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Medieval Archaeology in Spain

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CHAPTER 9

MEDIEVAL ARCHAEOLOGY IN SPAIN

By JUAN ANTONIO QUIRÓS CASTILLO

As in other countries in southern Europe, medieval archaeology in Spain is a young discipline. The predominance of prehistoric and Classical archaeology in academe has conditioned the study of medieval societies on the basis of the archaeological record. It is only in the last 30 years that medieval archaeology has undergone a significant quantitative and qualitative development. This paper presents a brief analysis of the discipline's historiography and of the main subjects studied, and considers the main challenges currently posed by the development of the subject.

INTRODUCTION

As in other parts of southern Europe, the archaeology of medieval societies in Spain is a discipline of very recent creation, despite the fact that its antecedents can be traced back to the 19th century. In spite of this, the discipline has undergone a spectacular development in the last few decades. As the field currently stands, there have never before been so many active archaeological projects or such systematic investigations of medieval sites. There is now an impressive number of published monographs and related studies. As discussed later in this paper, however, this explosion in professional interest and output contrasts with a negligible presence in academic institutions. This has led to the existence of several 'medieval archaeologies'; an absence of methodological and epistemological reflection can be observed, and the results obtained by archaeology have been marginalized in historical syntheses devoted to the medieval period.

This paper is not a summary of the recent academic results of medieval archaeology in Spain. A book on this topic has recently been published (Quirós Castillo and Bengoetxea 2006). The aim here is to provide a critical review of the state of the discipline from different points of view, as well as an overview of the different subjects dealt with in recent years. First, a brief analysis of the history of medieval archaeology in Spain is provided, followed by a consideration of the current situation. In conclusion, the paper will outline the challenges which will ideally be addressed in coming years.

HISTORIOGRAPHY OF MEDIEVAL ARCHAEOLOGY IN SPAIN

Despite the fact that the antecedents of medieval archaeology in Spain can be traced in various ways since the 19th century, it is only from the 1980s that medieval archaeology developed in modern terms. Various schools emerging in the previous century have had considerable influence on the discipline's construction. In general terms, three main lines of enquiry have influenced the formation of the discipline.

A first tendency or school is linked to the archaeological study of the Middle Ages, understood as the study of monumental material evidence. From the beginning of the 20th century, a monumentalist school which defined 'Visigothic', 'Mozarab' and 'Asturian architecture' linked the history of art with archaeology and developed around people like M Gómez Moreno. On the basis of such studies, several authors and their associated 'schools', from Spain (eg Puig i Cadafalch, Camps Cazorla, Palol) and other countries (particularly Germans like Schlunk and, subsequently, Hauschild) carried out intensive work on medieval structures, and established architectural and stylistic periods between the end of the Roman world and the Romanesque (Preromanic). This work involved dating buildings according to stylistic attributes defined in the absence of precise chronological indicators, thus creating a major corpus of monumental remains. The earliest studies (Gómez Moreno 1919) explored the singularity of what defined 'Hispanic' in Hispanic architecture under Byzantine influence, and the enduring nature of what was Roman. Some even denied the existence of a Visigothic style (Torres Balbás), while in the 1940s the existence of Visigothic art and architecture was defined (Schlunk) and took root in the succeeding decades. Following this scheme of styles, from the 1970s onwards, a 'Christian archaeology' was articulated which, from the end of the 1970s and practically up to the present, has organized national congresses, although on an irregular basis. 'Christian Archaeology' is dominated by a focus on remains of a monumental and mono-thematic nature.

Apart from this monumentalist approach, archaeological study of the Middle Ages developed throughout the 20th century from the point of view of 'Visigothic archaeology'. In Spain, as in other parts of Europe, the archaeological study of Germanic peoples underwent an early development via culture-historical approaches. It was during the 1930s, and the early years of Francoism in particular — when relations with Nazi Germany were more intense — when the development of an archaeology of the Goths was fomented in Spain. During the 1930s and 1940s, German authors like H Zeiss and W Reinhart and Spanish archaeologists were highly influenced by Nazi archaeology (Zeiss 1934). Among the latter, of particular significance is Julio Martínez Santa-Olalla who was one of the most important scholars of his day working on the Visigothic period. Excavations of important cemeteries like Castiltierra or Herrera del Pisuerga are attributable to Santa-Olalla (1933). Whereas these authors emphasized links between Spain's early history and Germanic peoples, other scholars were far removed from this philo-Germanic current, and re-emphasized the importance of the Classical, early Imperial substratum of the Visigothic world. In this vein, the works of J Supiot (who excavated the Espirdo-Veladiez cemetery) or those of C de Mergelina (who had already investigated

the Carpio de Tajo cemetery in the 1920s) are particularly worthy of mention. In the mid-1940s, at the end of the Second World War and following a certain distancing from the Francoist regime, philo-Germanic studies of an ethnic and migrationist nature gradually began to give way to new studies that reassessed the older stylistic approaches (Molinero Pérez 1948). The concept of Hispanic-Visigothic art was introduced as the result of a more conservative approach. This led to the development of new syntheses and allied studies that limited the presence of the 'Visigoths' to specific parts of the peninsula, depending on the distribution of cemeteries and artistic styles (Palol and Ripoll 1988), and thus, scholarly attention became focused on monumental remains.

