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The case of the Bierzo region

THE MEMORY OF THE 'HOLY MEN' IN HISPANIC MONASTICISM: THE CASE OF THE BIERZO REGION

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ABSTRACT

This article analyses the use of the memory of the "holy men" through the study of monasticism in the Bierzo region. The 7th-century cases of Fructuosus and Valerius are examined, along with the use of these two Visigoth "holy men" in the monastic restoration undertaken by Gennadius at the end of the 9th and beginning of the 10th centuries. Lastly, the use of this memory in the Tumbo Viejo of San Pedro de Montes is dealt with, as is the substitution of the "holy men" by the kings as the legitimating reference in the mid 12th century. This social memory played an important role in the struggle for social prestige in a setting marked by the multiplicity of Christian models, understood as *microchristendoms*.[1]

KEY WORDS

Memory, Monasticism, Microchristendoms, Holy Man.

CAPITALIA VERBA

Memoria, Monachorum condicio, Regulae Christianae singulares, Homo sanctus.

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Cualquiera sabe que la fantasía se inspira en la realidad,
pero la ley de la ficción exige que sólo se cuente una parte de la verdad
(Kirmen Uribe, Bilbao-New York-Bilbao)

1. The concepts: social memory and micro-Christianity

In his lovely recent book, Kirmen Uribe plays with reality and fiction through the memory, presenting the experiences of three generations of a family. The quote taken from his work very eloquently expresses how reality and fantasy interrelate. In this sense, the memory can also be understood as a tale that mixes real experiences and a certain dose de invention. The studies into the social memory have shown the important role played by the creation of this memory to justify the action of certain groups or legitimise interests. In some way, it can be stated that there is a clear search for control over the past to sustain the domain of the present and project it into the future. Thus, it is no surprise that in recent years the memory has become a scenario for confrontation that goes beyond a mere scientific dispute to the directly political.[2]

A noteworthy aspect is that memory, while configured by each individual, is moulded socially. As Halbacws stated, it is the social groups, who create this memory through certain mechanisms and include it into their cultural and historical coordinates. This is a social memory that exists and distorts the data and the present in an imprecise way forma. It is an operation in which the important is not the strict abidance to what happened, but more a social perspective to remember in a setting marked by the social and the political.[3] As Enzo Traverso has stated: "The memory (...) structures the social identities, inscribing them into a historical continuity and endowing them with sense, that is, a content and a direction".[4] Thus, it should not be confused with memory with a supposedly reliable representation of the past, that is, historiography understood as knowledge of history. This is really a cultural construction that seeks to give a meaning to the past, a meaning linked to the present and its justification and legitimation. It can be said that the social memory is the process that lets society recognise and reform its understanding of the past with the purpose of integrating it into its current identity.[5] Moreover, the processes of transmitting the social memory are presented to us in terms in uninterrupted

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2. A good example of this is the memory of the Jewish Holocaust, with the forming of a narrative that dispenses with the innumerable nuances or the historically proven fact that this memory only began to take form from the 1970s on. See the analysis of the case of the North-American Jews and the building of the Holocaust memorial in: Novick, Peter. *Judíos, ¿vergüenza o victimismo? El Holocausto en la vida americana*. Madrid: Marcial Pons, 2007.

3. Fentress, James; Wickham, Chris. *Memoria social*. Valencia: Universidad de Valencia, 2003: 16.

4. Traverso, Enzo. *El pasado, instrucciones de uso. Historia, memoria, política*. Madrid: Marcial Pons, 2007: 16.

5. Geary, Patrick J. "Memoria", *Diccionario razonado del Occidente medieval*, Jacques Le Goff, Jean-Claude Schmitt, eds. Madrid: Akal, 2003: 527-536.

continuity, when each generation really receives these memories it modifies them consciously or unconsciously.[6] Observing and studying these modifications turns the memory into a historical object, which changes with time.

The studies into the medieval world have echoed this growing interest in such a transcendental subject. A recent balance referring specifically to German historiography highlighted the importance of this argument. The works by Wollasch, Schmid and more recently, Otto Gerhard Oexle have shown us better how the memory works. Especially the latter has emphasised that memory should be understood as culture, with specific forms over time, linked to the presence of the dead in medieval society, which was understood by their peers as a community of the living and the dead, who in some ways coexisted.[7] The Hispanic field has been no stranger to these concerns as shown by some recent contributions.[8]

A particular aspect is the ecclesiastical memory, referring to a key institution in the medieval period. Its central role in the cultural system is evident, generating a vocabulary that impregnated the social, economic and political reality, with hegemonic designs. These circumstances enabled the clergy to become the medieval specialist of the memory, both through the liturgical commemoration of the dead and through the construction of discourses about the past.[9] In this atmosphere, the use of the past was constant, as shown by the famous invention of the "Donation of Constantine". Here it is worth emphasising a partial aspect of the ecclesiastical memory: its standardising vision of the past. The Church's official memory raises the existence of a line of unchanged orthodox continuity that links Jesus and Saint Peter to the Roman chair. As a result of this, the enormous diversity that ancient and early medieval Christianity boasted is not taken into account.

However, this diversity continued into the Early Middle Ages and a certain degree of integration of Latin Christianity was not achieved until the 12th century. Peter Brown[10] has focussed attention on this enormous diversity that favoured the creation of what he calls regional *microchristendoms*, adjacent, but different and poorly linked. The absence of regular interregional contacts meant that the ecumenical

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6. Fentress, James; Wickham, Chris. *Memoria social...*: 231.

7. Borgolte, Michael. "'Memoria'. Bilan intermédiaire d'un Project de recherche sur le Moyen Âge", *Les tendances actuelles de l'histoire du Moyen Âge en France et en Allemagne*, Jean-Claude Schmitt, Otto Gerhard Oexle, dirs. Paris: Publications de la Sorbonne, 2003: 53-69. See also the works in: *The Uses of the Past in the Early Middle Ages*, Yitzhak Hen, Matthew Innes, eds. Cambridge (UK): Cambridge University Press, 2000.

8. Without being exhaustive, see: Isla, Amancio. *Memoria, culto y monarquía hispánica entre los siglos X y XII*. Jaén: Universidad de Jaén, 2006. *Memoria, mito y realidad en la Historia Medieval*, José Ignacio de la Iglesia, coord. Logroño: Instituto de Estudios Riojanos, 2003; *Memoria e historia. Utilización política en la Corona de Castilla al final de la Edad Media*, Jon Andoni Fernández, José Ramón Díaz, eds. Madrid: Sílex, 2010; Sabaté, Flocel. "La construcción ideológica del nacimiento unitario de Cataluña", *Castilla y el mundo feudal*, Mª Isabel del Val, Pascual Martínez, Julio Valdeón, dirs. Valladolid: Junta de Castilla y León, 2009: I, 91-110.

9. Henriet, Patrick. "L'espace et le temps hispaniques vus et construits par les clercs (IXe-XIIIe siècle)", *A la recherche des légitimités chrétiennes. Représentations de l'espace et du temps dans l'Espagne médiévale (IXe-XIIIe siècle)*, Patrick Henriet, dir. Lyon: ENS Éditions -Casa de Velázquez, 2003: 81-127.

10. Brown, Peter. *El primer milenio de la cristiandad occidental*. Barcelona: Crítica, 1997: 189-190.

atmosphere, that had been fundamental in the late Roman epoch, gave way to a much more regionalised organisation. These microchristendoms believed that they held, albeit in miniature, the essence of a whole Christian culture, including its own traditions. These were small religious constellations, much of them shaped from the activity of "holy men"[11] and the monasteries they founded, which conserved their memory, that worked as christendoms in miniature, with a high level of autonomy, based on the local prestige of these "holy men". Their coherence derived from the existence of a series of social, cultural and religious references shared by groups that were perfectly integrated into en networks for transmitting their own information, but, in contrast, poorly linked to other similar networks. This was the case, for example of the foundations of Irish monks on the continent or, beyond the Frankish frontiers, the action of various Anglo-Saxon kings. These christendoms in miniature were normally run according to their own rules and included a wide network of patronage with a solid local or regional base.[12]

The coexistence between these microchristendoms was not always easy, as conflicts arose through the existence of different traditions, as happened in Anglo-Saxon England, solved in the synod of Whitby. These controversies could include the use of the "true" Roman traditions, that served to give greater authenticity to the microchristendoms thus established, that were considered peripheral to other groups, whose traditions were delegitimised. This is what happened in Wilfred's case, but also with Saint Winifred in the case of the Rhineland areas under Frankish domain.[13] This situation was altered in the case of the Carolingian period by the policy of *correctio*, which sought religious unification around a set of traditions considered correct.[14] The relative success of this undertaking in the Frankish areas did not prevent these from surviving in important areas of western Europe outside this situation, such as Anglo-Saxon England, where the Norman conquerors in 1066 found a whole set of Christian traditions they considered erroneous.[15]

The Iberian Peninsula was not outside this situation. The Visigothic Church had been barely linked to Rome, and with its own traditions. This isolation grew with the Muslim conquest and possibly the intervention of Charlemagne in the Adoptionist controversy should be seen as a ploy to discredit this microchristendom, whose body of traditions nevertheless survived until the 12th century.[16] At the same time,

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11. For this figure, the basic work is still Peter Brown: Brown, Peter. "The Rise and Function of the Holy Man in Late Antiquity". *Journal of Roman Studies*, 61 (1971): 80-101.

