

THE SHIFTING STATUS OF INFANZONES: WARRIOR IDENTITY AND SOCIAL MOBILITY IN THE KINGDOM OF LEON

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Infanzones appear in written sources from tenth-century Northwestern Iberia as servants of the aristocracy, linked to their magnate patrons through ties of clientele and service. Recurring episodes of political instability in the 980s-1030s undermined traditional authority and customary social identities in the kingdom of Leon, which provided some opportunities for upward mobility. *Infanzones* took advantage of this chance for social ascent by redefining themselves as warriors and consolidating their position as local elites throughout the eleventh century, to the point of being finally recognized as a nobility of blood.

Keywords: Early Middle Ages, Social mobility, Warrior identity, Kingdom of Leon

ESTATUS CAMBIANTE DE LOS INFANZONES: IDENTIDAD GUERRERA Y MOVILIDAD SOCIAL EN EL REINO DE LEÓN

Los infanzones aparecen en las fuentes escritas del Noroeste ibérico en el siglo X como servidores de la aristocracia, vinculados a sus patronos magnaticios a través de lazos de clientela y servicio. Episodios recurrentes de inestabilidad política en las décadas de 980-1030 socavaron la autoridad tradicional y las identidades sociales en el reino de León, lo que proporcionó algunas oportunidades de movilidad ascendente. Los infanzones aprovecharon esta ocasión de ascenso social para redefinirse como guerreros y consolidar su posición como élites locales a lo largo del siglo XI, hasta llegar a verse finalmente reconocidos como una nobleza de sangre.

Palabras claves: Alta Edad Media, Movilidad Social, Identidad Guerrera, Reino de León

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Introduction

Infanzones have given many a headache to scholars. The source of all troubles is, of course, the fact of dealing with the historical record of people who face the misfortune – in terms of posterity – of having embodied wickedness in clerical eyes, in a similar way to Catalonian *milites*¹. *Infanzones* were unfortunate enough to impersonate the «bad guys» precisely in the twelfth century, when many ecclesiastical institutions were engaged in a massive process of documentary recompilation, selection, reproduction, reconstruction or mere fabrication on which a huge amount of the extant written sources for early medieval Northwestern Iberia depends. Just two examples will suffice. In the early twelfth century, while manipulating the text of a grant issued by King Fernando I to the cathedral church of Oviedo (Asturias) in 1063, the episcopal scribe added a reference to «duos monasteria que antiquitus propria fuere ipsius Ovetensis ecclesie sed per malum ingenium infanzones extraxerunt ea inde»². In the same period, the monks of Puerto (Santoña, Cantabria) were elaborating the first part of their own cartulary. In it, two charters issued in 1047 by King García Sánchez III of Pamplona were transformed into *narrationes* accounting how Abbot Paternus and his monks had been expelled from the monastery by some *homines iniqui de regione illa*³ among those *cuncti novilioribus seu senioribus terre*⁴ who had previously elected him, and how the very same day Paternus was reinstated by the king, he went to the nearby village of Escalante, where he recovered two other monasteries from *ipsos infanzones* who had allegedly taken them over⁵.

¹ Ruiz-Domènec, José Enrique, *Quan els vescomtes de Barcelona eren. Història, crònica i documents d'una família catalana dels segles X, XI i XII*, Fundació Noguera, Barcelona, 2006.

² «two monasteries that formerly belonged to the church of Oviedo, but some *infanzones* took them away through wicked schemes». García Larragueta, Santos, *Colección de documentos de la catedral de Oviedo*, Instituto de Estudios Asturianos, Oviedo, 1962, n° 45; Sanz Fuentes, María Josefa et al., *Liber Testamentorum Ecclesiae Ovetensis*, M. Moleiro Editor, Barcelona, 1995, n° 33. This passage does not appear in the most reliable copy, edited by Calleja Puerta, Miguel, «Refacciones de un diploma de Fernando I en la catedral de Oviedo», eds. Herrero de la Fuente, Marta et al., *Alma littera. Estudios dedicados al profesor José Manuel Ruiz Asencio*, Universidad de Valladolid, Valladolid, 2014 (pp. 87-95).

³ «wicked men from that region».

⁴ «all the noblest people as well as the elders/lords of the land».

⁵ Abad Barrasús, Juan, *El monasterio de Santa María de Puerto (Santoña) (863-1210)*, Institución Cultural de Cantabria, Santander, 1985, pp. 8 (1047) y 9 (1047). For both being interpolated, see Fortún Pérez de Ciriza, Luis Javier, «Monjes y obispos: la iglesia en el reinado de García Sánchez III el de Nájera», ed.

While adapting the first charter, the monastery's scribe even suppressed the original mention of *infanzones* in a customary mid-eleventh century clause, turning them into *tirranos*⁶.

Certainly, in the twelfth century Northwestern Iberia *infanzones* were a well-established warrior nobility of landowners who led local communities, and were quite capable of taking over ecclesiastical lands. Pious scribes who were involved in the rearrangement of textual *munimina* that substantiated the property rights of their monasteries, collegiate, and cathedral churches, feared this power. Therefore, they «improved» many alleged copies of old charters by adding clauses from their own time intended to curb *infanzones*' influence, or to extend their privileged status (*fuero de infanzones*) to church possessions⁷. For their part, proud twelfth century *infanzones* kept oral memories about their fierce ancestors having obtained some privileges from the rulers of the past, and they could not conceive them as very different from those they themselves enjoyed. Consequently, they altered the documentary record as well, resulting in alleged early medieval charters that merely reproduced their own status as twelfth century noble warriors and local potentates, a kind of *infanzones* whose concerns and expectations were very different from those of their early medieval predecessors⁸.

As a result of such «improvements», the textual record for *infanzones* in Northwestern Iberia is full of manipulated references that should be dated back to the time when they were «copied» (c. 1100 onwards), rather than to the Early Middle Ages. For many years, scholarship has been reluctant to recognize such anachronisms, especially in Castile, long perceived as an epic land of brave, free people and «*caballeros villanos*». Many studies have been based on the mentions to allegedly early medieval *infanzones* in documents produced much later, particularly the *fuero* of Castrojeriz (Burgos) and the privilege of Berbea-Barrio and San Zadornil (Álava-Burgos)⁹. In both cases, the extant charters are later «reconstructions» – relying mostly on oral memories – recounting alleged privileges granted by the early medieval counts. Therefore, contrary to their claim of representing genuine old texts, both the documents logically reproduced the vocabulary and social categories typical of their own time, such as the distinction between *infanzones* and *villanos*. Many twentieth-century historians studied the supposedly early medieval passages in isolation, as though they were independent documents and not a part of later narrations. Only recently, after Ignacio

Iglesia Duarte, José Ignacio de la, *García Sánchez III «el de Nájera»: un rey y un reino en la Europa del siglo XI*, Instituto de Estudios Riojanos, Logroño, 2005 (pp. 191-252), p. 243.

