

LATE ANTIQUE AND EARLY MEDIEVAL IBERIA



Mariel Pérez

# Local Churches, Monasteries, and Bishops in León Between the Ninth and Eleventh Centuries

Amsterdam  
University  
Press

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León Between the Ninth and Eleventh Centuries

# Late Antique and Early Medieval Iberia

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*Mariel Pérez*

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# Abbreviations

- Astorga      Gregoria Cavero and Encarnación Martín López. *Colección documental de la catedral de Astorga. I* (646–1125). León: Centro de Estudios e Investigación “San Isidoro,” 1999.
- Becerro de Presentaciones      José Antonio Fernández Flórez. “El Becerro de Presentaciones. Códice 13 del Archivo de la Catedral de León. Un parroquial leonés de los siglos XIII–XV,” in *León y su Historia, V*. León: Centro de Estudios e Investigación “San Isidoro,” 1984.
- Benevívere      Luis Fernández. *Colección diplomática de la Abadía de Santa María de Benevívere (Palencia)*. Madrid, 1950.
- Castañeda      Ángel Rodríguez González. *El tumbo del monasterio de San Martín de Castañeda*. León: Centro de Estudios e Investigación “San Isidoro,” 1973.
- Documentos pontificios      Santiago Domínguez Sánchez. *Documentos pontificios referentes a la Diócesis de León (siglos XI–XIII)*. León: Universidad de León, 2003.
- Entrepeñas      José Manuel Ruiz Asencio, Irene Ruiz Albi, and Mauricio Herrero Jiménez. *Colección documental del monasterio de San Román de Entrepeñas (940–1608)*. León: Centro de Estudios e Investigación “San Isidoro,” 2000.
- Eslonza      José Manuel Ruiz Asencio and Irene Ruiz Albi. *Colección documental del monasterio de San Pedro de Eslonza, I, (912–1300)*. León: Centro de Estudios e Investigación “San Isidoro,” 2007.
- Legislación Conciliar      Gonzalo Martínez Díez. *Legislación conciliar del Reino Astur (718–910) y del Reino de León (910–1230)*. León: Centro de Estudios e Investigación “San Isidoro,” 2009.
- León 1      Emilio Sáez. *Colección Documental del Archivo de la Catedral de León (775–1230). I (775–952)*. León: Centro de Estudios e Investigación “San Isidoro,” 1990.
- León 2      Emilio Sáez and Carlos Sáez. *Colección Documental del Archivo de la Catedral de León (775–1230). II (953–985)*. León: Centro de Estudios e Investigación “San Isidoro,” 1990.



- León 3 José Manuel Ruiz Asencio. *Colección Documental del Archivo de la Catedral de León (775–1230). III (986–1031)*. León: Centro de Estudios e Investigación “San Isidoro,” 1990.
- León 4 José Manuel Ruiz Asencio. *Colección Documental del Archivo de la Catedral de León (775–1230). IV (1032–1109)*. León: Centro de Estudios e Investigación “San Isidoro,” 1990.
- León 5 José María Fernández Catón. *Colección documental del archivo de la Catedral de León (775–1230), Tomo V (1109–1187)*. León: Centro de Estudios e Investigación “San Isidoro,” 1990.
- León 6 José María Fernández Catón. *Colección documental del archivo de la Catedral de León (775–1230), Tomo VI (1188–1230)*. León: Centro de Estudios e Investigación “San Isidoro,” 1991.
- Montes Augusto Quintana Prieto. *Tumbo viejo de San Pedro de Montes*. León: Centro de Estudios e Investigación “San Isidoro,” 1971.
- Otero José Antonio Fernández Flórez and Marta Herrero de la Fuente. *Colección documental del monasterio de Santa María de Otero de las Dueñas, I (854–1108)*. León: Centro de Estudios e Investigación “San Isidoro,” 1999.
- Palencia María Teresa Abajo Martín. *Documentación de la catedral de Palencia (1035–1247)*. Burgos: Garrido Garrido, 1986.
- Sahagún 1 José María Mínguez Fernández. *Colección diplomática del monasterio de Sahagún (siglos IX y X)*. León: Centro de Estudios e Investigación “San Isidoro,” 1976.
- Sahagún 2 Marta Herrero de la Fuente. *Colección diplomática del monasterio de Sahagún (857–1230). II (1000–1073)*. León: Centro de Estudios e Investigación “San Isidoro,” 1988.
- Sahagún 3 Marta Herrero de la Fuente. *Colección diplomática del monasterio de Sahagún (857–1230). III (1073–1109)*. León: Centro de Estudios e Investigación “San Isidoro,” 1988.
- Sahagún 4 José Antonio Fernández Flórez. *Colección diplomática del Monasterio de Sahagún (857–1300). IV (1110–1199)*. León: Centro de Estudios e Investigación “San Isidoro,” 1991.