12. The concept of microchristendom has been used successfully by: Innes, Mathew. *Introduction to Early Medieval Western Europe, 300-900. The Sword, the Plough and the Book*. London: Routledge, 2007: 456-480.

13. Brown, Peter. *El primer milenio de la cristiandad...*: 193.

14. de Jong, Mayke. "Charlemagne's Church", *Charlemagne. Empire and Society*, Joanna Story, ed. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005: 103-135.

15. Bartlett, Robert. *La formación de Europa. Conquista, colonización y cambio cultural, 950-1350*. Valencia: Universidad de Valencia, 2003: 357-358.

16. See: Deswarte, Thomas. *Une Chrétienté romaine sans pape. L'Espagne et Rome (586-1085)*. Paris: Classiques Garnier, 2010.

the above-mentioned controversy marked a turning point after which the Christian powers in the north felt decoupled from the Mozarabic authorities, generating their own organisational frameworks.[17] Thus microchristendoms arose, which, in the case of the Asturian monarchy, had the *inventio* of the tomb of Santiago as its principal resource. However, if we descend to a more local scale, we discover that in the Visigothic period there were numerous traditions that can be identified with microchristendoms, as happens with the extreme diversity of monastic rules or the presence of "holy men", such as Saint Millan or Saint Fructuosus, who fathered their own bodies of traditions with specific socio-cultural references. The lack of really effective ecclesiastic frameworks after the Muslim conquest and the disarticulation of the Visigothic kingdom encouraged this heterogeneity.[18] The persistence of some Christian enclaves with their own traditions, for example, in the area of La Rioja or around Sepúlveda,[19] illustrate this reality, which was complemented by the existence of a host of small monasteries, protected by local patrons.

Under these circumstances, the different microchristendoms created their own memories to legitimise themselves as depositories of an authentic Christianity. As a corollary, the rest of the traditions were regarded as inferior. The study of these memories over time is the subject of this work and, to this aim a region in northwest Spain, the Bierzo, was selected. In the north-western corner of the modern province of León, this is a district in the Miño basin, with a long monastic and hermit tradition in the post-Roman and Early medieval centuries, whose imprint has been transmitted in writing. These circumstances make it an extraordinarily useful scenario for understanding how these memories were formed and what they were used for in a chronological scope wide enough to show the transformations.

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17. The best study in this sense is still the one by Amancio Isla: Isla, Amancio. "El adopcionismo y las evoluciones religiosas y políticas en el reino astur". *Hispania*, 200 (1998): 971-993. There is a recent analysis in Thomas Deswarte: Deswarte, Thomas. "Une minorité chrétienne en Occident à la fin du huitième siècle. La Chrétienté hispanique et l'adoptionisme", *Minorités et regulations sociales en Méditerranée médievale*, Stéphane Boissellier, François Clément, John V. Tolan, eds. Rennes: Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2010: 251-268.

18. An overview can be found in: Fernández, Francisco Javier. *La religiosidad medieval en España. Alta Edad Media (siglos VII-X)*. Gijón: Trea, 2008. This work can be complemented with more closely focussed on the institutional aspects and the links with political power, and centred on the case of the northwest of the Iberian Peninsula in: de Ayala, Carlos. *Sacerdocio y reino en la España altomedieval. Iglesia y poder político en el Occidente peninsular, siglos VII-XII*. Madrid: Sílex, 2008.

19. See respectively: Larrea, Juan José. "Obispos efímeros, comunidades y homicidio en la Rioja Alta en los siglos X y XI". *Brocar*, 31 (2007): 171-199 and Martín, Iñaki. "Repoblaciones, territorios. Iglesias y santos: los valles del Duratón y del Riaza (siglos X-XII)". *Biblioteca. Estudio e Investigación*, 23 (2008): 265-292.

2. The "holy man" and his heir: Fructuosus in the work of Valerius of *El Bierzo*

At the start of this narrative about memory there is Fructuosus, who was a subject of memory throughout the period under study. We know that Fructuosus lived in the mid-7th century and since then had enormous prestige. His origins are among most important aristocratic families of the Visigothic kingdom —his father is mentioned as *dux*—, although from an early age he focussed on religion. His activity was very varied. He was a hermit, the founder of monasteries and creator of rules and the bishop who sat on the seat of one of the metropolitan sees of the Visigothic kingdom, in *Bracara* (Braga), as well as having close links to royal power. Thus, he is commemorated as one of these "holy men" typical of the late Antiquity, people with a special charisma that turned them into vehicles for social action and that were quickly commemorated. A habitual formula to set and maintain the memory of the "holy men" is hagiography, a type of literary text, with its own rules, that praises the person's virtues and focuses on him as a model for believers to follow.[20] As a literary text, it does not aim to reconstruct the character as accurately as possible, but rather present him with his virtues as a model of saint, using some resources or *topoi* to this end, such as relating the person with divine intervention in favour of the "holy man".[21]

Fructuosus was the subject of one of these hagiographies, the *Vita Fructuosi*.[22] I do not aim to analyse this work in detail, as it is already well known among philologists and historians. I only wish to highlight some specific aspects. *Vita Fructuosi* is divided into two compact blocks. The first of these covers chapters 1 to 7 and 17 to 20 and can be defined as a typical hagiography, and which narrates Fructuosus' viscitudes in the north west of the Iberian Peninsula. The other block, made up of chapters 9 to 15 (chapters 8 and 16 are transitions between the two blocks), relates a series of miraculous events, situated in the south west of the Spain. This double redaction must have been merged into a single text at the end of the 7th century.[23] The authorship of the text is not perfectly defined, although since the studies by Manuel C. Díaz y Díaz, the hypothesis of Valerius has been rejected.[24] It seems that a disciple of Fructuosus, by the name of Teodisclo, who could have been the bishop

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20. As Castellanos, Santiago. *La hagiografía visigoda. Dominio social y proyección cultural*. Logroño: Fundación San Millán de la Cogolla, 2004: 14-16, accurately indicates, the hagiographic text has a large dose of ideological projection.

21. There is an analysis of the Visigothic hagiographic genre in: Velázquez, Isabel. *Hagiografía y culto a los santos en la Hispania visigoda: aproximación a sus manifestaciones literarias*. Mérida: Museo Nacional de Arte Romano, 2005.

22. *La Vida de San Fructuoso de Braga. Estudio y edición crítica*, ed. Manuel Cecilio Díaz. Braga: Empresa do Diário do Minho, 1974.

23. Codoñer, Carmen. "Sobre la *'Vita Fructuosi', Athlon*. Madrid: Gredos, 1987: II, 183-190.

24. Díaz, Manuel C. "A propósito de la *Vita Fructuosi* (Biblioteca Hagiographica Latina, 3194)". *Cuadernos de Estudios Gallegos*, 8 (1953): 155-178. See also the introductory study to his edition of *Vita Fructuosi* cited in the previous note.

of Lamego, may have been the redactor or promoter of at least part of the text, with propagandistic aims against the monastery-bishopric of Dumio.

This text emphasises two aspects of the figure of Fructuosus: his condition as a hermit, who seeks the desert, following the model of the Egyptian and Syrian fathers, and his activity as a founder of monasteries, to which he gave (as we know from other sources) rules for their organisation, distancing them from other laxer but also more common models. This latter facet is very important, as Fructuosus seems to have been responsible for a kind of *correctio* against the manifestations of other Christian traditions. The *regula communis*, possibly inspired in him, aimed to channel these formulas considered incorrect and practiced in family monasteries. These rules were aimed at framing more firmly those monasteries that were possibly on a lower level than those that were run by Fructuosus' own rules.[25] However, in Fructuosus' espiscopal activity hardly merits mention in *Vita Fructuosi* and only at certain episodes does it shed light on Fructuosus's proximity to political power.[26] In this effort to create a memory of Fructuosus, very shortly after his death, attention is focussed on the saint's experience as a hermit as inspiring the creation of monasteries that would work as Christian microcosms.[27]

Within this monastic activity, El Bierzo was a privileged scenario. Resident in the region or at least knowledgeable about it through his father's work,[28] Fructuosus founded the first of his monasteries, Compludo,[29] using his own patrimony for this.[30] Longing to lead a hermit's life, he left Compludo and founded the *rufianense* monastery, that is identified with San Pedro de Montes, but the people sought hi out and forced him to return to Compludo[31], in which we should see hagiographic *topos*: the saint mobilised the masses and they forced him away from his desire to be a hermit and continue activity closer to the communities.[32] Thus, Fructuosus' activity contained in his hagiography refers fundamentally to him as a founder of monasteries, with a spirit of hermit that he was unable to satisfy fully.

The construction of this "official" memory did not lead to the disappearance of other memories about Fructuosus. This is shown by the works of Valerius of El Bierzo, who lived in the area in the second half of the 7th century. He wrote a hagiographic

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25. Díaz, Pablo C. "Monasteries in a Peripheral Area: Seventh-Century *Gallaecia*", *Topographies of Power in the Early Middle Ages*, Mayke de Jong, Frank Theuws, Carine van Rhijn, eds. Leiden: Brill, 2001: 329-359.

26. López, Jorge. "Actividad monástica y acción política en Fructuoso de Braga". *Hispania Sacra*, 109 (2002): 7-22; Castellanos, Santiago. *La hagiografía visigoda...*: 264-297.