⁶ «*comites ac principes vel merinos aut iudices et tirranos vel saiones*». Abad Barrasús, Juan, *op. cit.*, p. 8. Cfr. with a 1045 charter by the same king: «*aut rex, aut comes, vel pontifex, aut senior vel infanzone, aut maiorino et iudice vel saione*». Álamo, Juan del, *Colección diplomática de San Salvador de Oña (822-1284)*, Escuela de Estudios Medievales, Madrid, 1950, p. 35.

⁷ Such as Gamba, Andrés, *Alfonso VI. Cancillería, curia e imperio*, vol. 2, Centro de Estudios e Investigación San Isidoro, León, 1998, p. 108; García Andrevá, Fernando, *El Becerro Galicano de San Millán de la Cogolla. Edición y estudio*, Cilengua, San Millán de la Cogolla, 2010, p. 396; Martínez Díez, Gonzalo, *Colección documental del Monasterio de San Pedro de Cardeña*, Caja de Ahorros y Monte de Piedad del Círculo Católico de Obreros de Burgos, Burgos, 1998, p. 246; Jusué, Eduardo, *Libro de Regla o Cartulario de la Antigua Abadía de Santillana del Mar*, Centro de Estudios Históricos, Madrid, 1912, p. 14, etc.

⁸ Such as Zabalza Duque, Manuel, *Colección diplomática de los condes de Castilla*, Junta de Castilla y León, Valladolid, 1998, pp. 30, 49 (see below).

⁹ Muñoz y Romero, Tomás, *Colección de fueros municipales y cartas pueblas de los reinos de Castilla, León, Corona de Aragón y Navarra*, Imprenta de Don Jose Maria Alonso, Madrid, 1847, pp. 31-33. Also in García Andrevá, Fernando, *op. cit.*, pp. 535-536, 37-42. A careful diplomatic study in Zabalza Duque, Manuel, *op. cit.*, p. 30, 49.

Álvarez Borge expressed certain doubts¹⁰, has the context in which these texts were written become a matter of careful analysis¹¹.

Older scholarship insisted upon the authenticity of such manipulated testimonies by advocating the anomalous precocity of aristocratic *infanzones* in Castile with respect to other areas, an idea that was well received as it further highlighted the singularity of Castilian identity. Such an anomaly was explained as being due to regional differentiation in the meaning of early medieval *infanzones* (servants in Galicia, knights in Castile)¹², which, instead of enriching our understanding, led to a dead-end.

Fortunately, since the late 1990s, advancement of textual criticism¹³ and a much more sophisticated scholarship on the changing nature of the aristocracy¹⁴, the history of war¹⁵, and the dynamics between central and local powers¹⁶, have made it possible to approach early medieval *infanzones* from a different perspective¹⁷. In what follows

¹⁰ Álvarez Borge, Ignacio, *Comunidades locales y transformaciones sociales en la Alta Edad Media: Hampshire (Wessex) y el sur de Castilla, un estudio comparativo*, Universidad de la Rioja, Logroño, 1999, p. 32, note 15.

¹¹ Martínez Sopena, Pascual, «Los concejos, la tradición foral y la memoria regia en Castilla y León», eds. Martínez Sopena, Pascual and Rodríguez, Ana, *La construcción medieval de la memoria regia*, Universitat de València, València, 2011 (pp. 135-167), pp. 139-142; Santos Salazar, Igor, «Los privilegios de Berbeia y Barrio: elites, memoria y poder en Lantarón durante el siglo X», *Studia Historica. Historia Medieval*, n° 31, 2013 (pp. 51-81).

¹² Pérez de Tudela, María Isabel, *Infanzones y caballeros. Su proyección en la esfera nobiliaria castellano-leonesa (siglos IX-XIII)*, Universidad Complutense de Madrid, Madrid, 1979, pp. 81-85, 142-155.

¹³ Martínez Díez, Gonzalo, «El monasterio de San Millán y sus monasterios filiales. Documentación emilianense y diplomas apócrifos», *Brocar*, n° 21, 1998 (pp. 7-53); Zabalza Duque, Manuel, *op. cit.*

¹⁴ Astarita, Carlos, «Sobre los orígenes de las caballerías en Castilla y León. Siglos X-XII», *Olivar*, n° 10, 2007 (pp. 279-312); Larrea, Juan José, «El reinado de García de Nájera, entre el viejo y el nuevo orden: rey, barones e infanzones entre la monarquía isidoriana y la feudal», ed. Iglesia Duarte, José Ignacio de la, *García Sánchez III «el de Nájera»: un rey y un reino en la Europa del siglo XI*, Instituto de Estudios Riojanos, Logroño, 2005 (pp. 151-172); Martínez Sopena, Pascual, «Reyes, condes e infanzones. Aristocracia y alfetena en el reino de León», *Ante el milenario del reinado de Sancho el Mayor: un rey navarro para España y para Europa*, Gobierno de Navarra, Pamplona, 2004 (pp. 109-154).

¹⁵ García Fitz, Francisco, Ayala Martínez, Carlos de and Alvira Cabrer, Manuel, «Castile-Leon. Early and High Middle Ages (8th to 13th centuries)», eds. García Fitz, Francisco and Gouveia Monteiro, João, *War in the Iberian Peninsula, 700-1600*, Routledge, London, 2018 (pp. 54-93); Isla Frez, Amancio, *Ejército, sociedad y política en la Península Ibérica entre los siglos VII y XI*, Ministerio de Defensa – CSIC, Madrid, 2010; Porrinas González, David, *Guerra y caballería en la Plena Edad Media: condicionantes y actitudes bélicas. Castilla y León, siglos XI al XIII*, PhD diss., University of Extremadura, 2015.