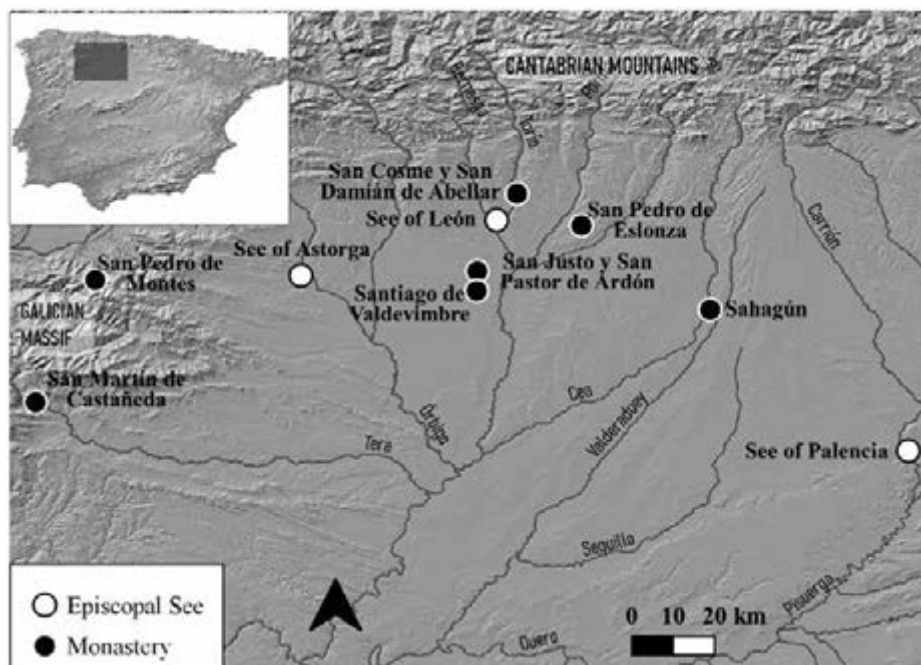
# Introduction

**Abstract:** This chapter presents the main contours of this work, establishing the temporal and geographical framework, the book's objectives, and its relationship to the existing historiography.

**Keywords:** local churches, monasteries, bishoprics, Kingdom of León

The overall aim of this work is to contribute to an understanding of the ecclesiastical organisation of the Kingdom of León in the early Middle Ages. To achieve this, we begin with the basic units, local churches – defined in broad terms as privately founded churches and monasteries with local influence that are outside episcopal jurisdiction – and examine them in connection with the two major institutions that enabled ecclesiastical framing during the period on a supralocal scale: monasteries and bishoprics. Within this context, we propose three main objectives. Firstly, this study analyses the role of local churches as the initial point in the ecclesiastical organisation of the faithful, as well as the role these churches played in the power-building dynamics of the local elites and aristocracies and in the creation of frameworks of social cohesion and identity within rural societies. Secondly, it analyses the role of independent monasteries in the ecclesiastical organisation through the progressive absorption of local churches by way of donations, and their integration into networks of monastic churches of varying sizes. And finally, the book analyses the nature and characteristics of episcopal power in the early Middle Ages with the aim of understanding the transformations that gave way, in the final decades of the eleventh century, to the gradual subordination of the local churches and their clergy to episcopal jurisdiction.