27. Velázquez, Isabel. *Hagiografía y culto a los santos...*: 225-226.

28. Díaz, Manuel C. *La Vida de San Fructuoso...*: doc. nº 2.

29. There are still doubts about where this monastery was, although it seems to have been near the current village of Palacios de Compludo; López, Jorge; Martínez, Artemio M. "Un *monasterium* fructuosiano por descubrir: el de Compludo, en el Bierzo (prov. de León)". *Argutorio*, 18 (2007): 43-47.

30. Díaz, Manuel C. *La Vida de San Fructuoso...*: 3.

31. Díaz, Manuel C. *La Vida de San Fructuoso...*: 6.

32. Velázquez, Isabel. *Hagiografía y culto a los santos...*: 219.

collection and other texts, notable among which are his autobiographical works.[33] In these, Valerius presents himself as a representative of a rigorist monastic way, which leads him to continuous clashes. Although his autobiographical writing (*Ordo Querimoniae*, *Replicatio* and *Residuum*) sometimes narrates the events of his life in a disorderly way, it is possible to present an outline of his experiences.[34] Motivated by his desires for religious perfection, Valerius went to Compludo monastery, founded by Fructuosus. However, he left the monastery to live as a hermit in a deserted place, in the mountains between *Castrum Petrensis* and Astorga. He gradually drew the attention of the inhabitants and even gained disciples. However, a presbyter by the name of Flaíno began to insult and plot against him. Valerius then moved to a *predium* or estate, called Ebronanto, whose owner, Ricimero, had his own church. Ricimero, encouraged by Flaíno, began to build a new church and expelled Valerius from the room where he lived. Nevertheless, Ricimero died when the roof of the church under construction fell on him and Valerius was appointed presbyter of the new church. Despite this, the vicissitudes of Valerius continued, as Flaíno managed to have one Justo named as the presbyter of the same church, and he harassed Valerius constantly. The fall of Ricimero's family into disgrace and the confiscation of his assets forced Valerius to seek refuge in the monastery of Rufiana, founded by Fructuosus. Conflicts arose between him and the monks, although finally he seems to have obtained the recognition of the authorities and inhabitants.

Thus Valerius offers us a view of his life, in which, after numerous difficulties, he was recognised as a true "holy man". This autobiographical character is a real *unicum* of early medieval hagiographic literature. However, a comprative analysis shows how some of the vents narrated were really common ground that can be traced to other sources. In reality, these narrations were conceived as didactic *exempla* that, although based on Valerian experiences, had not necessarily really happened.[35]

It can be suspected that Valerius exaggerated the difficulties and clashes[36] and that some of them may be no more than exemplary stories and not the author's authentic experiences. But we know that fiction is based on reality, so we can suppose that at least the conflicts that appear in the autobiographical works were possible for Valerius' readers. The first of these refers to the presbyter Flaíno. Valerius' writings suggest that he was the presbyter of small basilica (*eiusdem baselicule presbiter*), who clashed with Valerius when the latter had managed to draw the attention of the inhabitants of the area as a hermit.[37] It seems reasonable to suspect that Flaíno was the presbyter who ran the hermitage of the Saints in Ebronanto, so he would

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33. The most complete edition of his works is: Díaz, Manuel C. *Valerio del Bierzo. Su persona. Su obra*. León: Centro de Estudios San Isidoro, 2006, where the references are taken from.

34. Castellanos, Santiago. *La hagiografía visigoda...*: 39-40.

35. Martín, José Carlos. "La biografía dentro de la autobiografía: el caso de Valerio del Bierzo (siglo VII)", *Las biografías griega y latina como género literario. De la Antigüedad al Renacimiento. Algunas calas*, Vitalino Valcárcel, ed. Vitoria: Universidad del País Vasco, 2009: 319-342.

36. Díaz, Pablo C.; Fernández, Lina. "Valerio del Bierzo y la autoridad eclesiástica". *Helmantica*, 145-146 (1997): 25.

37. Valerius. "Ordo querimonie prefati discriminis", *Valerio del Bierzo...*: 5.

have been closely linked to the interests of the local elites. It is easy to imagine that cause of the conflict must have been about the incomes and prestige, which could have moved over to Valerius in detriment to Flaíno.[38] An important detail is the accusation by Valerius that his rival had stolen his books, specifically those that he had copied referring to *De lege domini* and *De sanctorum triumphis*.[39] These works were orientated towards correction of Valerius' own discipline and tell us about one of the traits of his activity: he aimed to base it on the authority of a written norm, that is by creating a "textual community" to establish a canon in contrast with the existing plurality.[40] It is no surprise that it was the subject of attacks by Flaíno, given that it was a basis for Valerius' action. It is possible that in these we should see the existence of two opposing models of microchristendom, one of which used the forming of a canonical and written tradition as means of ensuring its superiority. This was a struggle in the setting of private churches, which must have been common in the epoch. For that reason, they had to compete for the favour of the owner, which would explain the conflicts for the control of the church of Ebronanto.[41]

This conflict between two models of microchristendom, both dependent on lay patronage, is clearer in the narration about the presbyter Justo.[42] Flaíno instigated Ricimero's heirs to appoint Justo presbyter of the new church, for which he would be co-responsible together with Valerius.[43] The tensions between the two were frequent and exaggerated by the constant complaints by Valerius, who added a supposed attempt at murder by Justo in his tale.[44] It is interesting to see how Justo appears in Valerius' writing with the traits of a character who embodies a model of Christianity different to that which Valerius advocates. In contrast with the asceticism, that imposed a certain distance, and the resort to the creation of a "textual community", Justo appealed to the songs, festivals and dances,[45] thus approaching the culture of the people of the area, a culture that was rejected by the official Church, for whom this was a set of practices that did not fit the canons.[46] However, this model, close to folklore, was enormously successful in wide areas of the *pars occidentis*, so that a hybrid between the official Christianity and traditional

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38. Corullón, Isabel. "El eremitismo en las épocas visigoda y altomedieval a través de las fuentes leonesas (I)". *Tierras de León*, 63 (1986): 55-56; Díaz, Pablo C.; Fernández, Lina. "Valerio del Bierzo...": 32.

39. Valerius. "Ordo querimoniae...": 6.

40. This concept has been used by: Moore, Robert I. "La alfabetización y el surgimiento de la herejía, *ca.* 1000-*ca.* 1150", *La Edad Media a debate*, Lester K. Little, Barbara H. Rosenwein, eds. Madrid: Akal, 2003: 552-570, to define the full medieval heresies. It would be group whose identity was built around their adhesion to a set determined by the texts.

41. Valerius, "Ordo querimoniae...": 10-12; Díaz, Pablo C. "Iglesia propia y gran propiedad en la autobiografía de Valerio del Bierzo", *I Congreso Internacional Astorga romana*. Astorga: Ayuntamiento de Astorga, 1986: 297-303.

42. Castellanos, Santiago. *La hagiografía visigoda...*: 158-159.

43. Valerius. "Ordo querimoniae...": 13.

44. Valerius. "Ordo querimoniae...": 15.

45. Valerius. "Ordo querimoniae...": 13 and 16.

46. Giordano, Oronzo. *Religiosidad popular en la Alta Edad Media*. Madrid: Gredos, 1983. This opposition is clear in the connection that Valerius makes between these practices and lust and drunkeness.

practices, common among the peasants, was shaped.[47] I consider that this is the image that is derived from the tale of the avatars of Valerius and Justo in Ebronanto: the fight between two different types of microchristendom for the social prestige and patronage of the owning family. It is possible that the events, as have come down to us through Valerius' pen, did not correspond literally to reality, but undoubtedly represented a viable situation, that could be presented by the author as a struggle between two opposing models.

With the fall from grace of the owners of the church of Ebronanto and besieged by his enemies, Valerius became a monk in the monastery of Rufiana, that is, San Pedro de Montes. Again tensions arose between Valerius and the rest of the monks, especially with one by the name of Firmino, who was possibly the Superior of the monastery.[48] In this case, the tensions must have arisen from the little intention of Valerius to abide by the norms the monastery was run by.[49] The presence of someone who believed himself to have a special charisma and who, as we see, attempted to link himself directly to the memory of Fructuosus, the monastery's founder, generated numerous frictions.[50] In these tensions we can detect the difficult insertion of a model, like Valerius', charismatic and ascetic, in a communal life run according to the norms and subject to the canons.[51]

The sad list of all his misfortunes (according to his own account, it is clear) also alludes to a conflict he had with the bishop of Astorga, Isidoro, who, given the problems that had arisen between Valerius and the monks of Rufiana, proposed to take the former to the theatre in Toledo so that everyone could know his erudition.[52] Valerius did not agree with the proposal and, in a typical turn in the hagiographic genre, the prelate died suddenly due to divine intervention. The episode seems to reveal that the bishop aimed to use Valerius to apply firmer control over the monasteries, as these had a wider capacity to act outwith the prelates' control.[53] It is possible that with this, Valerius also wished to contrast his model with the model of bishops anxious to control all initiatives.

This pilgrimage through the woes of Valerius allows some conclusions to be sketched out. El Bierzo was an area that had a fully consolidated Christian landscape, with churches, oratories and monasteries, which in no way should be interpreted

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47. Russell, James C. *The Germanization of Early Medieval Christianity. A Sociohistorical Approach to Religious Transformation*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994.

48. Valerius. "Quod de superioribus querimoniis residuum sequitur", *Valerio del Bierzo*...: 2-3. Valerius qualifies him as *brutobardus atque ineptie socordis babigerus*.