A second area which has had a notable influence on the development of the discipline is the study of Andalusī material. Here, too, the most immediate precedents must be sought in the Romanticist antiquarian movement from the end of the 19th century. The first archaeological research carried out at complexes like Madīnat Elvira, Madīnat al-Zahrā' or Bobastro reveals unequivocal attention to material evidence of a monumental nature. Throughout the 20th century, in the context of the restoration of monuments, there were interventions in palatial complexes (like the Alhambra) and large and impressive sites (like the Cordoba mosque). In the 1930s, the al-Andalus journal began to publish Spanish archaeological material and provided the basis for systematic archaeological analysis of themes such as cities, cemeteries, architecture and prestigious ceramics. It is important to point out that it was precisely because of Andalusī archaeology that medieval archaeology was first incorporated into Spanish universities, with the creation in 1912 of the Chair of Andalusī Archaeology held by M Gómez Moreno.

A third influence on the creation of medieval archaeology was the activity carried out in the 1960s outside academic circles, mainly in museums. Exceptions were A Del Castillo and M Riu, who, under the auspices of the Chair of Medieval History of the University of Barcelona, were involved in major research on regional territorial archaeology. A number of individuals were prominent in this field (Zozaya, Rosselló, García Guinea, etc), which included areas of enquiry that had begun to be explored elsewhere in Europe (such as the excavation of deserted villages or the systematization of 'common' ceramics), although the interpretative frameworks used were determined by the dominant historiography of the time. Thus, in the 1970s, when historical archaeology was being consolidated as an academic discipline in Spain, only a few groups were working on the medieval period, and these were working, in the main, outside the university sector. This initial stage of the development of medieval archaeology in Spain perhaps ended with the appendix written by M Riu with the translation into Spanish of the *Manual of Medieval Archaeology. From Prospection to History* by Michel de Boüard (1977). In this text, Riu assembled an exhaustive bibliographic compilation of many works carried out to date in the field of archaeological research on the Spanish Middle Ages, classified according to subject matter. In the same year, the National Archaeology Congress included in its programme a session devoted exclusively to medieval archaeology. Also at that time, the French school, under the direction of Pierre Guichard (1976),

started its activities, and, from the Casa de Velázquez, would play a fundamental role in putting new energy into the discipline.

Only after the 1980s, however, was there a true explosion and development of medieval archaeology in Spain, which established the basis for the discipline as it currently stands. In 1980, the first meeting on a national level took place in Toledo, and the following year the second international congress on Medieval Ceramics in the Western Mediterranean was held in the same city. In 1983, the first congress on Spanish medieval archaeology was held in Huesca with the participation of over 400 scholars. This event resulted in the first syntheses of studies carried out up to 1983, providing regional reviews of the state of medieval archaeology across Spain at that time. The congress was organized by the Spanish Association of Medieval Archaeology, founded in 1982, which has promoted the publication of a journal (since 1986) and has organized a number of national congresses (Huesca 1983, Madrid 1987, Oviedo 1989, Alicante 1993, Valladolid 1999).

It was at the first conference in 1983 that the main approaches considered so far in this paper converged and that the real situation of the discipline could be gauged. Inertia in the development of theoretical frameworks initially led this convention to divide its sessions into ‘Visigothic Archaeology’, ‘Archaeology of the Christian Kingdoms’ and ‘Al-Andalus Archaeology’. This division, which more or less reflected former traditions, was only interrupted in the congresses held in the 1990s, although it has survived to a certain extent to the present. This situation ensures that it is still very common to find works and syntheses that conclude with the feudal invasion (11th–15th centuries) and which are limited to a dogmatic thematic framework. On the contrary, reflections that contemplate diachronic processes in all their complexity are less frequent.

Moreover, it must be pointed out that the Law on Spanish Historical Heritage was passed in 1985, which enabled the transfer of the management of heritage to regional governments, and created a new management model for archaeology. This development led to a major increase over the last 30 years in the number of archaeological interventions carried out within the framework of urban expansion and its infrastructure, which have mostly affected medieval and post-medieval archaeological contexts. This administrative framework has entailed the emergence of new players who participate in the management of archaeological heritage (for example, commercial archaeologists and local authority archaeologists).