For the purposes of this study, we have focused on a defined territory – namely, the region of León, which is roughly located between the Cantabrian Mountains and the Duero river (going north to south), and between the Pisuerga river and the Galician Massif (going east to west). It therefore covers virtually the same territory as two medieval dioceses, those of León



Map 1. Main ecclesiastical centers in the region of León mentioned in this book

and Astorga. The period under discussion begins around 850, with the Christian conquest of these cities, the subsequent creation of the see of León and restoration of the see of Astorga, and the development of a series of monasteries whose social, economic, and political practices – as well as those of the episcopal sees in question – will be reflected in the creation of an extensive and expanding diplomatic documentation, which serves as the primary source for this study. We will situate the culmination of this period around 1100, shortly after a series of ecclesiastical transformations ushered in a process that, in the centuries to follow, would give way to the establishment of the territorial diocese and the parochial system. Focusing on this period will help us understand the characteristics of ecclesiastical organisation in the early Middle Ages, while also revealing some of the changes that will lead to the development of new frameworks for ecclesiastical structuring.

The geographical and temporal scope of this book situates the topics it addresses within the context of two major historiographical issues. The first is the so-called repopulation of the Duero plateau or *meseta*. In the mid-twentieth century, Claudio Sánchez Albornoz argued that as a result of the Muslim conquest, the Duero valley had been depopulated and subsequently, from the ninth century onwards, was reinhabited by *emphyteutae*

and small-scale free landowners.<sup>1</sup> Although this view had already been debated in the historiography through a variety of proposals and analytical perspectives, in recent years Sánchez Albornoz's theory has been completely dismissed following the emergence of solid critical arguments based on new archaeological evidence. It has in fact been argued that the collapse of the Visigothic kingdom in 711 and the weakness of Muslim power would have left the Duero basin devoid of a centralised power structure, though this did not result in the abandonment of rural settlements. Thus, the phenomenon of "repopulation" should be understood, according to recent studies, as the process of the integration of local societies with their own internal dynamics that already occupied the southern region of the Cantabrian Mountains into an overarching political system.<sup>2</sup> In this context, the actions of monasteries and bishoprics with respect to local churches in the early Middle Ages are, to a large extent, part of a process of organising local populations that had a high level of autonomy.

The second historiographical issue at play is the emergence of the medieval diocese. While traditional studies, under the assumption that the medieval diocese was a legacy of the late Roman and Visigothic administrative divisions, have focused on tracing the origins of the bishoprics and the continuities and discontinuities between the Hispano-Gothic and the medieval ecclesiastical maps,<sup>3</sup> new historiographical tendencies have shifted the focus of this issue, proposing that with the fall of state structures in the early Middle Ages, the ancient dioceses, anchored in the *civitas* and its territory, would have begun a process of deterritorialisation, relying on personal principles that associated the bishop with the churches under his control. The medieval diocese, in this view, is the consequence of a lengthy process of territorial construction that took place (with regional differences) between the eleventh and twelfth centuries.<sup>4</sup> Within this framework, the ecclesiastical reality examined in this book corresponds to a period of significant weakness in the diocesan structures – which gave the local

1 Sánchez Albornoz, *Despoblación y repoblación*. An essential work on the historiographical evolution of Sanchez Albornoz's theory and its critiques is Escalona and Martín Viso, "The Life and Death."

2 Castellanos and Martín Viso, "The Local Articulation"; Vigil-Escalera Guirado, "Early Medieval Landscapes"; Carvajal Castro and Martín Viso, "Historias regionales"; Martín Viso, "Colapso político."

3 Mansilla Reoyo, *Geografía eclesiástica*; Martínez Díez, "Los obispados de la Castilla Condal."

4 Lauwers and Ripart, "Représentation et gestion"; Lauwers, "*Territorium non facere diocesim*"; Florian Mazel, *L'évêque et le territoire*. For the Spanish territories, García de Cortázar, *La construcción de la diócesis*; Guijarro González and Díez Herrera, *La construcción de la parroquia*.

churches and monasteries significant leeway for autonomous action. This was the case until the late eleventh century, when the process that led to the strengthening of episcopal power and the creation of the diocese began.