¹⁶ Carvajal Castro, Álvaro, *Bajo la máscara del regnum: la monarquía asturleonense en León (854-1037)*, CSIC, Madrid, 2017; Castellanos, Santiago and Martín Viso, Iñaki, «The Local Articulation of Central Power in the North of Iberian Peninsula (500-1000)», *Early Medieval Europe*, n°13/1, 2005 (pp. 1-42); Escalona Monge, Julio, «Dense Local Knowledge: Grounding Local to Supralocal Relationships in Tenth-Century Castile», eds. Escalona, Julio, Vésteinnsson, Orri and Brookes, Stuart, *Polity and Neighbourhood in Early Medieval Europe*, Brepols, Turnhout, 2019 (pp. 351-379); Escalona Monge, Julio, «Military Stress, Central Power, and Local Response in the County of Castile in the Tenth Century», eds. Baker, John, Brookes, Stuart and Reynolds, Andrew, *Landscapes of Defence in Early Medieval Europe*, Brepols, Turnhout, 2013 (pp. 341-367); Portass, Robert, *The Village World of Early Medieval Northern Spain: Local Community and the Land Market*, Boydell & Brewer, Woodbridge, 2017; Quirós Castillo, Juan Antonio, ed., *Social Inequality in Early Medieval Empire: Local Societies and Beyond*, Brepols, Turnhout, 2020.

¹⁷ Escalona Monge, Julio, «Comunidades, territorios y poder condal en la Castilla del Duero en el siglo X», *Studia Historica. Historia Medieval*, n° 18-19, 2000-2001 (pp. 85-120); Larrea, Juan José, «La infanzonía en una perspectiva comparada: infanzones y *arimanni* del ordenamiento público al feudal», ed. Bonnassie, Pierre, *Fiefs et féodalité dans l'Europe méridionale (Italie, France du Midi, Péninsule Ibérique) du X^e au XIII^e siècle*, Université de Toulouse-Le Mirail, Toulouse, 2002 (pp. 363-396).

we shall see that, once we adopt an overarching perspective for the kingdom of Leon, taking into account textual references not on their alleged date but at their actual time of production, the differences between the types of *infanzones* appear as chronological in nature rather than a result of regional differentiation¹⁸. Thus, an interesting historical problem emerges: how did a group of servants redefine their identity and access social mobility over the tenth to eleventh centuries so as to become aristocrats?

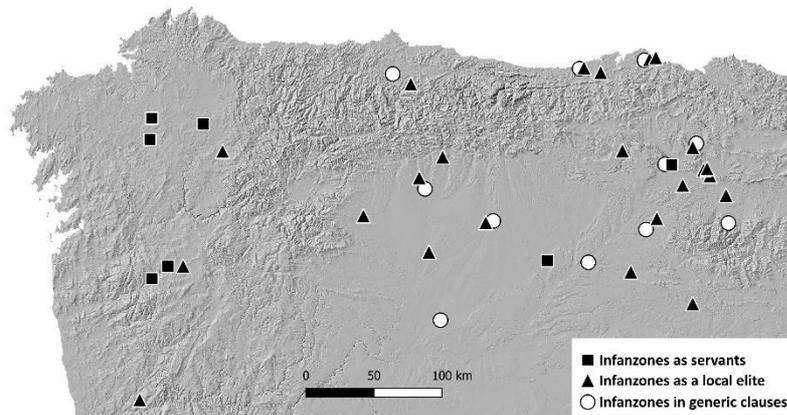


Figure 1. Mentions to *infanzones* in Northwestern Iberia (tenth-eleventh centuries).

Infanzones as servants of the aristocracy

When the term *infanzones* emerges in mid-tenth century sources, it denotes how the great landed aristocracy sees them: as servants of low rank¹⁹. Such a clearly Romance word was so close to everyday spoken language that, being considered a vulgarism by scribes, it took a long time to make its way into the documents written in the central areas of the kingdom of Leon.

However, before the first express mentions of *infanzones* appear, we find the term *puer* meaning «servant» in charters issued by kings or great aristocrats since the time of King Alfonso III, who sent some *pueri (palacii) nostri* to collect the crown he was offered by the clergy of St. Martin of Tours in 906²⁰, and who also recalled three years later how «*cum pueris nostris adprehendimus*» the *villa* of Alkamin, in the Tordesillas area²¹. These mentions of *pueri* could be understood as a scribal cultism

¹⁸ Excluding forged charters and later interpolations, we have 43 authentic references to *infanzones* in the kingdom of Leon during the tenth-eleventh centuries: 9 from Galicia-Portugal (dating from the years 966-1082), 12 from Asturias-Leon (dating from the years 1040-c.1100), and 22 from Castile (dating from the years 1011-c.1100). Only 6 of these references – 5 from Galicia, 1 from Castile – precede the seizure of power by the Navarrese dynasty (at 1029 in Castile, and 1038 in the whole kingdom), and all of them present *infanzones* as servants of the aristocracy. After 1011, that meaning survives in only one reference from the area of Tierra de Campos in 1055, while since the early 1040s *infanzones* are presented in a new way as local elites in charters from all over the kingdom (since the early 1030s in Castile, then already ruled by the Navarrese dynasty).

¹⁹ Modern terminology can be misleading when applied to early medieval societies. *Infanzones* were certainly not mere domestic servants, neither did they hold an established position as officers. Here the term servant should be understood in the sense of agents performing tasks on behalf of their masters.

²⁰ López Ferreiro, Antonio, *Historia de la Santa A. M. Iglesia de Santiago de Compostela*, vol. II: Los tres primeros siglos de la Iglesia Compostelana. Parte primera, Seminario Conciliar Central, Santiago de Compostela, 1899, pp. 57-60.

²¹ «we took with our *pueri*». Mínguez Fernández, José María and Herrero de la Fuente, Marta, *Colección diplomática del monasterio de Sahagún (siglo IX – 1109)*, Centro de Estudios e Investigación San Isidoro, León, 1976-1988, n.º. 9 (909).

trying to render a learned Latin equivalent of *infanzones*, with that very same expression of social inferiority through a metaphorical youth.