Paradoxically, this exponential growth of archaeological activity on medieval sites did not bring with it a consolidation of the discipline or a reinforcement of methodological, conceptual or theoretical approaches. There are several reasons for this situation that nowadays influence Spanish medieval archaeology. In the first place, there has been no consolidation of Spanish medieval archaeology in the academic sphere. Indeed, it was from the 1980s onwards that staff numbers rose in universities in Spain but, due to the policy of those running Departments of Archaeology and Medieval History, as well as to the conceptual and methodological vacuum of medieval archaeology, the subject failed to benefit from this period of growth. At the present time, only 12 of the 74 universities in Spain have teachers with academic qualifications in medieval archaeology. Accordingly, the number of teachers

of medieval archaeology in Spain is very small (scarcely a dozen), and they are distributed in two areas. The greater numbers of teachers are based in Andalusia and the Mediterranean, with a few working in the Meseta region (except for Madrid) and in the north of Spain. This academic geography is and has been of significant importance in the development of the discipline. Current reforms of university studies, however, will entail in many cases the elimination of medieval archaeology as a degree course and its inclusion, where appropriate, in postgraduate courses.

In the face of an almost total absence of formal training and research programmes arranged by universities, the demand for experts to work in the field of management archaeology — which to a large extent concerns medieval sites — has been met by graduates in prehistory or Classical archaeology. The fracture between academe, the business world and local authorities is manifested in terms of operation, training and scientific approach. This disjointedness among the principal players has had a very negative effect on the development of the discipline, with the result that very few professional archaeological projects have resulted in publications or ended up being referenced in academic work.

Nor did the Spanish Association of Medieval Archaeology succeed in becoming, as in other countries like Britain or Italy, a polarizing element to solve the situation described above. Having failed to include university lecturers, CSIC (Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas) researchers, experts and administrators, the influence of the Spanish Association gradually decreased to a marginal presence after the 1990s. Furthermore, national congresses were not held on a regular basis and the resulting *Gazette* itself failed to include the most important works carried out in the discipline. Indeed, a congress devoted to the problems of medieval archaeology in Spain was held in Jaén in 1993, and it was then that the new review *Arqueología y Territorio Medieval* (Archaeology and Medieval Territory) published by the University of Jaén was conceived. Unlike the already-mentioned journal, this latter review has been published regularly and has managed, to a certain extent, to include the academic output generated by academe.

Due to its originality and significance, it is also worth mentioning the initiative carried out in Catalonia by the ACRAM (Catalan Association for Research on Medieval Archaeology). This association, made up only of commercial archaeological contractors, organizes congresses on medieval and post-medieval archaeology on a regular basis in Catalonia, and publishes the *Medieval Archaeology* journal, three issues of which have been published to date. It is important to point out that this activity is promoted and financed by the contractors themselves, and neither the universities nor research centres have managed to lead or promote a similar arena for voicing and exchanging ideas.

It should not surprise us that the first work of reference following the 1985 legislation was that written by M Barceló, under the provocative title *Arqueología Medieval. En las afueras del medievalismo* (*Medieval Archaeology. In the suburbs of medievalism*) (Barceló Perelló 1988). In this book, which the author defines as a 'methodological reflection', Barceló gives his full attention to theoretical and conceptual aspects relating to the growth of medieval archaeology, while paying only secondary attention to the discipline's methodological aspects. This book denounces

how archaeology is placed outside ‘medievalism’, the latter being understood as the academic dimension of medieval history, being relegated to a mere auxiliary function or for illustrating historical narratives. Barceló proposes a highly conceptual research programme, in which there is space for the use of archaeological and written record within the context of a specific interpretative framework.

Naturally, this kind of proposal gained supporters among the emerging field of medieval archaeology linked to medieval history, although it also gave rise to considerable antagonism within the discipline of medieval archaeology itself, which felt threatened by a reflection of this nature on the relationship between archaeology and medieval history. To date, the main syntheses and reflections on the role of medieval archaeology had been based essentially on subjects already touched on by medieval history, but without questioning basic aspects like the construction of the archaeological record. We thus arrive at the paradox where some historians called for a greater participation of archaeology in furthering knowledge of the Middle Ages (possibly to supply empirical data to fill gaps), but, at the same time, vacant positions for lecturers in medieval archaeology were not being filled.

The situation did not change much during the 1990s, at least in relation to the greater part of the historiography of medieval studies. The most recent syntheses of Spanish and general medieval history fail to mention even a single European or peninsular archaeological site. Medieval archaeology is evidently still considered by many historians solely as a source for illuminating specific aspects of daily life in medieval society.