This book is based on an extensive corpus of documents from the diplomatic collections of the ecclesiastical institutions in the Leonese region, particularly those of the cathedrals of León and Astorga and the monasteries of Sahagún, San Pedro de Eslonza, Santa María de Otero de las Dueñas, San Pedro de Montes, and San Martín de Castañeda. This is complemented with research based on diplomatic collections from other regions, the texts of the conciliar legislation of the Kingdom of León, and invaluable contributions made in the field of archaeology – especially with respect to local churches – that cast light on aspects the written records have left in the dark. At the same time, it should be noted that the written sources that comprise the foundation of this research are predominantly of a diplomatic nature, which brings with it the inherent pitfalls of a fragmentary and lacunary textual tradition. Furthermore, the production and preservation of part of these documents was focused on the protection of the heritage and the rights of ecclesiastical institutions.<sup>5</sup> On the other hand, we will begin with a methodological perspective based on micropolitics, initially focusing our analysis on local churches, and then attempting to understand the social logic that enabled the creation of relationships between these churches and higher ecclesiastical powers.

The book opens with a chapter dedicated to local churches, addressing the social initiatives that enabled their emergence and development; the characteristics of the churches of the local elites and aristocracies and their role in these groups' strategies of ascent and social reproduction; the material aspects of the churches; their religious functions; their function as a meeting place and a source of identity in rural communities; and the tensions that emerged in the communities around local centres of worship. This is followed by a chapter devoted to monasteries, focusing not on issues that have long been dealt with in historiography (such as the various forms of monasticism or monastic domains), but rather on the role the monasteries played, through the absorption of donations, in structuring the ecclesiastical networks of varying scope and size that connected a series of local churches that gradually came under their control. Finally, we will

5 However, it should be noted that ecclesiastical archives also contain documentation produced by laypeople, both aristocracies and local elites. See Calleja Puerta, "Archivos dispersos"; Calleja Puerta, "Conservación y recepción." For Western Europe, see Brown, Costambeys, Innes, and Kosto, eds, *Documentary Culture*.

examine the characteristics of the episcopate in the early Middle Ages, its initial power bases, and the dynamics through which it began to absorb churches by means of donations. We will also analyse the changes that the development of reformist measures brought about in episcopal practice, the gradual imposition of the bishops' jurisdiction over the churches and their clergy, its advance on ecclesiastical revenues, the control exercised over local clergy, and the initial steps in organising the territorial diocese.

In short, this book seeks to shed light on the forms of socio-religious organisation and structuring in the north of the Iberian Peninsula during a period marked by both the absence of diocesan structures and the relative weakness of superior ecclesiastical powers, which were undergoing a process of consolidation; moreover, it aims to explain the logic behind the construction of the power of ecclesiastical institutions in the early Middle Ages.

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# 1 Local Churches

**Abstract:** This chapter analyses the role of local churches in the ecclesiastical organisation of the Hispanic northwest in the early Middle Ages, with a focus on the region of León. It examines the social initiatives that led to the emergence of these churches; their material features; the religious, social, and economic roles they played for those who controlled them; and the place they occupied in the social dynamics of rural communities.

**Keywords:** local churches, local elites, aristocracy, rural communities

*Ecclesia, monasterium, cimiterium, basilica.* These terms – which often overlap and are sometimes used interchangeably – are applied to a myriad of local and privately founded houses of worship in the Iberian North, beginning in the ninth century and with growing frequency in the tenth and eleventh centuries, which we will refer to in this book as “local churches.” These churches, which, as we will see, were the result of very diverse social initiatives, served to construct and express status and seek social legitimation, acted as hubs in the organisation of land and rights, and functioned as markers of family and collective identity, as well as important territorial references that hierarchised and structured spaces. At the same time, they constituted a veritable social scene, a meeting place where different social strata interacted, exhibiting and legitimising the social order.

