

# Culture and Society in Medieval Galicia

*A Cultural Crossroads at the Edge of Europe*

*Edited and Translated by*

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BRILL

LEIDEN | BOSTON

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# Epilogue: Future Directions in the Study of Medieval Galicia

*James D'Emilio*

This work was conceived as an interdisciplinary introduction to medieval Galicia and current research on the region for medievalists, Hispanists, and students of regional cultures and societies. In prefaces to the collection and its six parts, I explained the chronological boundaries, the choice of topics for articles and sections, and the key issues that motivated me to propose and lead this collaborative project. Here, I conclude by reflecting on future directions in the study of medieval Galicia, with an eye on the role of international scholars and the burgeoning field of digital humanities.

Most readers could surely pick topics that merited more coverage, but the most glaring omission may be that of gender and women's history. Melissa Katz's article on Queen Violante's foundation of a convent of Poor Clares in Allariz stands alone in showcasing a female patron. Separating the queen's act from dynastic politics, Katz explores her protagonism in the light of patterns of women's patronage. Within the usual constraints of medieval sources, those from Galicia certainly permit the study of gender, the family, and women's political, social, and cultural agency, as the pioneering initiatives of María del Carmen Pallares and Reyna Pastor demonstrate.<sup>1</sup> Material cited here, from the cathedrals to the *cantigas*, invites such analysis, and Galician charters cast light on women's religious communities and lay women of all ranks. Nonetheless, there is not yet, in my view, a critical mass of diverse studies of gender or of women's history in medieval Galicia to support an adequate treatment within this work.<sup>2</sup>

Throughout this book, religious institutions are ubiquitous as artistic centers, promoters of literacy and learning, wealthy proprietors wielding judicial authority, and partners or competitors in the exercise of royal and aristocratic power. Nearly all existing texts from Galicia before 1300 were passed down and often produced by ecclesiastical houses. So, it is disappointing how narrowly these communities have been viewed within Galicia. Inspired by rural

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1 Pallares (1993), (1998), (2005); Pallares and Portela (2012); Pastor (1990), (2003), and, more generally for Spain, (2005). A useful anthology of texts on the history of women in Galicia includes numerous medieval selections: Rodríguez Galdo (1999).

2 A recent conference on women in Galician history (García Fernández et al. [2012]) had but one case study on the medieval period: Cendón (2012).

historians of the French Annales school, the work of José Ángel García de Cortázar on monastic domains forged a template for a rigorously materialistic approach which Galician and Spanish scholars adhered to religiously for a generation.<sup>3</sup> Groundbreaking studies, like those of Sobrado and of the diocese of Tui by María del Carmen Pallares and Ermelindo Portela, initially supplied a welcome respite from apologetic histories echoing the eighteenth-century *España Sagrada*.<sup>4</sup> Over time, though, too many monographs became boilerplates of eerily familiar graphs and tables, tallying and classifying contracts, properties, and produce of every conceivable kind to fill tomes to rival the most daunting *Libros de apeo* compiled by the houses themselves.

The disproportionate weight of charter evidence does not dictate these choices, because this one-dimensional reading ignores much of what charters have to say as material artefacts, cultural texts, and sources on countless topics. Moreover, quantification deceptively flattens quite varied documents by 'counting' them equally within a statistical pile, and sidestepping questions about how and why some were lost or preserved, and whether or not the surviving pool faithfully represents the transactions once undertaken. Ecclesiastical institutions are reduced to landlords consumed with the exploitation of the people and resources of their estates. These stark sketches convey little of the life, culture, and social networks of religious communities crushed beneath the quantification of every last one of their material assets.

Gender, women's history, religious communities, ecclesiastical culture, and the 'reading' of charters are examples of fields that call for more research or fresh perspectives. In all areas, however, scholarship on medieval Galicia, like that on any region, would be galvanized by an intensified dialogue with an international community that collectively deploys more methodological and theoretical models. To begin with, the frequent separation of Galicia from Portugal makes no sense for the Middle Ages, and our own effort to introduce medieval Galicia to an English-speaking audience is not meant to widen that artificial divide. Joint exhibitions and catalogues of medieval art have built bridges, but Portuguese medievalists have more to offer.<sup>5</sup> They have, for example, taken a more balanced approach to ecclesiastical history and culture, along the lines laid out by Pierre David, Avelino de Jesus da Costa, and José Mattoso.<sup>6</sup> Recent dissertations, monographs, collected studies, and the pages

3 García de Cortázar (1969); for this historiographical 'genre': Reglero de la Fuente (2010).

4 Pallares (1979); Portela (1976).

5 Exhibition catalogues include Valle (1995); Rodrigues and Valle (1998); Valle and Rodrigues (2001). For the historiography of medieval Portugal: Mattoso et al. (2011).