Despite the fact that this is the standard outlook, it is also true that one cannot generalize completely. One cannot tackle the history of the Islamic presence in the Iberian Peninsula, for example, without recourse to archaeological studies, and soon it will not be possible to speak of the Late Middle Ages without making use of the numerous advances being made by archaeology. Many of these results have not yet been used in modern syntheses, but this will surely happen.

To support Barceló’s affirmations it must be pointed out that medieval archaeology has not only been left out of ‘medievalism’, but also remains on the fringe of archaeology. Although in recent years greater attention is being paid by universities and research centres to the medieval period, archaeologists are still in the minority.

MEDIEVAL ARCHAEOLOGY IN THE PRESENT

As discussed above, it is only in the last 25 years that medieval archaeology has been systematically developed in Spain (Figure 9.1). A bibliometric analysis of the main publications over this period helps us to understand the evolution of the discipline and the changing nature of the different subjects with which the discipline has been concerned (Figure 9.2).

During the second half of the 1980s, when the basis of medieval archaeology as currently practised was laid, considerable work was done on the creation of chronological and analytical methods and frameworks (the study of ceramics in particular underwent major development); while, at the same time, new areas of research were



FIGURE 9.1. Main sites mentioned in the text.

explored, such as the study of irrigated cultivation systems, the organization of rural space, castles and cemeteries. It was probably the study of the Late Middle Ages that underwent the most thorough renewal in this period, with critical review of monumental constructions, such as churches, as well as in the analysis of ceramics of the Visigothic period.

Since the 1990s, however, there has been a significant growth in archaeological engagement with medieval material, taking in very different subjects and contexts. Although settlement and territorial studies, based on prospection and the gathering of data from archaeological interventions, have been at the core of new developments in terms of quantity and quality, there has also been a great increase in work carried out in the context of monumental restoration and urban archaeology. Thanks to these developments the discipline as a whole has undergone a profound renewal, while one of the subjects that has developed most in these years is urban archaeology (Figure 9.3). Excavations carried out in 'living cities' (notably Mérida, Valencia, Zaragoza, Toledo, Córdoba, Barcelona, Tarragona, Cartagena, San Martí de Ampurias,