## Historiographical framework: Perspectives and contributions

In the early Middle Ages, churches were found at the core of a broad range of social and political practices, and have therefore been studied from a variety of different angles. Traditionally, rural churches have been approached from



a perspective of legal and institutional history.<sup>1</sup> The renewal of medieval Hispanic historiography beginning in the 1970s, which focused in part on the analysis of rural history, would situate local churches within a new framework for studies: the role that rural churches and monasteries played in the process of the colonisation, appropriation, and organisation of space in the territories located to the south of the Cantabrian Mountains following the Islamic invasion.<sup>2</sup> In this context, these churches would have provided a base for the settlement and establishment of the population within the territory, giving rise to the emergence of villages around them.<sup>3</sup>

However, the specific study of churches and monasteries themselves has been carried out from a different perspective, one focused on the power-building strategies of the lay aristocracies. Within this framework, special attention has been paid to the interests behind the foundation of churches and monasteries by the aristocracy, their role in the accumulation and structuring of estates, the collection of rent from peasant communities, and the role of churches and monasteries in the creation of family memory, the establishment of the social prestige of their proprietors, and the legitimisation of their dominant role in society. With this as a starting point, a branch of research has also focused on studying the transformations in the aristocratic churches that the implementation of the principles of the Gregorian Reform brought about in the Iberian sphere, taking into account, within the framework of the creation of parochial structures, the transition from a property-based form of control to another mechanism based on the right of patronage.<sup>4</sup>

1 In 1895, the German canonist Ulrich Stutz coined the concept of *Eigenkirchen* or “proprietary churches” in reference to churches founded on private estates and, therefore, outside of episcopal jurisdiction. Stutz, *Geschichte des kirchlichen*. This concept was widely used in European historiography: Wood, *The Proprietary Church*; Mollat, “La restitution des églises privées”; Feller, “Monastères privés et réforme.” In Spain, Torres López, “La doctrina de las ‘Iglesias propias’”; Torres López, “El origen del sistema”; García Gallo, “El Concilio de Coyanza.”

2 Linage Conde, *Los orígenes del monacato*, I:337–338; Martínez Sopena, *La Tierra de Campos*, pp. 89–91; Mínguez Fernández, “Ruptura social,” pp. 18–21; Peña Bocos, “*Ecclesia y monasterium*,” pp. 379–398; García de Cortázar, “La colonización monástica,” pp. 15–48.

3 Peña Bocos, “*Ecclesia y monasterium*,” pp. 388–389.

4 García García, *San Juan Bautista de Corias*; García García, “Monasterios benedictinos y aristocracia laica”; García García, “Aristocracia laica y monasterios familiares”; Loring García, “Nobleza e iglesias propias”; Martínez Sopena, “Parentesco y poder”; Martínez Sopena, “Monasterios particulares”; Martínez Sopena, “Fundaciones monásticas”; Martínez Sopena, “Aristocracia, monacato y reformas”; Martín Viso, “Monasterios y poder aristocrático”; Calleja Puerta, *El conde Suero Vermúdez*, pp. 419–516; García de Cortázar, “Monasterios hispanos”; Fernández Conde and Suárez Álvarez, “El monasterio de Bárcana”; Pérez, “El control de lo sagrado”; Pérez, “Proprietary Churches.”

The development of new historiographical proposals focused on the analysis of so-called “small worlds”<sup>5</sup> – that is, on the frameworks of action and social structuring at the local level – has led to renewed studies on local churches, incorporating churches linked to rural communities into the analysis and approaching them through new angles. From this perspective, local churches and the social logic that emerge around them have been situated within a broader set of practices, considering not only social and political practices at the local level, but also their relationship to overarching power structures. In this way, local churches have been studied as a means of constructing and expressing the status of prominent peasant sectors, as centres for the establishment of local social ties and community cohesion, and as focal points in the structuring of relations with higher secular and ecclesiastical powers.<sup>6</sup>