Certainly, tenth century sources portray both *pueri* and *infanzones* performing the same tasks. For example, the *puer nostro* of Ordoño II that delimited the boundaries of Bustillo del Páramo (Leon) by his order in 918²² or the *pueros nostros* of Alfonso IV who did the same with the *villa* of Villafria (Burgos) in 931²³ correspond well with the Count Gutierre Ordóñez's *suo infanzone* who delimited the possessions of the church of Santa Comba de Bande (Ourense) when this Galician magnate appropriated it around 930²⁴. In the same way, the «*pueris qui mecum vita comitante michi militaverint et a me munificatos fuerint*»²⁵ remembered by the deacon and Asturian-Leonese aristocrat Ermegildo Felici in his 936 will, as he establishes that «*cuncta que a me acceperint sint illis iuri quieto, sibi et posteris suis*»²⁶, correspond well with those *nos infanzones* that bishop Sisnando of Iria (Padrón, A Coruña) and his relatives mentioned in 966, recalling how they had given them «*nostros atonitos et nostras magnificentias (...) sive villas seu argento vel quecumque de ganato nostro eis dedimus, ut nobis cum eo servicium exercuissent*»²⁷.

The Latin word may have been borrowed from the Frankish world, where Merovingian sources portray these *pueri* as servants of the aristocracy, typically as warriors²⁸. In particular, the court service of the *pueri regis* as royal bodyguards is well documented as a source of social mobility that could lead to the commission of administrative and government tasks, the exercise of offices as count or duke, and the enjoyment of a position as a landed aristocrat²⁹. Some Galician charters show a similar pattern for *infanzones*³⁰, such as those *infançones qui vestros comitatos obtinemus*³¹ who agreed with Bishop Hermenegildo of Lugo to establish their residence in the city (c. 968)³², King Vermudo II's *sui infanciones* who had ruled the county of Abeancos (A Coruña) by royal mandate in the late tenth century³³, or the *infanzon* Nausti Díaz, who being in charge of the *mandamento* of Ludro disputed with the monastery of Celanova in 1007 about who was the rightful lord of some men residing in Ordes (Ourense)³⁴.

²² Sáez, Emilio and Ruiz Asencio, José Manuel, *Colección documental del Archivo de la Catedral de León (775-1109)*, León, Centro de Estudios e Investigación San Isidoro, 1987-1990, n° 45.

²³ Martínez Díez, Gonzalo, *Colección documental...*, op. cit., n° 20.

²⁴ Andrade Cernadas, José Miguel, *O Tombo de Celanova. Estudio introductorio, edición e índices (ss. IX-XII)*, Consello da Cultura Galega, Santiago de Compostela, 1995, no. 265 (982). The document, recounting events from the past, places this appropriation c. 929-932.

²⁵ «*pueri who served me while living with me, and were given gifts by me*».

²⁶ «*everything that they accepted from me shall belong rightfully to them and their successors without disturbance*». Sáez, Emilio and Ruiz Asencio, José Manuel, op. cit., no. 106.

²⁷ «*our military gears and our gifts (...) such as estates or silver or anything from our personal properties that we gave them, so that they served us with them*». Loscertales, Pilar, *Tumbos del monasterio de Sobrado de los Monjes*, Archivo Histórico Nacional, Madrid, 1976, vol. 1, n° 6 (966).

²⁸ Le Jan, Régine, «*Satellites et bandes armées dans le monde franc (VIIe-Xe siècles)*», *Le combattant au Moyen Âge*, Société des historiens médiévistes de l'enseignement supérieur public, Nantes, 1991 (pp. 97-105), p. 99.

²⁹ Halsall, Guy, *Warfare and Society in the Barbarian West, 450-900*, Routledge, London, 2003, p. 49.

³⁰ An insightful study of Galician *infanzones* is offered in Isla Frez, Amancio, *La sociedad gallega en la Alta Edad Media*, CSIC, Madrid, 1992, pp. 171-177.

³¹ «*we, infanzones who receive your counties*».

³² López Sangil, José Luis and Vidán Torreira, Manuel, «*Tumbo Viejo de Lugo (Transcripción completa)*», *Estudios Mindonienses*, n° 27, 2011 (pp. 11-373), n° 82.

³³ Lucas Álvarez, Manuel, *La documentación del Tumbo A de la catedral de Santiago de Compostela. Estudio y edición*, Centro de Estudios e Investigación San Isidoro, León, 1997, no. 59.

³⁴ Madrid, Archivo Histórico Nacional, Códices, L.986, fol.189r: «*Horta fuit intemptio inter Velasco Nuniz et Nausti Didaci super homines nomine Gundesinde et Donello qui erant habitantes in Hordines in casa de Cellanova, cuius homines erant. Tenebat illos Velasco Nuniz adcommendatos de manu Aloitus abba, et venit Nausti Didazi qui tenebat mandamento de Lutrio ad inquirendos ipsos homines post ipso*

However, the most revealing example is provided by the family of Nausti Vimáraz, the *infanzon* who had delimited Santa Comba de Bande for Count Gutierre Ordóñez (c. 930). This family of *infanzones*, who lived in the Galician region of Ourense, used a small and recurrent stock of personal names, making it possible to reconstruct both their genealogy and their ascending career through service to the magnates. We cannot identify Nausti's father for sure, although he could have been the Vimara that, along with two other men, had received the *villa* of Foramontanos in the Grou river area, not far from Bande, as *peculiare* from *domna* Pinoti (she was precisely the aunt of Odoíno Vermúdez, whose narration of his vicissitudes in 982 is indeed the primary source of information about Nausti's family)³⁵. The three men later exchanged it for another one on the banks of the river Arnoia with counts Gutierre Osóriz and Aldonza Menéndez³⁶. It was in this area that that the powerful monastery of San Salvador of Celanova was to be founded soon after by Bishop Rosendo, one of the greatest Galician aristocrats of the time³⁷.

If this identification of Nausti's father is correct, then such a small transfer from the Grou valley to that of the Arnoia, about thirty km north, would have determined the fortune of Nausti's family, since we can document how they made use of their proximity to the monastic foundation of Rosendo and the changes it brought with it in the local patterns of power to pursue their own social advancement. This seems to have been the task above all of Nausti's brother, Donnon Vimáraz, who knew how to take advantage of the opportunity to bond with Rosendo, his family and his monastery. Thus, in 936-941 he acts as a confirmer in donations to Celanova³⁸, and in 946 we find him in the city of Leon as a companion to count Pelayo González (Rosendo's brother-in-law), acting with him and Teuda Gotíniz as judges in a dispute over the ownership of a church located in the Cea River basin³⁹. In the following generation, his son Vimara Donnoni rises to the *commitatus* after Count Rodrigo Velázquez's death in 977-978 (probably due to the monastery's influence), and still appears as count and protector of Celanova in 982⁴⁰. Finally, his sons Nausti and Donnon Vimáraz, who bore the same name as their great-uncle and grandfather respectively, appear in Celanova's charters from 982-988, in which they are respectfully called *domos* and appear as patrons of their own *infanzones*⁴¹.

mandamento» (my transcription). Edited by Hinojosa, Eduardo de, Documentos para la historia de las instituciones de León y Castilla (siglos X-XIII), Centro de Estudios Históricos, Madrid, 1919, n° 8 (with some minor misprints); and Andrade Cernadas, José Miguel, *op. cit.*, n° 552 (with some lacunae due to the defective photocopy used by the editor).