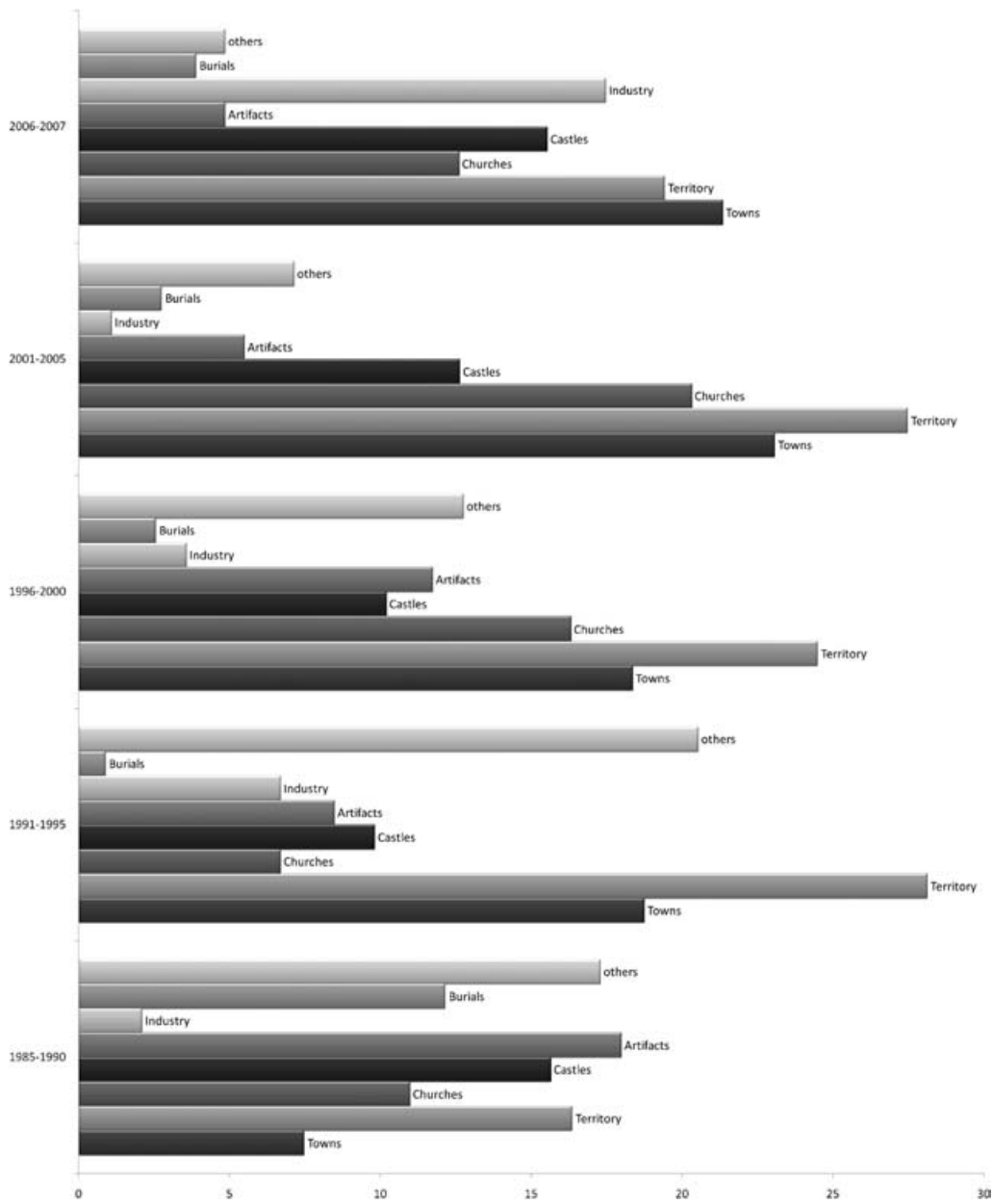


FIGURE 9.2. Bibliometric analysis of medieval archaeology in Spain 1985–2007. (From *Arqueología y Territorio Medieval*; *Boletín de Arqueología Medieval*; *Arqueología Medieval. Revista Catalana d'Arqueologia Medieval*; *Congresos de Arqueología Medieval Española*; *Congresos d'Arqueologia Medieval i Moderna a Catalunya*)



FIGURE 9.3. Episcopal area of the city of Valencia in early medieval period.

Granada, Denia and León) as well as in deserted villages (such as Recópolis and Tolmo de Minateda) have revealed the deep transformations experienced by urban centres in the Early Middle Ages and the bases upon which renewal or the development of a new urban network occurred at the end of this period. As in other European countries, including Britain, it has not been possible to process or synthesize into narrative accounts even a tiny proportion of the number of interventions carried out, largely due to the failure of heritage management models to deal with such a large number of archaeological investigations.

In conceptual terms, debate about the urban phenomenon in the Early Middle Ages has depended on external traditions, based for example on Italian models, where cities of the early medieval period (5th–10th centuries) have been analyzed using paradigms created by recent history using written documents. Indeed, this is one of our discipline's pending matters: the historical exploitability of urban archaeology (Díaz Martínez 2000).

Likewise, during the 1980s and 1990s, the first excavation works were carried out in rural settlements (for example at Cerro Peñaflo, El Cañal de Pelayos, El Bovalar, Navalvillar and Vilaclara de Castellfollit), although based on approaches far different from those applied to deserted villages elsewhere in Europe (Figure 9.4). Indeed, the archaeology of rural spaces has given priority to extensive rather than intensive studies, which has frequently raised plausible interpretative proposals compatible with a limited knowledge of rural medieval settings. Rural studies also