At the same time, this branch of studies has been enriched by data from the field of archaeology, which has also undergone a process of profound transformation in its theoretical and methodological foundations, shifting its approach to the rural world of the Middle Ages.<sup>7</sup> Traditionally, the medieval archaeology of churches had been dominated by the study of individual constructions and approaches from the history of art and architecture oriented at establishing stylistic periodisations and typologies. However, as Juan Antonio Quirós Castillo points out, developments in the field of archaeology in recent years have enabled a shift away from viewing houses of worship as sites closed in on themselves to a perspective which situates them within broader frameworks, thus facilitating an understanding of their role in the processes of the configuration and transformation of the early medieval social landscape and the ways in which settlement took place.<sup>8</sup>

On the other hand, new contributions from archaeology have made it possible to question the thesis that emphasised the role of churches and monasteries as the cells of colonisation of uninhabited spaces and the seeds of medieval villages. Contrary to this interpretation, the data from archaeological studies points to greater continuity in the occupation of the territory in the eighth and ninth centuries, albeit within a new social and political framework. In this sense, rural archaeology has recognised

5 Martin Viso, Portass, and Santos Salazar, *Los “pequeños mundos”*. For an archaeological perspective, see Quirós Castillo, “An Archaeology of ‘Small Worlds’.” The concept of “small worlds” refers to the work of Davies, *Small Worlds*.

6 A collaborative work that reflects this development: Sánchez Pardo and Shapland, eds, *Churches and Social Power*.

7 On this subject, see Quirós Castillo, “Medieval Archaeology.”

8 Quirós Castillo, “Las iglesias altomedievales.”

the existence of a dense network of settlements in a variety of areas in the northwest of the Iberian Peninsula during the early Middle Ages.<sup>9</sup> These villages would predate the appearance of the associated churches and not the other way around: the churches emerged within the context of spaces that were already socially structured.<sup>10</sup>

Finally, consideration should be given to the contributions made over the last several decades in the study of church architecture through the perspective of social history. The proposal for a social reading of religious architecture, which combines the study of archaeological and epigraphic records with written sources, aims firstly to identify the historical subjects of the architectural process, attempting to situate the ecclesiastical foundations in their social context. At the same time, it proposes a social analysis of the productive processes, taking into account the materials and construction techniques used. Finally, attention is paid to the relationship between the resources and techniques employed and the functionality and purpose of the constructions. From this perspective, churches have been analysed with respect to settlement patterns, funerary practices, and territorial organisation in order to contribute to the social analysis of these buildings.<sup>11</sup>

## A range of social initiatives

In the region of León, written records from cathedral and monastic archives indicate the presence of local churches beginning in the late ninth century, when local societies were just starting to be integrated into the networks of higher powers – especially ecclesiastical institutions – associated with the Asturian monarchy. The studies focusing on the internal dynamics of local societies during this period have shown, however, that in the early medieval period there was a very active peasantry composed of groups of economically and socially differentiated domestic units, which

9 Vigil-Escalera Guirado, “El modelo de poblamiento”; Vigil-Escalera Guirado, “Early Medieval Landscapes”; Quirós Castillo and Vigil-Escalera Guirado, “Networks of Peasant Villages,” among others.

10 Quirós Castillo, “Las iglesias altomedievales,” p. 195. Working with written sources, Juan José Larrea arrives at the same conclusion: Larrea, “Construir iglesias,” p. 332.

11 Quirós Castillo and Fernández Mier, “Para una historia social.” See also Brogiolo, “Dall’Archeologia dell’architettura.” Studies from this perspective: Sánchez Pardo, de la Torre Llorca, and Fernández Ferreiro, “Élites, arquitectura y fundación de iglesias,” and Quirós Castillo, “Pertenecer y diferenciarse.”

formed communities defined not only by the proximity and access to certain resources, but also by the development of a complex network of relationships based on cooperation, exchange, and patronage.<sup>12</sup> Within this context, many local churches and monasteries – which were hard to differentiate from both a linguistic and practical standpoint<sup>13</sup> – emerged either as community initiatives, or as a product of the internal social differentiation of these communities, linked, as we will see, to individuals or groups recognised for their social function, for their control of greater and more diverse economic resources, and/or for belonging to broader socio-political networks.<sup>14</sup> In addition to these churches, which were the result of the initiative of rural communities, records also indicate the presence of churches and monasteries associated with small monastic communities, bishops and abbots acting in a personal capacity, and members of the aristocracy, as we will see below.<sup>15</sup>