49. Corullón, Isabel. "El eremitismo en las épocas visigoda...": 57.

50. Valerius. "Ordo querimoniae...": 20-26.

51. One must bear in mind that the hermit was seen by many churchmen as suspect of some hidden vice, or anxious for ostentation and conceit. Díaz, Pablo C.; Fernández, Lina. "Valerio del Bierzo...": 28.

52. Valerius. "Ordo querimoniae...": 21. He is presented by Valerius as *pestilentissimus uir*.

53. Castellanos, Santiago. *La hagiografía visigoda...*: 150-152; Díaz, Pablo C.; Fernández, Lina. "Valerio del Bierzo...": 25-27. For these aspects, Díaz, Pablo C. *Formas económicas y sociales en el monacato visigodo*. Salamanca: Universidad de Salamanca, 1987: 17-23.

as if Christianity was the factor that structured the whole landscape.[54] In this context, there were different traditions that competed to earn social prestige and thus, become hegemonic. The greatest protector of one of these was Valerius, who defended a model based on asceticism, but anchored in the tradition of the fathers of the desert, with a strong character charismatic, strongly based on individual charisma and in the construction of a "textual community" that served as a basis for this microchristendom. However, these traditions conflicted with each other and used various means to earn this prestige.

One of the most relevant aspects in this fight for prestige and hegemony was the use of the memory of the "holy man", in this case Fructuosus. Right from the start, Valerius sought links with this man blessed with sainthood, recognised by all, even the official Church, as this would allow him to demonstrate the orthodoxy of his posture. Valerius was linked to Fructuosus by various ways. One of these is the fact that he lived in the two monasteries founded by Fructuosus in the district: he began in Compludo and finished in Rufiana. This *cursus honorum* emphasises that Valerius was destined to be Fructuosus' successor, as, after having lived a hermitic life, we would have been better enabled to translate Fructuosus' legacy in a monastic environment. This fate would initially fail in Compludo, from where he retired to live as a hermit, as Valerius must have lived through all the vicissitudes he narrates later.[55] However, José Carlos Martín, in an insightful work,[56] presents serious doubts about this initial stay in Compludo, given the little importance he gave to this episode. Bearing in mind the nature as an exemplary literary work and after a detailed analysis of the corresponding quote, he considers it possible that he was talking in spiritual terms (he could not retreat to the monastic life preferring the eremitic) and not physical. In any case, our author clearly aimed to link himself to the region's Fructuosian monasteries (that must not have been necessarily the only ones, but the most prestigious) and especially to Rufiana, where his fight against the monks is shown as a struggle to approach the spirit of Fructuosus.

This relation between Valerius and Fructuosus in Rufiana is expressed through the special link with certain places that the tradition associated with the founder.[57] Valerius lived in the same cell as Fructuosus.[58] He adds that it had previously been occupied by two other presbyters, so this was no novelty. In fact, these precedents were used by his enemy Firmino to discredit him, as he stated that those who attended at the window were more accessible to the people of the area. But Valerius disavowed his predecessors, one of whom returned to the world and the other died without having done anything; thus, he was the one who really inherited

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54. Although there are few references to the configuration of the territory of El Bierzo in the works of Valerius and these are almost always related to a religious topography, there is no doubt that the axis that gave meaning to the district was *Bergidum*, a civil settlement, possibly Castro Ventosa.

55. Valerius. "Ordo querimoniae...": 1.

56. Martín, José Carlos. "¿Valerio en Compludo? Examen crítico de los *opúsculos autobiográficos* (CPL 1282-1284) y las *Visiones del más allá* (CPL 1277-1279) de Valerio del Bierzo". *Veleia*, 23 (2006): 327-338.

57. Castellanos, Santiago. *La hagiografía visigoda...*: 158-159.

58. Valerius. "Ordo querimoniae...": 19.

and renewed the spirit of Fructuosus.[59] On another occasion, Valerius and his disciple Saturnino, also a monk in Rufiana, erected an oratory in the lower part of San Pedro de Montes, on a rock, used by Fructuosus to pray alone and where a wooden cross was set up as a monument. Despite his initial doubts, overcome by a vision in a dream, an oratory was built, consecrated by the bishop of Astorga, run by Saturnino.[60] This episode clearly shows his intention to associate himself with Fructuosus: create an oratory in the place where the saint was said to retreat to. It was to go beyond monastery, dominating a *locus sanctus*, more related with the eremitic life than with the monastery itself.

Thus we find a memory we could define as topographic, associated with certain places supposedly connected to the saint by tradition. The appropriation of this topographic memory is accompanied by the configuration of a specific personality of the "holy man". I have mentioned above that Fructuosus was a very polyvalent character, so Valerius selected the traits that brought his hero closest to his model of microchristendom. After all, Fructuosus had also created his own microchristendom, whose prestige could be obtained by the person who showed himself to be closest to the figure of the saint. Therefore, the right personality for the saint had to be outlined to serve these interests. So, Fructuosus appears in Valerius' work as loyally complying with the eremitic guidelines of the desert fathers. Hence, despite his monastic life, he had his own specific cell and a place to retreat to where he meditated.[61] This image is what emerges in *De celeste reuelatione*, where reference is made to a revelation that one Baldario had, who as a youngster, built a stone path for Fructuosus to reach certain inaccessible places, as the saint sought solitude and retreat to carry out his spiritual exercises, in likeness to, as is stated explicitly, the fathers of the Thebaid.[62] In contrast, the image as Fructuosus a founder of monasteries and beadle of rules is very unclear, and the episcopal role he played is not mentioned once.

The portrait of Fructuosus resembles the values that Valerius intended to transmit: a microchristendom based on charisma, ascetics and hermetism, with a monastic life that is not the highest aspiration, but is a necessary imposition, of little interest for the episcopal authorities. A model of "holy man" close to the cultural patrons inspired by the fathers in the desert, and all set through the formation of a "textual community".[63] Valerius is a new Fructuosus, as against others who, have either not

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59. Valerius. "Quod de superioribus...": 3.

60. Valerius. "Replicatio sermonum a prima conversione", *Valerio del Bierzo*...: 15-16. The action by bishop Aurelio would be here the counterpoint to that of Isidoro, by supporting the initiative by Valerius and his disciple.

61. These are *topos* that are also seen in Fructuosus' life, where the saint appears living in a cell (*ergastulum*) in San Pedro de Montes, where he treied to distance himself from the world; Díaz, Manuel C. *La Vida de San Fructuoso*...: 6.

62. Valerius. "De Celeste revelation", *Valerio del Bierzo*...: 1.

63. The adaptation of the image of Fructuosus and the one that Valerius wanted to project of himself is evident, as Pablo C. Díaz and Lina Fernández have shown: Díaz, Pablo C.; Fernández, Lina. "Valerio del Bierzo...": 20-21. Anyway, as Renan Frighetto has shown in: Frighetto, Renan. "O modelo de *vir sanctus* segundo o pensamiento de Valério do Bierzo". *Helmantica*, 145-146 (1997): 59-79, Valerius' model of

followed the path marked by the saint (the only really orthodox) or have distorted his message.[64] The image offered by Valerius and its appropriation have undoubtedly survived and in fact should be well-known features from the Astur-Leonese era, the period that the oldest surviving manuscripts of the work of Valerius date from.[65] In this sense, his work was a success. It is something quite different whether Valerius really managed to impose his criteria and make his model hegemonic. It is possible that setting his model of microchristendom in writing has overshadowed other possible traditions and memories that have not survived or that were never put into writing.

3. The monastic restoration of Gennadius and the link to the Visigothic past

The Muslim conquest of Hispania generated a dynamic of changes in all the territory. Some of these modifications simply deepened certain processes that can be seen earlier in the areas outside Andalusian control. In the north of the peninsula, the political fragmentation that had allowed the development of the regional and local powers, favoured by the implantation of state forms that acted less directly on the local scale, was driven by the absence of a state umbrella from the second third of the 8th century. The absence of a solid state apparatus and the propaganda used by the Asturians to legitimise their growing expansion were key factors in the creation of an image of a depopulated area, that, nevertheless, the analyses over recent decades have demolished. These studies indicate that the construction of the new Asturian political structure was the result of a long process of formation and consolidation, with the integration of the regional elites through various expedients.[66]

Some recent researchs on eighth-tenth century El Bierzo have shown clear indications of a demographic continuity,[67] but also in the field of power structures, as the *territorium bergidense*, cited in the 7th century, continued to exist as an entity in the 9th and 10th century.[68] It is possible that the integration of this area into the

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"holy man", who seeks out and captures disciples and who attempts to be present in the world, resembles more Saint Martin of Tours or Martin of Braga than the fathers in the desert.

64. However, and in contrast with Fructuosus, Valerius proposed a model of sainthood based on devotion, sacrifice and rigurous practices, and not in the use of wonders; Martín, José Carlos. "La biografía dentro de la autobiografía..."; Velázquez, Isabel. *Hagiografía y culto a los santos...*: 232.

65. Díaz, Manuel C. "Sobre la compilación hagiográfica de Valerio del Bierzo". *Hispania Sacra*, 7 (1951): 3-25.

66. Castellanos, Santiago; Martín, Iñaki. "The Local Articulation of Central Power in the North of the Iberian Peninsula (500-1000)". *Early Medieval Europe*, 13/1 (2005): 1-42.

67. Rodríguez, Mª Carmen; Durany, Mercedes. "Ocupación y organización del espacio en el Bierzo bajo entre los siglos V al X". *Studia Historica. Historia Medieval*, 16 (1998): 45-87.