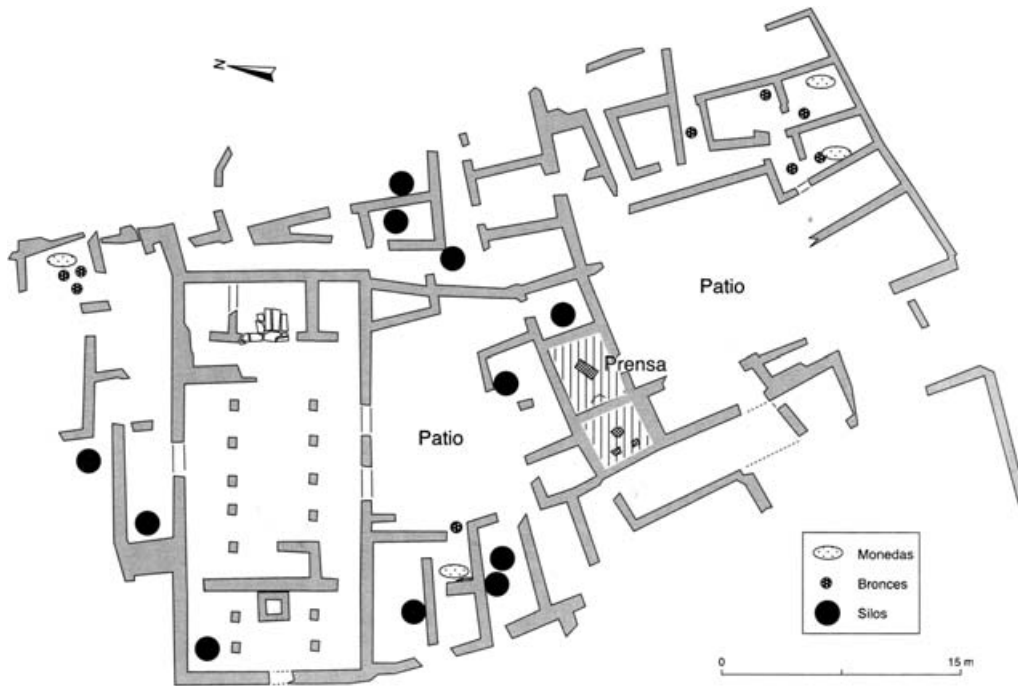


FIGURE 9.4. Plan of the village of Bovalar (Lleida).

engaged with varying historiographical traditions. To give just one example, during the 1990s, a series of doctoral theses of a micro-territorial or sub-regional nature were carried out in the north of the peninsula which, for the first time, aimed to integrate material records in the interpretation of medieval landscapes (Escalona Monge 2002; Fernández Mier 1999; García Camino 2002). The limited quality of available records and the initial historiographical approaches used led to conflicting interpretations of the same territories (eg in Castile).

The 1990s likewise saw a rise in the number of interventions concerned with churches and monumental complexes in the context of restoration work. A qualitatively significant contribution was the introduction and development of the so-called 'Architectural Archaeology' (Caballero Zoreda and Escribano Velasco 1996) under the strong influence of Italian archaeology (Figure 9.5). Stratigraphic readings of architectural fabrics enabled methodologically rigorous analyses of buildings which facilitated refinements of chronology (in the study of early medieval ecclesiastical architecture) as well as encouraging research in neglected regions (for example, Barcelona and Álava).

The archaeology of castles, which had been relatively more important in the 1980s, did not succeed in generating an archaeology of *incastellamento* or of territorial powers, but frequently ended up being limited to an archaeology of monuments, with specific exceptions (for example, the case of the Kingdom of León).

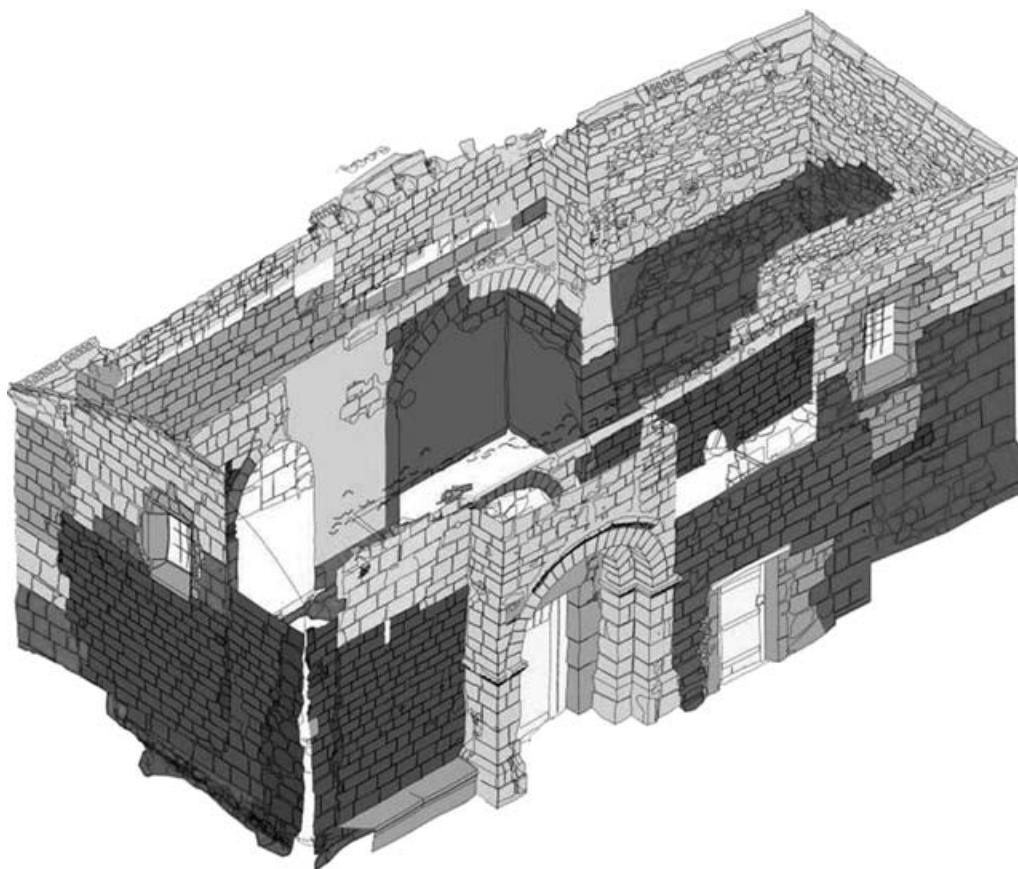


FIGURE 9.5. Stratigraphic analysis of San Roman of Tobillas church (Álava).