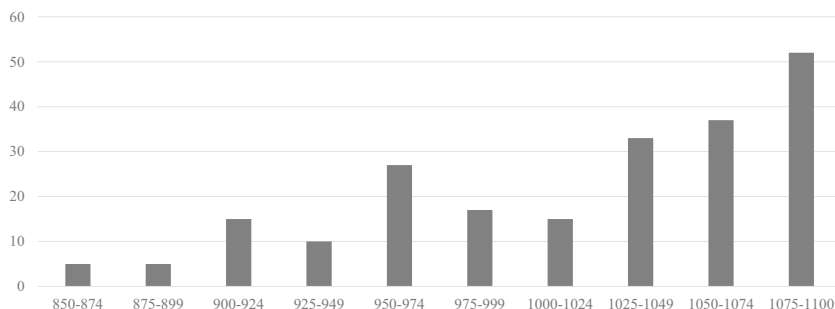
Given the nature of the documents preserved in monastic and cathedral archives, we generally know who was in control of the churches when they were alienated, usually to a larger ecclesiastical institution. This therefore generates a significant bias in the records, insofar as it is not possible to obtain a sampling that reflects which social actors actually controlled these places of worship, rather we know who used them in order to establish ties with lay and ecclesiastical powers on a supralocal or regional scale, and even with the monarchy. With this in mind, of the three thousand and more Leonese documents studied – from the collections of the León cathedral (1,309) and the Astorga cathedral (134), and the collections of the monasteries of Sahagún (1,064), Santa María de Otero de las Dueñas (306), San Pedro de Montes (107), San Pedro de Eslonza (73), San Martín de Castañeda (13), and San Isidoro de León (11) – 216 provide information on who controlled local churches between 850 and 1100. One point to consider is the steady rise in the number of

12 Davies, *Acts of Giving*; Godoy, “Los presbíteros locales”; Godoy, “Riqueza, circulación de bienes y élites rurales”; Martín Viso, “Unequal Small Worlds”; Carvajal Castro, “Collective Action.”

13 Loring, “Nobleza e iglesias propias,” pp. 90–93; Peña Bocos, “*Ecclesia y monasterium*,” pp. 380–381; Davies, *Acts of Giving*, pp. 47–48.

14 For other regions, see Quirós Castillo, “Iglesias altomedievales”; Quirós Castillo, “Pertener y diferenciarse”; Quirós Castillo and Santos, “Founding and Owning Churches.”

15 Loring García, “Nobleza e iglesias propias”; Martínez Sopena, “Aristocracia, monacato y reformas”; Pérez, “El control de lo sagrado”; Carvajal Castro and Narbarte Hernández, “Royal Power and Proprietary Churches”; Quirós Castillo and Santos, “Founding and Owning Churches,” among others. This diversity contrasts with the predominant role that bishops played in the construction of churches in the early Middle Ages prior to the disintegration of central powers in Galicia. See Sánchez Pardo, “Iglesias y dinámicas sociopolíticas.”



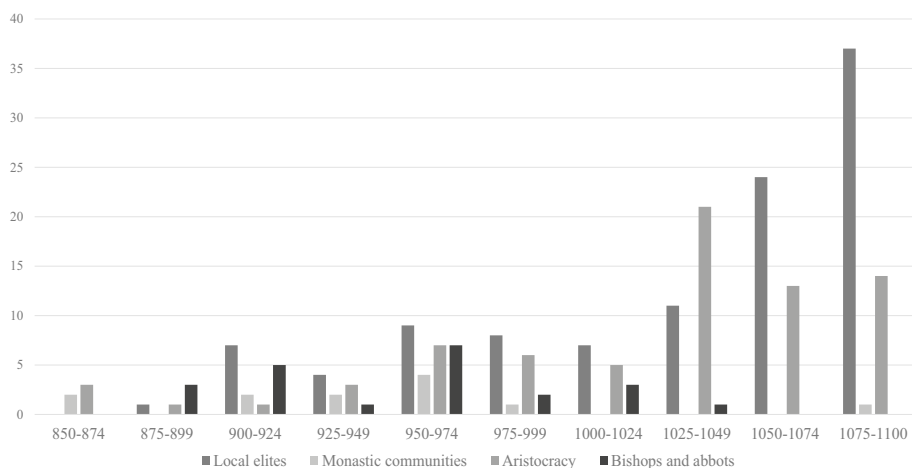
Graph 1. Number of transactions involving churches (850–1100)