68. This territory is cited in *Vita Fructuosi* and the works of Valerius. The *territorio Bergido* appears in the first surviving document from after the Visigothic period about the area, dated in 857. *El Tumbo de San*

structures of the Asturian kingdom came about at the end of the 8th or beginning of the 9th century, in the same dynamic that had led to the integration of the Miño area and south-east Galicia, whose relations with El Bierzo were notorious.[69] Little is known about the mechanisms of this integration or the configuration of the territory and society in these centuries, as we depend excessively on the written records, non-existent in this period. However, after the end of the 9th century, there is more documentation about El Bierzo, despite the terrible loss of the Astorga sources —of which in many cases, there are only some reviews from the 18th century.

There is a relevant data in this documentation that reveals a certain continuity with the Visigothic past. This continuity was naturally always dynamic and in movement: the presence of numerous monasteries. An analysis of the documents from between 850 and 1050 shows over twenty of these monasteries scattered over the area. These monasteries appear as important axes for the local social and religious life, although there were no indications initially of either an internal hyerarchialisation or a dependence on ecclesiastical institutions, as they operated autonomously.[70] Some of these monasteries had been founded by people invested with ecclesiastical positions, although we cannot ensure that these functions depended on a canonical and hierarchical structure.[71] The fact is added that certain local aristocratic families exercised patronage over them.[72] Such data remind us of a very similar pattern to that which can be glimpsed in Valerius' autobiographical works. It can be stated that monastic network in El Bierzo had arisen and was managed by local social agents, little or not at all connected to supra-regional networks, which is possibly a reflection of the region's inclusion in Astur-Leonese kingdom.

Gennadius' task of monastic restoration must be understood in this context. Through his own words, we know that Gennadius was a monk in monastery of Ageo, in Ayóo de Vidriales, in the northeast of the current province of Zamora.[73]

Julián de Samos (siglos VIII-XII), Manuel Lucas Álvarez, ed. Santiago de Compostela: Caixa Galicia, 1986: doc. nº 1. However, there seems to be no evidence to confirm that Castro Ventosa was occupied in this period.

69. Given the close links between the two regions, it seems interesting to compare the situation in El Bierzo with that in Galicia. See: Baliñas, Carlos. *Do mito á realidade. A definición social e territorial da Galicia na Alta Idade Media (séculos VIII e IX)*. Santiago de Compostela: Fundación Universitaria de Cultura, 1992.

70. Martín, Iñaki. "Monasterios y redes sociales en el Bierzo altomedieval". *Hispania*, 237 (2011): 9-38.

71. This was the case of Santa Leocadia de Castañeda, a monastery founded by the abbots Valentín and Moisés. After their deaths, there was a split among the monks, and some of them took the monastery's pact or testament to Bishop Indisclo, who seized control of the monastery for the bishopric. *Colección documental de la catedral de Astorga. Vol. I. 646-1126*, ed. Gregoria Cavero, Encarnación Martín. León: Centro de Estudios San Isidoro, 1999: doc. n º 13. In this text, it is inferred that the monastery's founders held an ecclesiastical position, but the monastery was not initially under episcopal control but rather was subjected to a monastic pact. Its foundations must be dated to the period of the episcopate of Indisclo (853-879) at the latest.

72. This is what happened with Santa Lucía de Montes, for whose patronage Count Placente's grandchildren competed with Osorio Gutiérrez. The former appear as descendents of the monastery's founder. *Colección documental de la catedral de Astorga...*: doc. nº 71 (952. 10. 01).

73. Quintana, Augusto. *El obispado de Astorga en los siglos IX y X*. Astorga: s.n., 1968: 208: *Cunque adhuc sub patre apostolico et abbate meo Arandiselo, in Ageo monasterio degerem*. I use the edition by Augusto Quintana

This was an area with a high monastic density in the 10th century, and where an important cultural environment developed, with some important *scriptoria*.[74] It is probable that certain figures, such as Abbot Arandiselo or Aransdisclo, played as role in the origins of this monastic blooming. The abbot was cited by Gennadius as abbot of Ageo and an epigraph with his name has been discovered recently near Tábara, one of the most important monasteries in the area, created by royal initiative.[75] Ageo thus seems to have been an important monastic centre, linked to the Asturian polity that was in a full process of political integration of the Duero basin. This aspect needs to be highlighted, as Gennadius arose from this cultural environment, knowing the Visigothic-origin traditions and closely linked to royal power. It is impossible to establish whether he was from El Bierzo or not;[76] what is important is that his initiative was born outside the Bierzo networks.

Gennadius continues to tell us that he left Ageo, with the agreement of abbot Arandiselo, to go with twelve brothers to San Pedro de Montes, a monastery founded by Fructuosus and where Valerius lived, whose lives and miracles are gathered in writing, and that they encountered barren.[77] Here he plays with various *topoi*: the number of companions was inspired in the twelve apostles, so doubts can be expressed about the statement; moreover, the view of the place being a wasteland corresponds to one of the most common images in monastic literature, in which the desert —remembering the Egyptian and Syrian fathers— is a fundamental requirement for the founding of monasteries. In any case, it seems that San Pedro de Montes was restored in 895 and its church was consecrated in 919.[78] From then on, Gennadius followed an ecclesiastical career that included the foundation or restoration of other monasteries in the Bierzo region and his appointment as bishop of Astorga, by decision of Alfonso III, around 909.[79] This *cursus honorum* is relatively common; Froilán, first bishop of León, whose career is found in the *Vita Froilanis* possibly written around 920, also began by founding monasteries then

and not the more recent one by Gregoria Cavero and Encarnación Martín, as the document in question appears mutilated in the latter, as the lines that are of interest here have been skipped, a lamentable errata.

74. Quintana, Augusto. "El monasterio de Ageo". *Brigecio*, 1 (1989): 61-108; Regueras, Fernando; García, Hermenegildo. *Scriptorium. Tábara visigoda y mozárabe*. Tábara: Ayuntamiento de Tábara, 2001.

75. Regueras, Fernando; García, Hermenegildo. "Cenobios tabarenses: sobre un nuevo epígrafe localizado en Tábara". *Brigecio*, 7 (1997): 65-90.

76. Testón, Juan Antonio. *El monacato en la diócesis de Astorga en los periodos antiguo y medieval. La Tebaida berciana*. León: Universidad de León, 2008: 305-307.

77. Quintana, Augusto. *El obispado de Astorga...*: 208: *vita heremitarum delectantibus cum duodecim fratribus et benedictione supradicti senis, ad Sanctum Petrum, ad heremum perrexi, qui locus possesus a beato Fructuoso et institutus, postquam sanctus Valerius eum obtibuit: quantae autem vitae santitatis fuerint et quanta virtutum gratia et miraculorum emolumenta enituerint, historiae et vitarum eorum scripta declarant.*

78. As indicated in an epigraph in San Pedro de Montes, edited by: Gómez, Manuel. *Iglesias mozárabes. Arte español de los siglos IX a XI*. Madrid: Centro de Estudios Históricos, 1919: 215, where the text appears with its abbreviations developed.

79. Quintana, Augusto. *El obispado de Astorga...*: 110-113; Testón, Juan Antonio. *El monacato en la diócesis de Astorga...*: 307.

later to be named bishop by the king.[80] However, Froilán had hermetic beginnings, which Gennadius lacked, although at the end of his life, the latter seems to have freed himself from his charges to take a hermitic life, even if it was in the monastic structures he himself had founded.

My aim is not to carry out a detailed study of the figure of Gennadius[81] or the "holy men" of this period, which would, however, be of enormous interest. I will focus mainly on his actions. Gennadius appears to us as a restorer of monasteries. Right from the start, he sought to recover the monastic tradition of the Visigothic period, inspired by Fructuosus and Valerius, which shows the circulation of works related to both of the latter in this period. The most eloquent example is the choice of San Pedro de Montes, mentioned as being deserted. It is of no matter whether it was or not, although the grant of the monastic demesne by Bishop Ranulfo in 896 describes a mountain landscape with evident anthropic elements.[82] From this foundation, Gennadius built a whole network of monasteries. Leaving aside some very optimistic statements about the number of institutions Gennadius founded,[83] we know for certain that he founded San Andrés de Montes and Santiago de Peñalba, as well as the oratory of Santo Tomás.[84] In this case, restoration did not imply that these monasteries had existed previously but rather that a monastic model closer to the values expressed by Fructuosus and Valerius was implanted. One of the props for this network was an itinerant library, created by Gennadius himself, shared by the four foundations. It held biblical books and others by doctors of the Church.[85] Thus a "textual community" was formed in which the writings served to set a model in line with a canon seen as the Orthodoxy. Thus an internal cohesion was created that simply denied the existence of other traditions that coexisted in the same place.

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80. Martín, José Carlos. "La 'Vita Froilanis episcopi Legionensis' (BHL, 3180) (s. X). Introducción, edición crítica y particularidades lingüísticas", *Parva pro magnis munera. Études de littérature tardo-antique et médiévale offerts à François Dolbeau per ses élèves*, Monique Goullet, ed. Turnhout: Brepols, 2009: 561-584.

81. Quintana, Augusto. *El obispado de Astorga...*: 81-185 does an excessively hagiographic reconstruction of the life of Gennadius.

82. *Tumbo Viejo de San Pedro de Montes*, ed. Augusto Quintana. León: Centro de Estudios San Isidoro, 1971: doc. nº 4. This document mentions the existence of a *strata* that crosses the mountainous landscapes.