6 David (1947); Costa (1959); Mattoso (1968), (1982).

of *Lusitania Sacra* display a spectrum of topics, with a decidedly cultural and humanistic orientation, ranging from Fructuosan monastic literature to cathedral clergy and chanceries.<sup>7</sup> These have been buttressed by editions of texts and major advances in ancillary fields like epigraphy, palaeography, and linguistics.<sup>8</sup>

A still wider circle of collaboration must arise from a re-evaluation of the place of Galicia and Atlantic Iberia within Spanish scholarship and foreign studies of Iberia. I have addressed this challenge throughout this volume, arguing for a counterweight to prevailing emphases on Castile, Mediterranean Spain, and interactions among the religious communities of medieval Iberia. More and more, these areas are seen in the light of experiences across the Mediterranean, from Sicily and the Maghreb to the Holy Land.<sup>9</sup> That diminution of a Spanish 'exceptionalism' tied to the heritage of al-Andalus allows for greater attention to Atlantic societies and cultures. Surprisingly, Spain's 'Atlantic turn' in early modern times spurs more interest in the Reconquest as a precursor of Spain's imperial vocation than in the medieval communities that faced the ocean.<sup>10</sup>

Beyond the peninsula, British and Spanish scholars have increasingly collaborated on early medieval history, turning to archaeology for insights into material culture, population and settlements, trade and communications, and signs of social differentiation and religious belief in funerary customs. Coupled with closer scrutiny of related texts, this research has explored the exercise of power within and among early medieval communities. Recent international volumes have featured articles on northern Iberia with some treatment of Galicia.<sup>11</sup> These trends are already raising the profile of Atlantic Iberia in English-language studies of the period, like those of Chris Wickham, and they are stimulating the growth of medieval archaeology in Spain.<sup>12</sup> In this volume, Michael Kulikowski pointed to archaeological study of late antique or Suevic Gallaecia as one avenue for breaking the impasse derived from speculation

7 Dias (2001); Morujão (2005); Cunha (2005); Saraiva and Morujão (2014).

8 *Testamenti*; Santos (1994); Barroca (2000); Emiliano (2003); and other studies by these authors.

9 See, for example, recent studies by Catlos (2014) and Moreno (2012).

10 Within the early modern period itself, the work of Allyson Poska (1998), (2005), is a rare instance of Galicia's appearance in English-language scholarship.

11 Quirós (2009); Escalona (2011).

12 Wickham (2005). A recent collection, Valor and Gutiérrez (2014), on the archaeology of Spain in the central and late Middle Ages focuses, though, on the interaction of religious communities. See Sánchez Pardo (2012), (2013) for the use of archaeology to study the early medieval Galician landscape and the foundation of churches.

over a scattering of spare and well-worked texts. One hopes for greater numbers of careful and rigorous field surveys and excavations in Galicia with well-published results, like those on post-Roman and Anglo-Saxon England which Robin Fleming synthesizes in a recent overview.<sup>13</sup> At the same time, paradigms drawn from more comprehensive research on Britain should not be applied too hastily 'to connect the dots' between more fragmentary Galician finds.

These fruitful collaborations remind us that Galicia is not simply a region of Iberia. As this volume demonstrates, Galicia belonged to political, commercial, and cultural communities and networks which expanded, contracted, and overlapped in different ways throughout the Middle Ages. Today, we must strive for a similar integration within the history of medieval Galicia to do justice to this rich and complex past. One path is through comparative study, like that which Jeffrey Bowman advocates here for the regions "from the Rhône to Galicia" in the tenth and eleventh centuries. His appeal should be extended to the whole history of medieval Galicia and to regions across Europe, the Mediterranean, and the Atlantic seaboard.

While there is an attraction, even an imperative, for making local or regional history a comparative enterprise, there are challenges to doing so. Microhistory, for example, has earned acclaim as a genre of historical writing with wide relevance, but it seems an oxymoron to ask local history to speak to a wide and diverse audience.<sup>14</sup> This is about more than nomenclature. Microhistory typically zooms in on a discrete event, a person or small community, or a text. Self-contained and easily grasped, these particular, and often unusual, subjects illuminate matters that elude quantification. Under the historian's interrogation, strange or strangely documented cases expose norms of belief, patterns of life, and assumptions otherwise taken for granted in the historical record.

Local history is altogether different. Sometimes scorned as the province of amateurs and antiquarians, it demands time-consuming mastery of the minutiae of persons, places, and events. By its nature, such immersion in the 'particulars' of one region or district may discourage broader conversations. When these do occur, quantification offers one common language, but smooths the

13 Fleming (2010). Since 1990, the regional government of Asturias has published a series of volumes, each summarizing four years of archaeological investigations and, so far, covering the period from 1983 to 2006, e.g., *Excavaciones arqueológicas*. Similar initiatives in Galicia would be invaluable, but, for now, López Quiroga (2004), 517–625, offers a helpful bibliographic catalogue of late antique and early medieval sites in southern Galicia and northern Portugal.