³⁵ Andrade Cernadas, José Miguel, *op. cit.*, n° 265.

³⁶ *Ibidem*, n° 48.

³⁷ See Portass, Robert, *op. cit.*, pp. 153-173.

³⁸ Andrade Cernadas, José Miguel, *op. cit.*, n° 228 (936) and 219=249 (941).

³⁹ Sáez, Emilio and Ruiz Asencio, José Manuel, *op. cit.*, n° 192. Donnon must have accompanied count Pelayo in Ramiro II's entourage, since the *placitum* took place in Leon the day after the king's arrival. Donnon Vimáraz's subscription is followed precisely by that of Teuda Gotíniz in Andrade Cernadas, José Miguel, *op. cit.*, n° 219=249 (941).

⁴⁰ Andrade Cernadas, José Miguel, *op. cit.*, n° 265 (982).

⁴¹ *Ibidem*, n° 265 (982) and 316 (988).

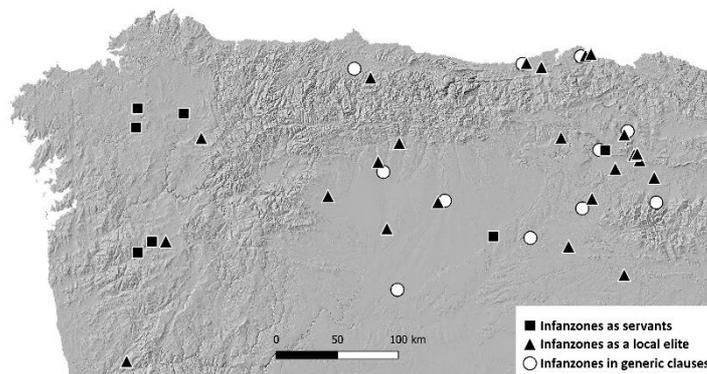


Figure 2. Family of the Galician *infanzon* Nausti Vimáraz.

In the county of Castile, if we leave aside mentions of allegedly early medieval *infanzones* in documents produced indeed much later, we have a first reference which seems authentic in a privilege of immunity granted by count García Sánchez to the monastery of Oña (Burgos) in 1011. Although the text has been interpolated, the confirmation by «*nos vero infanzones supra nominati (...) cum domino nostro comite Sancio*»⁴² seems to have been taken from an original charter, since the formula would have been difficult to make up by an interpolator from later centuries, when *infanzones* were no longer perceived as dependants of potentates, but as nobles themselves⁴³.

Among these *infanzones* who declare having Sancho García as their master in 1011 we find Munio Gustioz, who still confirms two documents from Sancho and his son García Sánchez in the following years⁴⁴. According to an annotation in a codex from Oña's library, he would have been one of the perpetrators of the latter's assassination while he was in the city of Leon⁴⁵. First, this account illustrates the close proximity of these old-type *infanzones* to potentates, whom they still escort and attend as domestics of their entourage. But in addition, it would be tempting to suppose that Munio and his companions killed their master in collusion with King Sancho III of Navarre, who was married to García's sister Muniadona. Sancho not only was the main beneficiary of his brother-in-law's death (as he became *de facto* ruler of Castile on behalf of his son Fernando, nephew and heir of García), but also seems to have promoted a new status for *infanzones* (see below)⁴⁶. In any case, the murder of the last native Castilian count by his *infanzones* in 1028 is both a fitting end to an era when these were seen as mere servants of landed aristocrats, and an effective gauge of the violent changes that were undermining traditional patterns of authority in those years.

Fideles and rebelles: warrior identity in the making

The Navarrese dynasty seized the throne of Leon in 1038, after some turbulent decades in which the rule of the last Asturian-Leonese monarchs had been repeatedly challenged by aristocratic rebellions, royal minorities and foreign invasions. Written sources would not hesitate to describe such recurring episodes of instability as *alfetena*

⁴² «we, the aforementioned *infanzones* (...) with our lord the count Sancho».

⁴³ Álamo, Juan del, *op. cit.*, n° 12. Instead, the passage in which the *infanzones* of the surroundings supposedly undertake not to violate Oña's immunity has all the aspect of a late interpolation.

⁴⁴ Zabalza Duque, Manuel, *op. cit.*, n° 74 (1014), n° 81 (1027).

⁴⁵ Pérez de Urbel, Justo, *Historia del condado de Castilla*, vol. 2, CSIC, Madrid, 1945, p. 981.

⁴⁶ Some details about the death of García Sánchez, which should be placed at the end of 1028 rather than in the traditional dating of 1029, in Martínez Díez, Gonzalo, *Sancho III el Mayor. Rey de Pamplona, Rex Ibericus*, Marcial Pons, Madrid, 2007, pp. 141-142.

(from Arabic *al-fitna*, «division», «civil war»)⁴⁷. This situation undermined the traditional bases of royal and aristocratic power and led to the political reorganisation of the kingdom under feudal schemes, as sanctioned by the new legal framework proposed by the decrees of the *Curia* gathered by Alfonso V in the city of Leon in 1017⁴⁸. It is in this context that warrior identity emerges in our sources, gaining more and more visibility over the eleventh century.

Of course, the Latin term *miles* was known and used in early medieval Leon, but it did not denote an specialized warrior belonging to a particular social group (*i.e.* «knight»). Prior to the mid-eleventh century, the word just seems to perpetuate the old generic meaning («soldier»), as in a royal charter of 1007 recalling how in the past a count charged of crushing a revolt had gone to Galicia «*in exercitu cum omnibus militibus palatii et gentis sue*»⁴⁹. Such traditional usage is well documented already in the late ninth century Asturian Chronicles, wherein *militēs* referred to warriors in general, while those on horseback were called *equites*. In the same way, the term *miles* does not appear as a mark of social status following individual names in Leonese charters until the reign of Alfonso VI (1065-1109).