83. Quintana, Augusto. "Las fundaciones de san Genadio". *Archivos Leoneses*, 19 (1956): 55-118.

84. *Colección documental de la catedral de Astorga...*: doc. nº 12 (915): *ecclesiam Sancti Petri quam dudum restauraveram, miris aedificaminibus revolvens ampliaui et in melius ut potui erexi. Deinde autem in montibus illis aulam nomine Sancti Andreae construxi aliudque monasterium ad ordinem monasticum, inter vallum distendens, in memoriam Sancti Iacobi, tertium construxi quod vocatur Pennalba, inter utrumque vero locum est qui dicitur ad Silentium in honorem sancti Thomae quartum oratorium fabricaui...*

85. *Colección documental de la catedral de Astorga...*: *Restat autem qui non solo pane vivit homo, sed omni verbo quod precedit de ore Dei ut tradam caeteros libros quam divinos, id est, bibliotecam totam,: Moralia Job, Pentatheucum, cum Historia Ruth liber unus, sive etiam specialiter doctorum, ide est, Vitae patrum, item Moralium, Ezechielem, item Ezechielem, Prosperum, Genera officiorum, Ethimologiarum, Carta Iohannis, Libri trinitatis, Liber aeprincgi, Epistoli Hieronymi, item Ethimologiarum, Glossomatu, Liber comitis, Liber regularim virorum illustrium. Hos omnes libros iubeo ut onmibus fratribus in istis locis communes sint nec quisquam eorum pro dominatione sibi vindiciet sed sicut dixi per parte in communes possidentes videant legem Dei et adsuprascriptas ecclesias percurrant verbi gratia ut quantoscumque fuerint ex eis in Sancto Petro, alios in Sancto Andreas et alios tantos similiter in Sancto Iacobo, et mutuo inter eos disponenet istos quos qui legerint in uno monasterio commutent eos cum alio, ita per singula loca discurrent ut totos eos communiter habeant et totos per ordinem legant ea dum taxat ratione servata...*

This community of communities was subject to episcopal control, which allows us to conceive of Gennadius' network as a microchristendom linked to main ecclesiastical lines associated with Astur-Leonese power, versus the local initiatives. In fact, the action of Bishop Ranulfo of Astorga seems to have been fundamental in the phase of foundation, as the church of Santa María de Castrelo, and some properties in Redelga, near Astorga, appear granted to San Pedro de Montes in 892.[86] Even the grant of the monastic demesne was done by the same bishop and under the condition that the monastic rule be followed.[87] This relation with the bishopric of Astorga became deeper thanks to Gennadius obtaining the position of Bishop of Astorga and was constant from then on. Four bishops are mentioned on the consecratory epigraph commemorating the construction of the church of the monastery of San Pedro de Montes, dated in 919. Their presence legitimated the act and also certified that the community recognised the episcopal authority.[88] Therefore, the monastic and hermitic impulse was set inside the framework of the ecclesiastical episcopal structures. This process can be seen as an initiative that sought to make the theoretical control of the Astorgan prelates over El Bierzo more effective. This domain was limited by the presence of large number monasteries that operated outside the bishops' control. They took advantage of any circumstances to integrate these monasteries more closely as in the case of Santa Leocadia de Castañeda, where internal conflict between the monks was used by bishops Indisclo and Ranulfo to take direct control of the monastery.[89] The creation of the network sponsored by Gennadius, directly under the power of the Astorgan bishops, must be understood in this context of the search for mechanisms to make the theoretical power of the bishops effective on a local scale.

This circumstance brings us back to the view of a multiplicity of ecclesiastic agents, probably each with their own traditions, who functioned as a plethora of microchristendoms, among which, the one built around Gennadius was just one more. A study of the activity in San Pedro de Montes and Santiago de Peñalba, compared with other monastic centres of different origins in El Bierzo, shows up some specific features. Thus, these centres related mainly with ecclesiastical (against the predominance of the lay in the other cases), with a certain tendency to control of centres of worship, especially in San Pedro de Montes. However, they do not seem to have exercised a more relevant social role than the other monasteries, nor formed more extensive assets than the monasteries of "local" origin, although they stand out for their more numerous assets in Astorgan territory, a result of their relation with the bishops.[90] Therefore, the success of the network established by Gennadius was relative and had to coexist with other monasteries with other

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86. Augusto Quintana, ed. *Tumbo Viejo de San Pedro de Montes...*: docs. nº 1 and 2.

87. Augusto Quintana, ed. *Tumbo Viejo de San Pedro de Montes...*: doc. nº 4.

88. Gómez, Manuel. *Iglesias mozárabes...*: 215. For an evaluation of the function of these epigraphs, see: Martínez, Artemio M. "Dedicaciones, consagraciones y *monumenta consecrationes* (ss. VI-XII): testimonios epigráficos altomedievales en los antiguos reinos de Asturias y León". *Brigecio*, 6 (1996): 77.

89. *Colección documental de la catedral de Astorga...*: doc. nº 13.

90. Martín, Iñaki. "Monasterios y redes sociales ...".

traditions and that possibly based their prestige on other elements. However, the prestige of this microchristendom made it easy for Gennadius to incorporate some monasteries into this network, such San Alejandro, in Soto de Frailes[91] or Santa Leocadia de Castañeda.[92] These were pre-existing institutions, under the control of local elites, who now recognised the moral and ecclesiastic authority of Gennadius, accepting the pattern of Christianity that he advocated and placing themselves under the control of the bishopric of Astorga.

This microchristendom must have competed with others that already existed in El Bierzo, so that those aspects that favoured its prestige over the others had to be enhanced. The main tool was the link to the memory of Fructuosus and Valerius. Thus, the grants by Bishop Ranulfo to San Pedro de Montes highlighted that the monastery had been founded by Fructuosus, stressing his condition as bishop to enhance the episcopal domain over the new monastery.[93] However, Gennadius also included Valerius —a formula to blur a memory excessively orientated towards the episcopal— and expressed his desire to emulate Fructuosus and Valerius. Although we know very little about the specific structure of the "Genadian" communities, it seems reasonable to imagine a fairly faithful adaptation to the postulates of the two "holy men" cited, used as a higher authority than those of other traditions. Some indirect witnesses tell us about a monastic life subjected to eremitical practices,[94] closely in lien with the Fructuosus pattern held especially by Valerius. As we have seen, it was also subject to episcopal power, closer to Fructuosus than to the problems Valerius had with the Astorgan bishops. This memory is constantly cited and comes from the most relevant cultural cenacles culture, which particularly appealed to the members of the ecclesiastic group.

All these characteristics were perfectly described in the consecratory inscription in the church of San Pedro de Montes.[95] The epigraph begins by recording the founding of an oratory by Fructuosus, after having founded Compludo, and the later extension of the church by Valerius.

> *Insigne meritis beatus Fructuosus, postquam Complutensem condidit*
> *cenobium, et nomine Sancti Petri, brebi opere in hoc loco fecit oratorium;*
> *post quem non inpar meritis Valerius sanctus opus aeclesie dilatabit*

This narration does not coincide with those from *Vita Fructuosi* and the autobiographical works of Valerius, which indicate the existence of an oratory, but inside a perfectly structured monastic institution. This is a fiction that thus aims to

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91. *Colección documental de la catedral de Astorga...*: doc. nº 11 (915. 05. 28).

92. *Colección documental de la catedral de Astorga...*: doc. nº 13 (916. 01. 08).

93. In 892, in the grant of assets in Redelga to San Pedro de Montes by bishop Ranulfo, mention is made in the fact of it having been founded by Fructuosus: *qui locis fundatus est a sancto Fructuoso, episcopo... Tumbo Viejo de San Pedro de Montes...*: doc. nº 2. The same occurs with the grant of the monastic demesne in 896 (*Tumbo Viejo de San Pedro de Montes...*: doc. nº 4).

94. *Colección documental de la catedral de Astorga...*: doc. nº 71.

95. The quotes follow the text as it is reproduced in Gómez, Manuel. *Iglesias mozárabes...*: 215, note 1.

offer a less problematic connection between Fructuosus and Valerius, avoiding the innumerable problems the latter had with the monks in Rufiana. It then indicates that Gennadius restored the place in 895 with twelve brothers and then, as bishop, he completely rebuilt it.

> *Nobissime Genadius presbiter cum XII fratribus restaurabit, era DCCCCXXXIIIª*
> *pontifex effectus a fundamentis mirifice ut cernitur denuo erexit,*
> *non oppresione vulgi, sed largitate pretii et sudore fratrum huius monasteri*

At this point, it is worth highlighting that the activity of bishop Ranulfo, of whom several diplomas supporting the restoration of San Pedro de Montes have survived and who was a very important agent in this task, was eliminated. The inscription centred on Gennadius, successor to Fructuosus and Valerius in a line of continuity that reinforced the role of the restorer, who is presented in his episcopal task. However, the initiative dates from before his appointment as bishop of Astorga and, on the other hand, there is no mention of Fructuosus becoming a bishop, like there was in contrast, in the texts emitted by Ranulfo. Thus it seems that there was struggle for control of the official memory that finally fell to Gennadius, placing emphasis on the monastic restoration. Lastly, the consecration of the church was carried out by four bishops, who thus sanctioned the restoration, which was placed directly under episcopal control.