There is no doubt, however, that it was Andalusí archaeology which underwent the most significant development during the 1990s, as can be appreciated by its unquestionable presence in congresses and scientific meetings and its gradual incorporation into university teaching. This renewal of studies was articulated around two main issues: broadening the chronological scope (paying special attention to the emiral and caliphal period), and widening thematic scope. If the focus during the 1970s and 1980s was exclusively on monuments, decorated ceramics, epigraphy and numismatics, other aspects such as deserted villages or the material culture of these periods being unknown, from then on, the situation was to change thanks to the dating of the first emiral ceramic finds from the south and south-east of al-Andalus. Using these materials, archaeology contributed decisively to the re-conceptualizing of Islamic societies and to the study of complex phenomena such as the shaping process of Islamic social training or to the explanation of Andalusí landscapes (ie Acién Almansa 1994). Progress made on material culture (for example, in the south-east), rural deserted villages (like Cerro Miguelico), hydraulic networks (especially in

the Balearic islands), monumental complexes (like Madinat al-Zahra': Vallejo Triano 2004) and Andalusí territorial structure by French and Spanish authors has helped us to identify the structure of Andalusí rural settlement, of the *husun* or *castillo*, as well as the role of the state and tribal groups in the shaping of the landscape. The most important territorial studies, some of which were carried out as doctoral theses (for example, by J C Castillo, S Gutiérrez and A Gómez), took in, above all, Andalusian, Levantine and Balearic regions (Bazzana 1992; Bazzana, Cressier and Guichard 1988; García Porras 2001; Gómez Becerra 1998; Gutiérrez Lloret 1996; Malpica Cuello 2003). Other archaeological records, such as ceramic, numismatic, architectonic and decorative materials, were systematized in a parallel fashion. Andalusí cities perhaps provoked the least theorizing in the 1990s, despite the fact that many historic centres were intensively excavated in advance of architectural restoration.

The importance of the research carried out in the late medieval and Islamic world in these territories was considerable, with the result of many European scholars showing an interest in their findings, and solid relations were forged with other archaeological traditions like the French tradition, through the *Castrum* congresses, or the Italian tradition, through the Hispano-Italian congresses on medieval archaeology.

With the advent of the new millennium many of the tendencies documented in the previous decade were maintained, although new developments have been made. The classification of ceramics and the creation of standard archaeological indicators (Gerrard *et al* 1995), although still few in quantity, are now available for periods like the Late Middle Ages (13th–15th centuries), although primary study of certain categories of archaeological materials is still required. Regional studies are still important, although the need is evident to go beyond such broadly based approaches and carry out extensive excavation projects. The importance of urban archaeology is growing in terms of the communication of discoveries, which are not always accompanied by an archaeological conceptualization of the city. Monumental archaeological remains are now governed by very elaborate protocols with regard to archaeological intervention, mainly due to the growth of architectural archaeology and widespread restoration of monuments (Caballero Zoreda and Mateos Cruz 2000).

A new phenomena in recent years is the development of the serious archaeological study of the medieval peasantry through open area excavation of rural sites. This development has allowed archaeologists to overcome the division between archaeology of dwellings and that of agricultural landscapes (Figure 9.6). In the case of the Madrid region such work has produced startling results, revealing early medieval settlements and their associated landscapes on a scale not previously realized (Quirós Castillo and Vigil-Escalera Guirado 2006). The study of processes like the demise of Roman towns or *villae* (Chavarria Arnau 2007), the creation of early medieval networks of villages or the organization of Andalusí and the nature of early medieval territories provide major avenues for research in this field.

The archaeology of fortifications is likewise another subject undergoing a significant growth (Barceló Perelló and Toubert 1998). Leaving behind the more monumental and descriptive traditions, recent years have seen an increase in studies which analyze such architecture in social terms (Gutiérrez González 1995; 2006),



FIGURE 9.6. Early medieval village of Zaballa (Álava), 6th–12th centuries.

following the lead established in the previous decade (for example, at Peñaferruz). Within this framework, Andalusí as well as feudal fortifications take on a new meaning as centres for territorial articulation.

The wide acceptance of architectural archaeology has allowed a broadening of subject matter (archaeology of building techniques; archaeology as applied to restoration) and the formation of consolidated research groups whose work can be found in the new journal, *Arqueología de la Arquitectura*, in which the majority of modern studies of medieval buildings are now published.