transactions involving churches throughout the period, especially – and most significantly – in the second half of the eleventh century. The latter is not only due to an increase in the number of churches – reflected in the references to new constructions – but also to the strengthening of the policy of transferring proprietary churches to large monasteries and episcopal sees, which was promoted by the Gregorian Reform, as we will see below.<sup>16</sup>

The documented churches have been classified according to the various types of owners, with a distinction between four different categories: local elites, acting individually or collectively;<sup>17</sup> monastic or clerical communities, acting jointly; members of the high aristocracy, including the monarchy; and, finally, bishops and abbots of major monasteries acting in a personal capacity. Of these, the number of churches in the hands of local elites stands out (108), followed by those controlled by the aristocracies (74). In smaller numbers, there are churches that were handed over by bishops and abbots (22) and by monastic groups (12), mainly in the tenth century. This data is also subject to a documentary bias: it is lay people – and to a lesser extent, small religious communities – who hand over their churches to the monastic and episcopal centres that produce and preserve the records. However, on the other hand, while in the tenth century bishops and abbots were transferring churches outside their domain, in the eleventh century this situation is reversed, suggesting a change of attitude on the part of the ecclesiastical groups – especially the episcopate – with respect to their churches, which we will analyse in the following chapters.

16 See also García de Cortázar, *La construcción de la diócesis*, p. 51.

17 We exclude from this category the churches controlled by a priest or cleric along with their family group, which are included within the category of local elites.



Graph 2. Transactions involving churches sorted by original owners (850–1100)

The category of local elites is dominated by transfers made by individuals and families. There are only eleven references to churches explicitly tied to the community as a whole, which appear in the latter half of the eleventh century.<sup>18</sup> This does not mean that there were no actual “community” churches in the early Middle Ages. In fact, we have the example of San Martín de Villabáscones, in Castile, which was donated to Abbot Eneco by the local inhabitants between 945 and 950.<sup>19</sup> The documentary invisibility of these community churches in the early Middle Ages has been associated with the communal nature of these properties, which would have prevented their sale or individual transfer. It was not until the second half of the eleventh century, within the context of the reform and strengthening of the ecclesiastical institution, that these churches would begin to be placed under the control of cathedrals and monasteries, resulting in their “documentary disclosure.”<sup>20</sup>

We will analyse the characteristics of the churches of the local elites and the aristocracies below. The churches controlled by individual abbots and bishops will be addressed in the following chapters.

18 León 4, doc. 1110, 1057; León 4, doc. 1123, 1061; León 4, doc. 1134, 1065; León 4, doc. 1172, 1070; Sahagún 2, doc. 708, 1071; Sahagún 3, doc. 735, 1074; León 4, doc. 1197, 1076; León 4, doc. 1206, 1077; León 4, doc. 1216, 1080; León 4, doc. 1284, 1045; Sahagún 3, doc. 1055, 1100.

19 Fernández Flórez and Serna Serna, *El Becerro Gótico de Cardena*, doc. XLII, (945–950).

20 Quetglás Munar and Martín Viso, “*Cum consilio et assensu*,” pp. 145–187, 156–157. In general, for common property, see Martín Viso, “Los comunales en la meseta,” pp. 32–34. On the advancement of episcopal power over rural churches starting from the Gregorian Reform and its implications for the rural communities, see Pérez, “Clérigos rurales.”