> *Consecratum est hoc templum ab episcopis IIIIᵒʳ, Gennadio Astoricense, Sabarico*
> *Dumiense, Frunimio Legionense, et Dulcidio Salamnticense; sub era nobies centena, decies*
> *quinta, terna, et quaterna, VIIIº kalendarum nobembrum*

This epigraph presents the "official" version of the restoration by Gennadius,[96] who would not innovate but would use models that the tradition had considered optimum, using the memory for this. This memory was set in an inscription, that is, a text that could be seen by the public, although always bearing in mind the fact that only a few people could understand it as it was written in elegant Visigothic people letters. Thus, the epigraph itself is evidence of the cult character that this memory adopted.

It is worth noting that both the inscription and the surviving documentation strive to give an image of the "holy men" that emphasises their character as founders de monasteries. While Valerius had considered Fructuosus firstly as a hermit, Gennadius and his monks saw Fructuosus, and to a lesser extent his follower Valerius, more as creators of monasteries and, therefore, of a rule. This partial view is understood

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96. The text can be understood as an example of *monumenta consecrationes* as information is added about the construction of the building and it generates and official narrative; Martínez, Artemio M. "Dedicaciones, consagraciones y *monumenta*...": 89.

in the context of Gennadius' own activity, he being the founder (or refounder) of monasteries and restorer of monastic rules associated with Fructuosus himself.[97]

The microchristendom organised by Gennadius and sustained by the memory of Fructuosus and Valerius thus obtained a prestige with which to compete with other monastic networks. During the 10th century, the latter showed great vitality, so the success of Gennadius' restoration was very partial. Even so, and after Gennadius' death, the Astorgan bishops took advantage of some moments of difficulties in the monasteries to include them into this network. This is what happened to Santa Lucía de Montes, whose control was disputed between Count Placente's grandchildren and the Galician aristocrat Osorio Gutiérrez and that in 952 came under the domain of the bishopric of Astorga, following the model of the hermitages of Santiago de Peñalba, San Andrés de Montes and San Pedro de Montes.[98]

When Santa Lucía de Montes joined the microchristendom organised around Gennadius, he was already dead. However, his role was still essential, as his prestige had gone beyond his life. A resort to this end used was the creation of a funerary and topographic memory associated with the saint. In a document dated in 937, the bishop of Astorga, Salomón, recalls that he was Gennadius' successor in the bishopric, and how he founded monasteries in the area, before being ordained bishop by mediation of Alfonso III. Salomón explains that Fortis, disciple of Gennadius, and who succeeded the latter in the Astorgan chair, wanted to dedicate a place to the memory of Gennadius in Valle del Silencio, but died before his commission was carried out. Salomón now returned to the task and, after gathering abbots and confessors, decided that the chosen place was not adequate, so it was moved to the monastery of Santiago de Peñalba, founded by Gennadius. The bishop paid for necessary works to put the tomb of Gennadius there, for which he granted the loans of the village of Santa Colomba on the river Jamuz.[99] Thus, a place to commemorate Gennadius was created through his burial in a monastery, a *locum sacrum* that was created by Gennadius himself, and reinforced the signs of identity of the microchristendom. These signs were under the direct control of the Astorgan bishops, the real managers of both the saint's memory and his foundations.

The cycle begun by Gennadius at the end of the 9th century had ended. Gennadius used the memory of Fructuosus and Valerius to build a microchristendom and, on his death, his memory was added to that of the Visigothic "holy men" to legitimise and promote a Christian model, with a hegemonic vocation, but in dispute with other extant models.

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97. Velázquez, Isabel. *Hagiografía y culto a los santos...*: 243 qualifies Gennadius as the "historical heir" of the Visigothic "holy men".

98. *Colección documental de la catedral de Astorga...*: doc. nº 71. This agreement was ratified in 956; *Colección documental de la catedral de Astorga...*: doc. nº 84.

99. *Colección documental de la catedral de Astorga...*: doc. nº 48.

4. The memory of the institution: San Pedro de Montes

The careers of Fructuosus, Valerius and Gennadius have shown how the memory was progressively modifying, using various instruments to alter and transmit it. In this sense, not only the contents should be addressed but also the forms in which these contents are stored. As Patrick J. Geary has stated, the way the past is stored affects the contents of what is remembered, so that a change in the storage mechanism causes a change in the content.[100] This reflection forces us to ask ourselves about the registers through which the memory is conserved. Geary insisted that the documentary records often have a prescriptive social force, which affects the development of the collective memory.[101] An example of this would be the cartularies that make up an institutional memory based partially on selective oblivion, and whose projection creates a collective memory with a political sense. Therefore, the formal study of the cartularies gives greater insight into the building of an institutional memory.[102]

We have one of these great compilations of documents from San Pedro de Montes. This is the so-called *Tumbo Viejo*, written at the end of the 13th century and published some decades ago by Augusto Quintana Prieto. Its purpose was the construction and preservation of the memory of an institution closely linked to our "holy men": Fructuosus, Valerius and Gennadius. For that reason, I would like to analyse briefly some aspects related to the memory of said "holy men" in relation with the activity of San Pedro de Montes in the 11th to 13th centuries.

A striking element of the diplomas of the Tumbo Viejo of San Pedro de Montes is the direction of the protocols of most of the grants logically mentions the monastery, but, and this is very significant, its relation with the "holy men" is also frequently quoted. This phenomenon is seen in the documents from the 10th century and the first half of the 11th.[103] These refer expressly to the monastery as having been founded by the bishop Fructuosus (*locum olim a sancti Fructuosi episcopi fundatus*). This reference aimed to strengthen the prestige of the institution among those who gave the grants, a prestige based on it being a true Fructuosian institution, founded by the saint himself. However, the insistence on defining Fructuosus as a bishop is significant, which connects with the patronage the Astorgan bishops exercised over this and other monasteries in the Genadian network.

However, the number of documents from San Pedro de Montes is not very large in this period and is very similar to other monastic institutions in El Bierzo not in the Genadian sphere, such as Santos Cosme y Damián in Burbia. This situation would again demonstrate that fostering these monasteries did not mean making

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100. Geary, Patrick J. *Phantoms of Remembrance. Memory and Oblivion at the End of the First Millenium*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994: 10.

101. Geary, Patrick J. *Phantoms of Remembrance. Memory and Oblivion...*: 11-12.

102. A magnificent work, that inspired the following lines, is the one by David Peterson: Peterson, David. "Reescribiendo el pasado. El *Becerro Galicano* como reconstrucción de la historia institucional de San Millán de la Cogolla". *Hispania*, 233 (2009): 653-682.

103. Augusto Quintana, ed. *Tumbo Viejo de San Pedro de Montes*...: docs. 2, 4, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13 and 14.

their model hegemonic, so the appeal to the prestigious founder and bishop was a strategy aimed at collecting favourable wills.

This situation changed in the mid 11th century, when the documentation started to become more abundant. 173 texts have survived from the period between 1061 and 1156 alone, which indicates a period of considerable growth of the monastic domain.[104] This was when San Pedro de Montes became the principal monastery in the region, with strong backing from magnates and bishops, in a process of ranking the monastic centres that is seen generally in the kingdoms of León and Castile.[105] In contrast, most of the region's old monastic centres that coexisted and competed with San Pedro de Montes seem to have been reduced to parishes, when not completely abandoned.

The choice of dates is not random but rather corresponds to the moment in when the citations linking the monastery with the "holy men" proliferated. From this period alone we know of the existence of 73 documents whose protocols contain these quotes, and these make up 43% of the surviving diplomas. However, this figure is misleading, as the link between the monastery and the "holy men" is only mentioned in the protocols of the grants but not in other types of document (purchases, lawsuits, etc.). Thus, they are a specific characteristic of the grants. If we bear in mind that there are 140 registered in this period, the percentage of documents with references to the "holy men" rises to 52%. Thus it is a very common feature of the registers of grants, particularly at the end of the 11th and beginning of the 12th centuries.

The formula used until 1081 was similar to the one used in earlier documents: the foundation by bishop Fructuosus was mentioned. This means that there was continuity with regard to the use of the memory it was aimed to strengthen. However, a change is seen from this year, as quotes appear that include the participation of Fructuosus, Gennadius and Valerius in the founding, construction and monastic life of San Pedro de Montes (*ubi ex cenobio monastice regule constructum est permanendum, a sancti patribus Fructuosus, Gennadius et Valerius*). This triad progressively substituted the exclusive mentions of Fructuosus, which practically disappear from the start of the 12th century. Such a change conceals a modification in the structure of the memory; not is the prestigious founder appealed to but also other names linked to the monastery. In this sense, special relevance is conceded to Gennadius, who generally appears before Valerius, thus breaking with the chronological order in favour of an order of prestige and priority in the memory. While in 1075, Gennadius and his memory appear directly related to the monastery de Santiago de Peñalba,[106] in the first quarter of the 12th century, he is mentioned as the founder of San Pedro de

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104. About the forming of the domain, see: Durany, Mercedes. *San Pedro de Montes. El dominio de un monasterio benedictino del Bierzo (siglos IX al XIII)*. León: Diputación de León, 1977.

105. García, José Ángel. "Los monasterios del reino de León y Castilla a mediados del siglo XI: un ejemplo de selección de las especies", *Monjes y monasterios hispanos en la Alta Edad Media*, José Ángel García, Ramón Teja, eds. Aguilar de Campoo: Fundación Santa María la Real, 2006: 255-268.