Two spheres in which important contributions are now being made are cities and funerary rituals. While the management of the findings of urban archaeology is still a matter pending for all of European archaeology, in recent years some significant steps have been taken in Spain, and, indeed, specialists in al-Andalus are actively re-addressing the role and significance of cities in Islamic social formations. Recent interventions in Saqunda (Cordoba) and Vega Baja (Toledo) have clearly evidenced the kind of conflicts that this type of intervention generates in terms of heritage management.

Lastly, with regard to the study of cemeteries and other kinds of burial sites, progress is being made to move beyond the historical approaches that limited the interpretation of burials exhibiting certain rituals or containing certain grave goods as indisputably 'Visigothic'. This is perhaps one of the clearest cases where the absence of explicit methodological and theoretical frameworks ensures the continued

use of categories and concepts that are quite obsolete (Ripoll López 1998; Azkarate Garai-Olaun 2002).

More recently, significant steps have been taken to engage a wider public with the creation of museums, archaeological parks and exhibition projects. In fact, medieval archaeology has become a powerful tool for creating local and cultural identities. It nevertheless remains the case that most interpretations neglect to include evidence drawn from medieval archaeology, with the exception of the occasional image or illustration.

CHALLENGES POSED

To conclude, it is useful to draw attention to certain of the main challenges facing medieval archaeology in the coming years. In the first place, there is an urgent need for interventions giving priority to creating high-quality field records. Over the last few decades, extensive archaeological fieldwork has revealed a series of important sites upon which the main paradigms have been built. Yet, excavations are largely concerned with small areas and, of the materials recovered, the study of ceramics (Caballero Zoreda *et al* 2003) and structures far outweighs the emphasis placed upon bioarchaeological remains and archaeometric approaches. It is therefore necessary to re-orient research priorities, particularly in problematic areas such as urban archaeology, and to place a greater stress on the importance of generating qualitatively superior records, with a fuller appreciation and application of environmental archaeology and archaeological science more broadly. This latter aspect forms the second major challenge confronting medieval archaeology in Spain. The lack of specialist laboratories and sampling strategies makes it currently difficult to achieve these objectives.

A third challenge for the coming years is to develop an integrated medieval archaeology in Spain. Much activity is carried out within the framework of so-called professional or commercial archaeology and, in quantitative terms, is still mainly undertaken independently from academic and other research centres. This unnecessary division between both spheres can be overcome by integrating professional activities in academic work and by the collaboration, but not supplantation, of university teams in the management of heritage.

Making the results of archaeological fieldwork available to a wider public is yet another current problem. Very few archaeological interventions result in publications and the scarcity of editorial initiatives in Spain devoted to medieval archaeology is partly to blame. Basic priorities are the use of digital resources, publication by the different authorities of reports and papers on excavations on the internet and the creation of high-quality monograph series (such as the French series *Documents d'Archéologie Française*) which outline the findings of the excavations.

Equally important is the attainment of a more academically integrated approach to medieval archaeology. In fact, this is perhaps the most complex challenge to be tackled. The impermeability of academic institutions, the situation of the discipline in the universities throughout Spain and the process of integration into the EHEA (European Higher Education Area) does not appear to augur a very bright future for

these aspirations. Will there be a day when medieval archaeology is no longer in the suburbs of 'medievalism' or in the suburbs of archaeology?

Finally, it is particularly important that the discipline moves forward in terms of theoretical and methodological reflection. Medieval archaeology in Spain, as in many other parts of Europe, is frequently practised without explicit theoretical and conceptual approaches, with the result that it does not generate new models or paradigms, but continues to follow those formulated by historians or other related traditions. Indeed, the methodological and conceptual dependence of Spanish medieval archaeology at the beginning on the French tradition, and then upon the Italian, has been and still is considerable. It is necessary now to foster debate and to bring about frameworks to build a conceptually robust discipline (Malpica Cuello 1993).

However, all these above-mentioned challenges are not intended to detract from the fact that the growth and maturing of medieval archaeology in Spain has been extraordinary in recent years; within a few years, no serious scholar of the medieval period will be able to neglect material records in writing the history of the Spanish Middle Ages.

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BIBLIOGRAPHIC NOTE

The most important review published in Spain dedicated to medieval archaeology is *Arqueología y Territorio Medieval* published by the University of Jaén. Likewise, worthy of mention is the review *Arqueología Medieval* published in Barcelona by the ACRAM and the *Boletín de Arqueología Medieval*, which has resumed publication. The only conference devoted to late medieval archaeology held on an irregular basis is the 'Visigodos y Omeyas' (Visigoths and Omeyas), in Mérida. There are no editorial series expressly devoted to medieval archaeology in Spain.

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