village* (Toronto, 1964). On Hilton, see H. J. Kaye, *The British Marxist Historians: An Introductory Analysis* (Cambridge, UK, 1984), ch. 3, and, in particular, his sagacious animadversions on Hilton's approach: 'Hilton is the historian of medieval feudalism who has most definitely focused on and argued for the recognition of the peasantry as political actors.' P. Linehan, *History and the Historians of Medieval Spain* (Oxford, 1993).

30 García de Cortázar's work, exemplified by *Organización social del espacio en la España medieval: La Corona de Castilla en los siglos VIII a XV* (Madrid, 1985), was without doubt a milestone; the school that followed his lead rehearsed variations on the theme he outlined most clearly therein.

31 An approach that seems rather to miss the point when trying to understand the complicated contingent circumstances that occasioned peasant resistance, as Carvajal Castro has persuasively shown in 'Collective Action', p. 295.

32 Two good recent general guides that focus on the period after 1000: de Ayala Martínez et al., *Economía y sociedad*; I. Álvarez Borge, *La plena edad media* (Madrid, 2003), ch. 1.

33 Carvajal Castro, 'Collective Action'. See also I. Martín Viso, 'Unequal Small Worlds: Social Dynamics in Tenth-Century Leonese Villages', in Quirós Castillo, ed., *Social Inequality*, pp. 255–80; and, though with a pre-tenth-century focus, the excellent chapter by A. Vigil-Escalera Guirado, 'Meeting Places, Markets, and Churches in the Countryside between Madrid and Toledo, Central Spain (c. AD 500–900)', in J. Escalona, O. Vésteinsson and S. Brookes, eds, *Polity and Neighbourhood in early Medieval Europe* (Turnhout, 2019), pp. 173–202.

34 Thoughtful articles on the role of archaeology: J. Escalona, 'The early Castilian peasantry: an archaeological turn?', *Journal of Medieval Iberian Studies*, 1:2 (2009), 119–45; J. A. Quirós Castillo, 'An archaeology of "small worlds": social inequality in early medieval Iberian rural communities', *Journal of Medieval Iberian Studies*, 12:1 (2020), 3–27.

35 R. A. Fletcher, *St James's Catapult: The Life and Times of Diego Gelmírez of Santiago de Compostela* (Oxford, 1984).

36 W. Davies, *Acts of Giving: Individual, Community and Church in Tenth-Century Christian Spain* (Oxford, 2007).

37 R. Portass, *The Village World of Early Medieval Northern Spain: Local Community and the Land Market* (Woodbridge, UK, 2017); W. Davies, 'Sale, price and valuation in Galicia and Castile-León in the tenth century', *Early Medieval Europe*, 11:2 (2002), 149–74, though note the scepticism of Julio Escalona in his 'Dense Local Knowledge: Grounding Local to Supralocal Relationships in Tenth-Century Castile', in Escalona, Vésteinsson and Brookes, eds, *Polity and Neighbourhood*, pp. 351–75. On market exchange, see the insightful comments of Vigil-Escalera, 'Meeting Places', p. 183.