106. Augusto Quintana, ed. *Tumbo Viejo de San Pedro de Montes*...: doc. nº 24.

Montes, and even appears alone.[107] It could be said that the former bishop of Astorga acquired at that moment an important role in the memory of the monastery, which coincides with a progressive decline in the importance of Santiago de Peñalba.[108] Possibly, the memory of Gennadius and his activity shifted in benefit of San Pedro de Montes. In contrast, the figure of Valerius appears somewhat less defined and it is conceivable that his inclusion has much to do with the traditions encouraged by Gennadius, set in the consacratory epigraph of the monastery church.

The use of these references in the protocols of the donations was a strategy designed to reinforce the prestige of the institution the asset had been given to. This highlighted the association with "holy men" who had founded and lived in San Pedro de Montes: its founder and creator of the rules for its monastic life, the saint who had restored the monastery and the ascetic who lived in it. The appropriation of the memory of Gennadius linked the monastery to the bishopric of Astorga, under whose protection he placed it.

From 1156, the abandonment of this strategy is detected. From then on, the documentation ceases to mention the "holy men" as elements of prestige. This phenomenon could be blamed on the reduction in the number of donations in favour of San Pedro de Montes, but enough remained, all without the mention of the "holy men", to consider that this was a tendency that affected the monastery's strategies of social prestige. We can think about a change in these strategies, but what was it?

A look at the configuration of the Tumbo Viejo shows up some interesting details. The first document registered is a diploma by Sancho IV dated 1294, in which the privilege of Ordoño II about the immunity of demesne of Valdueza in 918 is confirmed.[109] Given that the Tumbo began with this text, which was given fundamental importance, the paradoxical conclusion is reached that the long and prestigious history of the monastery, that included its restoration by Gennadius and the endowment by Bishop Ranulfo, was not the best endorsement for the monastery at the end of the 13th century. In contrast, the monastery's links to the monarchy were emphasised and a relevant significance was given to the grant of immunity of the demesne by Ordoño II, a document that is contained in the confirmation of Sancho IV. An analysis of the grant of immunity means that it can be assured without any shadow of doubt that it was a forgery, probably done in the 12th century.[110]

This choice gave special emphasis to the legitimation of the seigneurial domain over the monastery's surrounding, threatened by the proliferation of "new royal

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107. Augusto Quintana, ed. *Tumbo Viejo de San Pedro de Montes*...: docs. nº 110, 135 and 138.

108. For the evolution of this monastery that became a parish in the 12th century, see: Quintana, Augusto. *Peñalba (Estudio histórico sobre el monasterio berciano de Santiago de Peñalba)*. León: Imprenta Provincial, 1963.

109. Augusto Quintana, ed. *Tumbo Viejo de San Pedro de Montes*...: doc. 385.

110. This is the opinion of the editor of the Tumbo, correcting his initial idea that it was a strange document, but authentic that he had expressed in: Quintana, Augusto. "El privilegio de Ordoño II a San Pedro de Montes". *Archivos Leoneses*, 21 (1957): 77-134.

towns" that had arisen between the 12th and 13th centuries.[111] However, what interests us most is that resort was made to royal patronage, that fact that the monastery had been since ancient times under the protection of the kings, whose power had increased in this period. The problem arose given the absence of any direct evidence that could relate San Pedro de Montes with the Astur-Leonese kings in the time of its restoration. There was no royal donation and only in the award of the church of Santa María de Castrelo in 892 by Bishop Ranulfo is it stated that the above-mentioned centre had been given to the bishop by prince Ordoño, possibly the future Ordoño II.[112]

Now, why this emphasis on the royal donation? I believe that this change should be understood in the new context that appeared with the restoration of San Salvador de Carracedo by Sancha Raimúndez, Alfonso VII's sister, in 1138.[113] With the backing of the royal family, this monastery, which had been founded by Vermudo II at the end of the 10th century, began to receive goods that considerably increased its domain in the Bierzo region and beyond. It became a powerful competitor for San Pedro de Montes for the favours of the believers, relying precisely on royal protection: it was the kings' monastery. Faced with the effectiveness of this strategy, the monks of San Pedro de Montes had to modify theirs and they orientated their efforts towards a memory that showed their ancient and privileged relation with the Astur-Leonese monarchs. This change implied that the kings replaced the "holy men" as the basis for institutional memory, at least partially. It is this time that the forgery of the text of the donation by Ordoño II must date from, probably using as a basis the text from 896 in which bishop Ranulfo conceded a demesne to the monastery. This privilege was first confirmed by Alfonso VII in 1129,[114] but there are some doubts about its authenticity. In contrast, these doubts evaporate in the case of the following confirmation, by Fernando II precisely in 1162.[115]

5. Conclusions: the construction of memory

The study of monasticism in El Bierzo shows how social memory is a construction in which contents from the past are selected that are best suited to the present in which they are used. It is also a creative action to the extent that a discourse is generated that does not necessarily respond to the perpetuation of earlier traditions, despite being presented as the continuation of the line that links the 7th century

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111. Durany, Mercedes. "Organización social del espacio berciano (siglos IX-XIII)", *La pervivencia del concepto. Nuevas reflexiones sobre la ordenación social del espacio en la Edad Media*, José Ángel Sesma, Carlos Laliena, coords. Zaragoza: Universidad de Zaragoza, 2008: 149-196.

112. Augusto Quintana, ed. *Tumbo Viejo de San Pedro de Montes*...: doc. 1.

113. *Cartulario de Santa María de Carracedo. Volumen I (992-1274)*, Martín Martínez, ed. Ponferrada: Instituto de Estudios Bercianos, 1997: doc. nº 16.

114. Augusto Quintana, ed. *Tumbo Viejo de San Pedro de Montes*...: doc. 144.

115. Augusto Quintana, ed. *Tumbo Viejo de San Pedro de Montes*...: doc. 195.

to the 12th. Thus, the memory is modified and its contents changed over time, despite its pretensions. The figure of Fructuosus is a good example. His polyvalent personality meant it was possible to choose the image that best suited each moment: founder of monasteries for the redactor of the *Vita Fructuosi*, model of hermit for Valerius of El Bierzo, mediator of regulated monasteries for Gennadius and a model of monk and bishop for the monks of San Pedro de Montes. These modifications (always presented as formulas for perpetuating and renovating the memory) responded to specific contexts, as a formulation of a model half way between the hermitic and monastic, with a strong charismatic bias by Valerius, or the restoration under the episcopal protection of Gennadius.[116] However, it can be seen that there was a turning point in the mid 12th century, at least in the institutional field of the memory of San Pedro de Montes, when the "holy men" were replaced by the kings as the central axes of this memory.

This fluid movement is explained because the social memory is always at the service of an objective. In the case of monasticism in El Bierzo, the aim was to legitimate the action of individuals who presented themselves as instruments of a reform that was dressed up as a return to an ideal past. This operation required the support of lay and ecclesiastic groups, so the resort to the memory aimed to capitalise on the prestige of certain figures, these "holy men" who were considered examples to follow as well as intercessors with the divinity. From the 12th century, this legitimation and social prestige was no longer based on the "holy men", at least not exclusively, but rather in relation to the kings and the protection they provided. These aims are understood in a context of a wide heterogeneity of Christian patterns, each of which possessed its own mechanisms for obtaining prestige. Until the second half of the 11th century, one can talk about a struggle to obtain a hegemonic position in this field. Resorting to a direct link to the "holy men" was an excellent way, although its success should not be exaggerated. In any case, it could be used to bind these groups together more tightly, giving them a more solid sense, converting them into part of the central nucleus of traditions that made up these microchristendoms. This happened with Valerius of El Bierzo, although we do not know the degree of institutionalisation he may have acquired. The example of Gennadius and his restoration is clearer, a case seems to me very similar to the consolidation of a structured micro-Christianity, linked to the ecclesiastical politics promoted by Astur-Leonese kings, in which the memory of the "holy men" was a fundamental ingredient.

It can be stated that the changing meanings of this memory were the result of different contexts, but all determined by the struggle for hegemony in a Christianity that was not homogenous. Even the references to the Tumbo Viejo of San Pedro de Montes should be understood as the consequence of a rivalry in order to become the most prestigious monastery, a struggle around the hierarchisation, to annul

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116. As Henriet, Patrick. *La parole et la prière au Moyen Âge: le verbe efficace dans l'hagiographie monastique des XIᵉ et XIIᵉ siècles*. Brussels: De Boeck, 2000, has accurately indicated, hagiography sirved as an effective instrument to transmit a monastic pieousness that adopted various forms and contents over time.

Santiago de Peñalba and fight against the growing influence of San Salvador de Carracedo, for which new strategies were established.

I have examined a traceable memory, that which emanates from power it is a written memory and is put into writing. This formal aspect should not be ignored, as it is an element that also configures the type of memory. In this sense, it could be said that we are faced with "textual communities", in which the connection with the past was a basic ingredient for creating and consolidating them. It is not a mere anecdote but more a basic component. Unfortunately, we cannot track the oral memory that must surely have played a fundamental role in forming this written and official memory.[117] This also prevents us from knowing other memories about the "holy men" and even other traditions that have been erased by the final triumph of the modalities studied here.

To finalise and returning to the quote by Kirmen Uribe, the analysis of the Bierzo case lets me state that the social memory is a fiction based partially on reality, but a fiction which is, in turn, able to create reality and reproduce itself as this reality.

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117. Innes, Mathew. "Memory, Orality and Literacy in Early Medieval Society". *Past & Present*, 158 (1998): 3-36.