14 On microhistory, see the recent essay by Carlo Ginzburg, "Microhistory: Two or Three Things That I Know about It," in Ginzburg (2012), 193–214, 302–310.

texture of local culture and society. Thematic monographs commonly start from a local matrix, but extract case studies for consideration within their own fields of history.

The future I imagine here is different. It is a collaborative and international engagement with the totality of sources—texts, monuments, material culture, the landscape—for a well-defined region, Galicia, through which we might tell numerous intersecting stories, chart change and continuity within a local landscape and culture, probe the workings of a local society, and do so in a manner accessible to students of other regions. This synthetic approach would facilitate topical and thematic comparisons, to be sure, but without fleeing the arena of local history. With this grounding, comparative work would contribute to our understanding of what it means to speak of a regional culture and society, and what it means to belong to a region.

Fundamental to this sort of study of any medieval region is access to its sources. Decades ago, Galician historians published valuable inventories of medieval documents.<sup>15</sup> They urged more progress in editing texts, and their calls met with some success. Monastic cartularies from Caaveiro, Celanova, Lourenzá, Sobrado dos Monxes, and Toxosoutos have been published, as well as the *Tumbo A* of Santiago Cathedral, large troves of documents from Ourense Cathedral and the Cistercian monastery of Oseira, and smaller sets from lesser religious houses.<sup>16</sup> Still, nagging gaps remain even among the quarter of medieval documents dated before 1300.<sup>17</sup> The major collections of Lugo Cathedral and of most Cistercian abbeys (Armenteira, Meira, Melón, Monfero, Montederramo, Penamaior), the smaller surviving archives of several important institutions (most notably Tui Cathedral), and scattered holdings or sections of archives (including the loose parchments from Sobrado and many documents related to Santiago Cathedral) have barely been indexed.<sup>18</sup> Existing publications, it must be said, vary in quality and some are scarce outside Galicia. The re-edition of documents is seldom a rewarding task, though it has been done, commendably, by María Beatriz Vaquero Díaz and Francisco J. Pérez Rodríguez for those of Ourense Cathedral before 1300.<sup>19</sup>

15 Jiménez (1973); Barreiro et al. (1988).

16 Many of these have been cited elsewhere the volume, but the selective list in the bibliography of primary sources here adds others.

17 Barreiro et al. (1988) estimated 61,623 surviving documents from medieval Galicia (before 1500) of which just over a quarter—16,901 documents—are dated before 1300.

18 Several have been the subject of doctoral dissertations, though these are often difficult to access, and their reliability untested by publication.

19 *Ourense 1, Ourense 2*. An earlier edition prepared by Emilio Duro Peña, the archivist of Ourense Cathedral, was published after his death: *Documentos...Ourense*.

Today, the advent of digital humanities opens a new route for publication and study of the medieval documents of Galicia, promising quicker and more widespread access to sources, and their collaborative use in ways that could facilitate the total history of a region envisioned here. This is not just a matter of making printed texts more widely available and searchable.<sup>20</sup> Instead, digital publication can overcome the inherent limitations of all printed editions and the specific shortcomings of some. Printed editions often reflect the modern afterlife of medieval charters. An edition of documents of a monastery or cathedral may include charters which joined its archive with a later transfer of property or incorporation of a religious house. Conversely, documents issued by an ecclesiastical institution or written by one of its more prolific scribes may now be distributed among diverse archives and therefore easily overlooked and omitted from a publication. Reconstructing the archives of noble families or the oeuvre of the notaries of Galician towns is even harder, since surviving charters are dispersed among ecclesiastical archives. Databases with well-indexed and cross-referenced documents would allow users to chart their own paths and choose their own criteria to assemble—or reassemble—collections directly relating to an ecclesiastical house, a set of families, or a particular district, or those written by certain scribes or witnessed by certain individuals. In short, users would be freed from the choices and contingencies behind the creation and preservation of archives and the preparation of printed editions.

Of course, the first step towards such a digital archive is to publish photographs of the documents, bypassing the bottlenecks slowing publication of transcriptions.<sup>21</sup> This would permit immediate correction of defective editions and reduce the importance of contentious editorial decisions, especially those arising from conflicting desires of historians and philologists for easily readable texts or ones that respect the palaeographic traits of the parchments. Indeed, it would have a far-reaching impact if all scholars could see their sources not as homogeneous texts, on page after page of a modern edition, but as handwritten material artefacts with all their wonderful idiosyncrasies.