- 38 W. Davies, *Small Worlds: The Village Community in Early Medieval Brittany* (London, 1988); L. Feller, A. Gramain and F. Weber, *La fortune de Karol: marché de la terre et liens personnels dans les Abruzzes au haut moyen âge* (Rome, 2005); L. Feller and C. Wickham, eds, *Le marché de la terre au moyen âge: actes des rencontres des Treilles, 19–25 juin 1999, et de Saint-Lambert-des-Bois, 15–17 juin 2001* (Rome, 2005); P. Bonnassie, 'Une famille de la campagne barcelonaise et ses activités économiques en l'an mil', *Annales du Midi: revue archéologique, historique et philologique de la France méridionale*, lxxvi (1964), 261–303; L. To Figueras, *Familia i hereu a la Catalunya nord-oriental (segles x a xii)* (Barcelona, 1997); W. G. Runciman, 'Accelerating social mobility: the case of Anglo-Saxon England', *Past & Present*, 104:1 (1984), 3–30.
- 39 Quirós Castillo, 'An archaeology of "small worlds"', p. 17.
- 40 See the example of Zaballa, in *ibid.*, p. 16. For more detail on these matters, see A. Vigil-Escalera, G. Bianchi and J. A. Quirós Castillo, eds, *Horrea, Barns and Silos: Storage and Incomes in Early Medieval Europe* (Vitoria-Gasteiz, 2013).
- 41 Vigil-Escalera, 'Meeting Places', pp. 178–83. For an introduction to some of this material see Vigil-Escalera, 'Granjas y aldeas altomedievales al norte de Toledo (450–800 DC)', *Archivo Español de Arqueología*, 80 (2007), 239–84. Quirós Castillo's work has set about developing a theoretical framework to explain what we might call an 'archaeology of the peasantry' only in very recent years; prior to this, he offered rather more conventional readings of rural society, often invoking seigneurialism to explain change detected in the archaeological register: see his 'The Other Spain: The Formation of Seigneurial Society in Álava', in S. Gelichi and R. Hodges, eds, *New Directions in Early Medieval European Archaeology: Spain and Italy Compared – Essays for Riccardo Francovich* (Brepols, 2015), pp. 111–33.
- 42 M. Fernández Mier, 'Peasant Communities and Landscape Change in North-West Iberia', in Escalona, Vésteinsson and Brookes, eds, *Polity and Neighbourhood*, pp. 57–82 (pp. 72–3).
- 43 P. Ballesteros Arias, 'La arqueología rural y la construcción de un paisaje agrario medieval: el caso de Galicia', in H. Kirchner, ed., *Por una arqueología agraria: perspectivas de investigación sobre espacios de cultivo en las sociedades medievales hispánicas* (Oxford, 2010), pp. 25–39; R. Blanco and P. Ballesteros Arias, 'Aldeas y espacios agrarios altomedievales en Galicia', in J. A. Quirós Castillo, ed., *The Archaeology of Early Medieval Villages in Europe* (Bilbao, 2009), pp. 115–35.
- 44 Fernández Mier, 'Peasant Communities and Landscape Change', p. 75.
- 45 For an introduction to the slates, see I. Velázquez Soriano, *Las pizarras visigodas (entre el latín y su disgregación)* (Burgos, 2004); I. Martín Viso, 'The Visigothic slates and their archaeological contexts', *Journal of Medieval Iberian Studies*, 5:2 (2013), 145–68. On the many social contexts of literacy in early medieval Iberia, see the game-changing G. Barrett, *The Written and the World in Early Medieval Iberia (711–1031)* (Oxford, forthcoming), a monograph based on the author's DPhil thesis (Oxford, 2015).
- 46 Portass, *The Village World*, chs 6, 7; Davies, 'Sale, price and valuation'.
- 47 'Terminos antiguos', in Galicia; see Portass, *The Village World*, pp. 137–8.
- 48 For the handful of other excavated sites, see J. C. Sánchez Pardo, 'Poblamiento rural tardorromano y altomedieval en Galicia: una revisión arqueológica', *Archeologia Medievale*, 37 (2010), 285–306 (pp. 291–3). On social structures in Galicia, see Davies, *Acts of Giving*, and Portass, *The Village World*, chs 6, 7.
- 49 On peasants taking the initiative in the construction of storage systems, see Quirós Castillo, 'An archaeology of "small worlds"'; J. A. Quirós Castillo and A. Vigil-Escalera, 'Networks of peasant villages between Toledo and Velezia Alabense, Northwestern Spain (V–X centuries)', *Archeologia Medievale*, 33 (2006), 79–130 (p. 106).
- 50 C. Loveluck, *Northwest Europe in the Early Middle Ages, c. AD 600–1150: A Comparative Archaeology* (Cambridge, UK, 2013), p. 13.
- 51 *Ibid.*, p. 274 and ch. 12 in general on the connections between social mobility in the rural sphere and the reorganisation of the landscape.
- 52 J. G. Flanagan, 'Hierarchy in simple "egalitarian" societies', *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 18 (1989), 245–66. See also C. Tilly, 'Introduction: anthropology confronts inequality', *Anthropological Theory*, 1:3 (2001), 299–306.
- 53 Pastor, *Resistencia*, esp. ch. 1. See also the much more nuanced approach of Carvajal Castro in 'Collective Action'.
- 54 D. M. Carballo, ed., *Cooperation & Collective Action: Archaeological Perspectives* (Boulder, CO, 2013); K. J. Vaughn, J. W. Eerkens and J. Kantner, eds, *The Evolution of Leadership: Transitions in Decision Making from Small-Scale to Middle-Range Societies* (Santa Fe, NM, 2010).
- 55 A. Azkarate Garai-Olaun and J. L. Solaun Bustinza, 'La cerámica altomedieval en el País Vasco (siglos v-x d.c.): producciones, modelos productivos y patrones de consumo', in A. Vigil-Escalera and J. A. Quirós Castillo, eds, *La cerámica de la Alta Edad Media en el cuadrante noroeste de la Península Ibérica (siglos v-x)* (Vitoria-Gasteiz, 2016), pp. 193–228. Taken together, the contributions to this volume hint at quite how underused the ceramic register has been in estimations of market transaction in early medieval northern Spain.
- 56 Azkarate and Solaun, 'La cerámica altomedieval', pp. 222–5.
- 57 Vigil-Escalera, 'Meeting Places', p. 183.
- 58 For Portugal, A. De Man and C. Tente, eds, *Estudos de cerâmica medieval: o norte e centro de Portugal, séculos IX a XII* (Lisbon, 2014). For an overview of Spanish examples, Vigil-Escalera and Quirós Castillo, eds, *La cerámica de la Alta Edad Media*.

- 59 An argument with significant ramifications for our interpretation of exchange in other, non-monetised early medieval societies, such as Denmark or Ireland, where exchange is well evidenced for many centuries before kings began to mint coins on a serious scale, from the late tenth century.
- 60 Vigil-Escalera, 'Meeting Places', p. 181.
- 61 B. Van Bavel, *Manors and Markets: Economy and Society in the Low Countries, 500–1600* (Oxford, 2010), p. 149: 'the iron industries (in the Veluwe and later in the Walloon area), pottery (in the Meuse valley), salt production (in Zeeland), and textile production (in Frisia and Flanders).'
- 62 S. Tange, 'La paysannerie indépendante et autonome à côté du grand domaine carolingien', *Revue belge de Philologie et d'Histoire*, 90 (2012), 347–59. For an overview of things exchanged, see W. Davies, 'Water Mills and Cattle Standards: Probing the Economic Comparison between Ireland and Spain in the Early Middle Ages', *Volume 21 of the H. M. Chadwick Memorial Lectures* (Cambridge, UK, 2012), p. 20.
- 63 R. Faith, 'Forces and relations of production in early medieval England', *Journal of Agrarian Change*, 9:1 (2009), 23–41 (p. 34).
- 64 *Ibid.*, p. 34; R. Britnell, *The Commercialisation of English Society, 1000–1500* (Manchester, UK, 1996) addresses this topic over several centuries but chs 1–3 focus on the earlier period.
- 65 C. Dyer, *Making a Living in the Middle Ages: The People of Britain, 850–1520* (New Haven, CT, 2002). I have also found essential P. Schofield, *Peasants and Historians: Debating the Medieval English Peasantry* (Manchester, UK, 2016).