But at least since the end of the tenth century we have firm indications of the social relevance warriors were acquiring in Northwestern Iberia, although our perspective is somewhat distorted by the traditionalistic bias of ecclesiastics and *litterati* against them. As written sources of the time reproduce precisely the ideology of such learned milieux, warriors are not yet expressly presented as such in 980s-1030s charters, and the focus is on those directly linked to the kings. This stress on royal authority was customary at that time, and can be found in ecclesiastical sources even when they condemn war. For example, in the earliest known penitential from Northwestern Iberia, the *Paenitentiale Vigilantum*, which was written in the late ninth century and copied in 974-976 in the monastery of Albelda (La Rioja). In the section *De homicidiis*, the military was not given any special consideration, implying that the warriors should be treated like common murderers: two years without communion and fifteen years of penance. The only exception was precisely «*qui occiderit hominem in publico bello / in proelio cum rege*», who was assigned just one year of penance⁵⁰.

Therefore, although these warriors would have been presented by scribes as *militēs* or *infanzones* had they lived some decades later, the sources of their own time prefer to focus on their relationship with the kings, thus dividing them into *fideles regis* or *rebelle*s (even though such a status could easily shift depending on the events)⁵¹.

A good example of those who chose to remain loyal to the monarchs is provided by a Leonese family composed by Fernando Núñez, his brother Rodrigo Núñez, and Munio Rodríguez, Rodrigo's son and Fernando's nephew and heir. They served Vermudo II (985-999) and his son Alfonso V (999-1028). Their bonds of loyalty to the kings proved very profitable, as Fernando was given three *villae* by Vermudo in Oncina,

⁴⁷ Martínez Sopena, Pascual, «Reyes, condes e infanzones...», *op. cit.*, pp. 132-150.

⁴⁸ Martínez García, Luis, «En el origen de los señoríos. Las leyes de León de 1017», ed. Martín Cea, Juan Carlos, *Convivir en la Edad Media*, Dossoles, Burgos, 2010 (pp. 69-100); Mínguez Fernández, José María, «Pacto privado feudal y estructura pública en la organización del poder político en la alta Edad Media», *Res Publica*, n° 17, 2007 (pp. 59-80), pp. 76-79.

⁴⁹ «in the army, with all the soldiers of the palace and their people». Andrade Cernadas, José Miguel, *op. cit.*, n° 3.

⁵⁰ «he who has killed a man in public war / in war beside the king». Bezler, Francis, *Paenitentialia Franciae, Italiae et Hispaniae saeculi VIII-XI, tomus II: Paenitentialia Hispaniae*, Brepols, Turnhout, 1998, pp. 6-7.

⁵¹ Pérez, Mariel, «Rebelle, infideles, traditores. Insumisión política y poder aristocrático en el Reino de León», *Historia. Instituciones. Documentos*, n° 38, 2011 (pp. 361-382). Such a distinction was certainly not intended to provide an ontological definition of social groups, as it was applied to people of different ranks, including also great aristocrats. Warriors are not expressly presented as a social group in written sources before the mid-eleventh century.

Cazanuecos and *Valle de Menin*⁵², and his nephew Munio received from Alfonso another one in Roperuelos⁵³. Rodrigo himself had lands in Cabañeros, *Sancti Mametis* and *Zakardines*⁵⁴, which might have been royal gifts as well, because they were also located in the «Páramo» (see below).

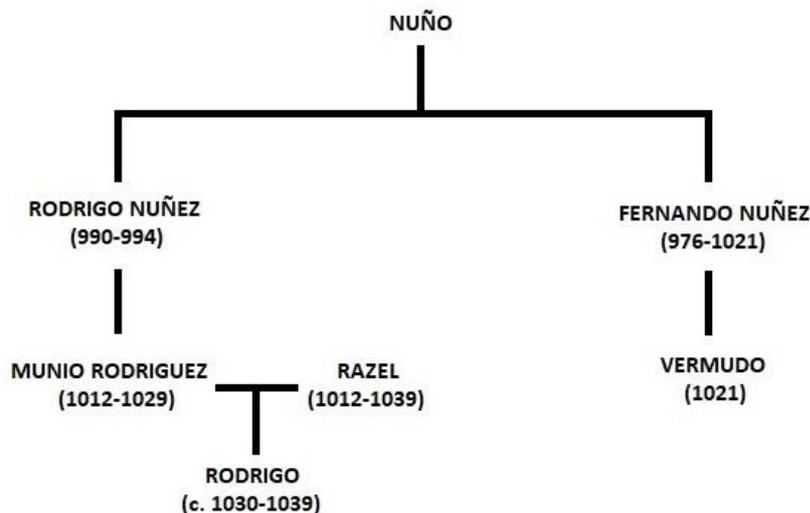


Figure 3. A family of *fideles regis*. Fernando Núñez and his kin.

They certainly maintained good horses: Fernando gave Vermudo II a black horse valued at 300 *solidos* as *offertione* when he received Cazanuecos and *Valle de Menin* from him, and Munio bought a *villa* in Fuentes de los Oteros with a bay horse valued at 150 *solidos*⁵⁵. In all likelihood, they were members of the monarchs' military entourage, as they were closely connected to the royal *armiger*⁵⁶. Specially to Fruela Vimáraz, *armiger regis* in 985-992⁵⁷ who was also an aristocrat in the *territorium* of Astorga, where he was given an *ereditate* by King Vermudo II in 989 and where he acquired

⁵² It no longer exists as a village, but its memory has been preserved by two microtoponyms: Valdemiñín and Laguna de Valdemiñín, both north of Cazanuecos.

⁵³ Sáez, Emilio and Ruiz Asencio, José Manuel, *op. cit.*, n° 541 (990), n° 565 (994), n° 855 (1029). On the social and political meaning of gift-giving in early medieval Leon, see Carvajal, *op. cit.*, pp. 57-90; and Davies, Wendy, *Acts of Giving: Individual, Community, and Church in Tenth-century Christian Spain*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2007.

⁵⁴ In Sáez, Emilio and Ruiz Asencio, José Manuel, *op. cit.*, n° 709 (1012), his son Munio Rodríguez mentions owning *rationes* and *herentias* there. *Sancti Mametis* might be identified with San Mamés de la Vega, a village in the Duerna valley, but it seems more likely that both *Sancti Mametis* and *Zakardines* were next to Cabañeros.