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20 An initiative of this kind, based on published editions and some dissertations, has already been undertaken by CODOLGA (Corpus Documentale Latinum Gallaeciae): <<http://corpus.cirp.es/codolga/>>.

21 The superb images of the *Tumbo de Samos* on the website of the Archivo histórico de la Universidad de Santiago de Compostela <<http://www.usc.es/arquivo/>> are an example.

A collaborative and interactive database would invite users to transcribe texts, recommend readings and corrections, add comments, and tag documents with key words. This would enable searches on the most varied topics, from family relationships and types of contracts, disputes, or properties, to diplomatic formulas and palaeographic or linguistic characteristics. Moreover, contributors could steadily increase the pool of documents by registering the countless references to vanished charters in early modern lawsuits, surveys, and compilations. This would be invaluable, particularly for major institutions like the monastery of San Vicente do Pino, whose medieval archives have largely been lost. Finally, collaboration on the database could yield an encyclopedia of reference entries, explaining and resolving ambiguities of usage and nomenclature, presenting short biographies of persons, a gazetteer of localities, and dictionaries of terms.

What is proposed here for documents could be extended to monuments with a graphic archive of medieval sites, linked to maps and documents. With many aborted projects, publication of Galicia's vast Romanesque patrimony has been slow, and early medieval or later Gothic sites have fared worse.<sup>22</sup> Today, the volumes dedicated to Galicia within the *Enciclopedia del románico* of the Fundación Santa María la Real de Aguilar de Campoo promise a full catalogue, but those that have appeared (Pontevedra and Coruña) do not match the quality of those produced for Castile-León under the direct auspices of the Fundación. For Galicia, descriptions of rural buildings and their sculpture are rarely specific enough in informed ways to help identify meaningful features and artistic relationships. Nor are the photographs well-chosen to complement earlier publications or highlight significant details. A comprehensive on-line corpus of photographs of medieval buildings with their sculpture, painting, and furnishings would enable scholars to use empirical evidence—not a priori categories—to define and tag recurring features of construction, decoration, and iconography.

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22 Monographs by Bango (1979) and Yzquierdo (1983) formed part of the *Catalogación Arqueológica y Artística de Galicia*, sponsored by the Museo de Pontevedra and the Fundación Pedro Barrié de la Maza, but planned books on Ourense, A Coruña, and the eastern part of Lugo never materialized. Nor was the initiative of the Ministerio de Educación y Ciencia extended to other Galician provinces after publication of the six-volume inventory of monuments of Lugo from 1975 to 1983 (Valiña et al. [1975–1983]), though the Diputación Provincial de A Coruña published 18 volumes on the architecture of that province: Soraluze Blond and Fernández Fernández (1995–2010).

This interactive digital repository of texts, works of art, and maps, buttressed by a reference collection on persons, places, and monuments, would lay a foundation for a new history of medieval Galicia as a collaborative venture, and as a tool for comparison and a methodological model for other regions. Obviously, technological advances eliminate many earlier barriers. One of these, and not an inconsequential one, is the proprietary grip on sources that has made their publication and dissemination the business of individual scholars. Too often, this has slowed and stifled the study of medieval Galicia—and perhaps of other areas. Today, digital media compel us to rethink our role and responsibility as researchers. Sharing sources as a common patrimony and collaboratively building an infrastructure for their use creates a platform through which we can all move more quickly to the interpretive studies that more properly reflect individual perspectives. This collaboration among Galician and international scholars would also bridge the bibliographic divide once and for all: today, Galician publications reach limited audiences and articles by foreign scholars on Galicia may be ignored for years in the local bibliography.

Throughout this volume, authors have considered how modern circumstances have conditioned interpretations of medieval Galicia and shaped questions and answers about the region's distinctiveness or its shifting place within Iberia and Europe, as well as the treatment of specific topics, from the Suevic kingdom and Galicia's integration in the Asturian realm to the reign of King García and the architecture of the pilgrimage roads. Nationalism and colonialism, the frustrated aspirations of Galicians in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, and Spain's bitter internal conflicts and fraught relations with Europe have all colored historians' visions of medieval Galicia.

We, too, stand somewhere. In an age of European integration and globalization, it is no accident that international authors have come together for a project that situates medieval Galicia in a wider world. We conclude well aware that our perspectives emerge from and speak to our own historical context, even in this appeal for collaborative digital initiatives. Most importantly, we end with a call to scholars engaged with medieval Galicia and to all readers of this book. We hope that you will seize the opportunities our historical moment offers, in the ways you deem best, to find a place for Galicia in the larger narratives of medieval history, alongside the many regions of medieval Europe and the Mediterranean, and to use Galicia as a model for understanding the shaping of regional culture and society through dynamic exchanges with larger communities.

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