⁵⁵ Sáez, Emilio and Ruiz Asencio, José Manuel, *op. cit.*, n° 565, n° 709.

⁵⁶ For example, the two charters recording gifts from Vermudo II to Fernando Núñez are confirmed by the *armiger regis*.

⁵⁷ He is mentioned as such in Mínguez Fernández, José María and Herrero de la Fuente, Marta, *op. cit.*, n° 328 (985), n° 342 (989); Fernández Flórez, José Antonio and Herrero de la Fuente, Marta, *Colección documental del monasterio de Santa María de Otero de las Dueñas (854-1299)*, Centro de Estudios e Investigación San Isidoro, León, 1999-2005, n° 30 (989); Sáez, Emilio and Ruiz Asencio, José Manuel, *op. cit.*, n° 549-550 (991); Sanz Fuentes, María Josefa et al., *op. cit.*, n° 26 (992); Miranda Duque, Andrea M., *Documentos orixinales de los siglos IX-X de los archivos del monesteriu de San Pelayo y de la catedral d'Uviéu*, Academia de la Llingua Asturiana, Uviéu, 2011, n° 23 (976, but here Fruela's subscription as *armiger* follows a later confirmation by Vermudo II).

some other properties during the following years as well⁵⁸. Fruela confirms the charter registering the royal gift to Fernando Núñez in 990, as Rodrigo – perhaps also Fernando himself – had subscribed the donation received by the *armiger* the year before⁵⁹. Almost all charters mentioning Fruela Vimárax as *armiger regis* include the subscription of at least one of the brothers (especially Fernando)⁶⁰. This close association both precedes and follows his years in office. Even in his first and last documentary appearances, Fruela's subscription is immediately followed by the one of a member of this kin group: Fernando in 976, Munio in 1002⁶¹. For his part, Rodrigo accompanies Fruela Vimárax in the only document from Celanova mentioning either of them, as confirmers of a grant given by Vermudo II in 994⁶².

Most of the estates owned by Rodrigo, Fernando and Munio were located in an agricultural plain between the rivers Órbigo and Esla known as «the Páramo»⁶³, but their origins lay elsewhere. The only place where both Rodrigo Núñez and his brother were landowners was Mansilla Mayor, fifteen km southeast of Leon. Unlike any other area in which the family owned property (Páramo, Valdoncina and Oteros), the charters do not mention Rodrigo, Fernando or Munio receiving gifts or purchasing lands in Mansilla. This may indicate it was not a place of interest for them, and their land there was just inherited. Therefore, they were probably natives to this place. On the contrary, their position as landed aristocrats in the Páramo was a result of their connections with kings and magnates. Since Late Antiquity, this old wooded area had been colonised by autonomous peasant communities, which were progressively subjugated and disciplined into aristocratic domains throughout the tenth and eleventh centuries⁶⁴. Full of *populaturas* and ephemeral *villae*, the Páramo offered some of the rural spaces most coveted by Leonese potentates around the year 1000. In such turbulent times, kings sought to redistribute land there in a political way, so the estates owned by *infideles nostri* were confiscated, while their *fideles* were rewarded with land grants⁶⁵. This could even mean turning loyal warriors into landed aristocrats, as it seems to have been the case of Fernando Núñez and his kin.

Nevertheless, royal favor was not the only path to social ascent. As evident from the case of Galician *infanzones*, service to the magnates could also prove to be rewarding. In fact, it is possible that the military career of Gonzalo and Fernando began as members of an aristocratic armed retinue. Their ties to the kings might have been a consequence of the fact that their first patron, Fruela Vimárax, was appointed as

⁵⁸ Fernández Flórez, José Antonio and Herrero de la Fuente, Marta, *op. cit.*, n° 30 (989), n° 37 (994), n° 40 (995), n° 41 (995), n° 46 (999). Fruela and his family had also important properties in El Bierzo and the mountains of Leon. See García Leal, Alfonso, «Los condes Fruela Muñoz y Pedro Flaínez: la formación de un patrimonio señorial», *Anuario de Estudios Medievales*, n° 36/1, 2006 (pp. 1-110).

⁵⁹ Rodrigo is correctly mentioned as *Ruderigo Nunniz*, but Fernando appears as *Fredenandus Monniuz*. As the patronymics Muñoz/Núñez are sometimes confused in early medieval charters, this could be a mere spelling mistake referring to Rodrigo's brother.

⁶⁰ Mínguez Fernández, José María and Herrero de la Fuente, Marta, *op. cit.*, n° 328 (985), n° 342 (989); Fernández Flórez, José Antonio and Herrero de la Fuente, Marta, *op. cit.*, n° 30 (989); Sáez, Emilio and Ruiz Asencio, José Manuel, *op. cit.*, n° 549-550 (991).

⁶¹ Miranda Duque, Andrea M., *op. cit.*, n° 23 (976); Sáez, Emilio and Ruiz Asencio, José Manuel, *op. cit.*, n° 629 (1002).

⁶² Andrade Cernadas, José Miguel, *op. cit.*, n° 104.

⁶³ As he recalls in Sáez, Emilio and Ruiz Asencio, José Manuel, *op. cit.*, n° 709 (1012), Munio had bought the *villa* of *Fontes de Algastro* (Fuentes de los Oteros), located in «Los Oteros», a hill area southeast of Leon.

⁶⁴ In particular, the low Órbigo valley where Rodrigo, Fernando and Munio's land properties are concentrated seems to have been free of aristocratic control until the late tenth century. Gutiérrez González, José Avelino, «El Páramo Leonés. Entre la Antigüedad y la Alta Edad Media», *Studia Historica. Historia Medieval*, n° 14, 1996 (pp. 47-96), pp. 73-74.

⁶⁵ Carvajal Castro, *op. cit.*, pp. 121-164.

armiger regis, offering them the benefits of Königsnähe (and they certainly knew how to make the most of it). Such a bond with a particular family from the great aristocracy would explain that they also appear closely connected to Munio Fernández, Fruela's son-in-law by his first marriage⁶⁶. Munio was the count of Astorga in 997-1008 and therefore the ruler of its huge *territorium*, including most of the Páramo plain. As such, he had confiscated the *villa* of Cebrones del Río from a murderer, which he later gifted to Munio Rodríguez⁶⁷. Additionally, Fernando Núñez sold precisely to Munio Fernández for 200 *solidos* the *villa* in Oncina which had been given to him by King Vermudo II⁶⁸. Rodrigo might have named his son «Munio» in honor of Munio Fernández, as he must have been born in the 970-980s, when his father and uncle were associated with Fruela Vimáraz, and Munio Fernández was still married to the latter's daughter Jimena.

However, the family's loyalty toward the monarchs proved stronger than their ties to the magnates. When Munio Fernández rebelled against Alfonso V in the summer of 1012⁶⁹, Fernando remained loyal to the king. He was even present when Alfonso V gave to his *fidelis* Falcon Amátez some lands he had confiscated from Munio Fernández, whom he calls *infidelem meum*⁷⁰. Soon after their patron's rebellion, Munio Rodríguez (his father Rodrigo had died by this time) and his wife Razel bestowed a huge donation to the monastery of Sts. James and Michael of Leon in November 1012⁷¹. This could be considered a public act of atonement, because the ceremony was held in the presence of some important magnates who remained loyal to the king, and the corresponding charter was written by the royal scribe Sampiro. Following the subscriptions by the bishops of Leon and Astorga, the first lay aristocrats who confirmed the document were the Asturian count Munio Rodríguez and his son Munio Muñiz. The latter, who had sold to Munio Rodríguez one of the lands donated by him to the monastery (the *villa* of *Sancta Maria Antiqua* in the Páramo, present day La Antigua)⁷², was chosen as the family's new patron. A much more reliable one: Munio Muñiz served as *maior domus regis* of Alfonso V between 1012–1019⁷³ and remained close to the king and the Leonese court throughout his life⁷⁴.

In 1021 Fernando Núñez calls him «benefactorem meum (...) qui quotidie mihi bonitatem inpendit» while making a pious bequest to redeem his soul and that of his benefactor⁷⁵. The act of giving was solemnly performed in the presence of personalities like King Alfonso V, the bishops of Leon and Astorga, Abbot Teodomiro of Sts. James and

⁶⁶ García Leal, «Los condes...», *op. cit.*, p. 8.

⁶⁷ Sáez, Emilio and Ruiz Asencio, José Manuel, *op. cit.*, n° 709 (1012). It appears as «*villa nominata Sancti Stephani*», but its demarcation corresponds with the present village of Cebrones del Río, whose church is still dedicated to St. Stephen.

⁶⁸ *Ibidem*, n° 596 (1000).

⁶⁹ Durany Castrillo, Mercedes and Rodríguez González, María del Carmen, «El obispado de Astorga en el primer tercio del siglo XI: de Jimeno a Sampiro», *Semata*, n° 15, 2003 (pp. 187-222), p. 196.

⁷⁰ Sáez, Emilio and Ruiz Asencio, José Manuel, *op. cit.*, n° 719 (1013).

⁷¹ *Ibidem*, n° 709 (1012).

⁷² A scribal error at a line break has rendered the text unclear, blending the references to the *villa* Fernando bought from Munio in La Antigua and the one he inherited from his father in Mansilla.

⁷³ Sáez, Emilio and Ruiz Asencio, José Manuel, *op. cit.*, n° 707 (1012), n° 708 (1012), n° 719 (1013), n° 724 (1014), n° 737 (1015), n° 748 (1017), 754 n° (1018), n° 767 (1019); Mínguez Fernández, José María and Herrero de la Fuente, Marta, *op. cit.*, n° 404 (1018). He still acted as *vigarium regis* in 1027 (Sáez, Emilio and Ruiz Asencio, José Manuel, *op. cit.*, n° 838).

⁷⁴ Munio Muñiz received several gifts from Alfonso V, who called him *fidelem nostrum*. Fernández Flórez, José Antonio and Herrero de la Fuente, Marta, *op. cit.*, n° 90, n° 224; Sáez, Emilio and Ruiz Asencio, José Manuel, *op. cit.*, n° 763. He also owned a *korte* and *palatios* in Leon. *Ibidem*, n° 979, n° 1014, where he founded a monastery dedicated to St. Michael. García Leal, Alfonso, *El Registro de Corias*, Real Instituto de Estudios Asturianos, Oviedo, 2000, p. 94.

⁷⁵ «my benefactor, who everyday performs acts of goodness towards me». Sáez, Emilio and Ruiz Asencio, José Manuel, *op. cit.*, n° 781 (1021).

Michael, and the priest Servando, who would be appointed bishop of Leon five years later. Of course, Counts Munio Muñiz and Munio Rodríguez were also present (they are both mentioned as *dux* in the charter). The beneficiary of this bequest was the monastery of St. Michael of La Vega, which lay outside the walls of Leon. Fernando disposed to be buried there, and the monastery also received generous gifts from his nephew and heir Munio Rodríguez in 1029, and from the latter's widow Razel in 1039⁷⁶. In 1050, St. Michael's abbot recalled them three among the monastery's main donors⁷⁷.

Interestingly, this family did not direct their donations toward the traditional female monasteries which prevailed in Leon until the mid-eleventh century. Instead, they fostered new forms of piety by promoting the two male-ruled, Benedictine communities of the city in their time, which gained increasing importance during the first decades of the eleventh century. The communities were led by two priests who were also brothers: Teodomiro (1002–1042), under whose rule the monks of St. Michael, originally subordinate to the nuns of St. James, would gain such importance as to take over the whole monastery, and Felix (1004–1057), who founded St. Michael of La Vega next to the ruins of the old extramural monastery of St. Claudius. As both of these communities receiving gifts from Munio Rodríguez and his kin worshiped the archangel St. Michael, we can legitimately wonder whether the commander of the heavenly host was particularly appealing to the families of warriors in search of a new, aristocratic identity⁷⁸.

Onomastics gives us some additional information about the identity changes of this kin group. Although they may have started their social ascent as servants of the aristocracy, they now enjoyed a position as landed aristocrats themselves, mostly thanks to the kings' munificence. The names given to their children reflect that evolution. Rodrigo's son was named Munio, probably in honor of the magnate Munio Fernández, and some decades later Fernando named his son Vermudo as a tribute to commemorate how much they owed to royal patronage⁷⁹. In the next generation, Munio Rodríguez chose the name of his scion not in someone else's family tradition but in his own's, so that the memory of his father would be preserved by his son Rodrigo. However, both Vermudo Fernandez and Rodrigo Muñiz seem to have died young, putting an end to their family's career⁸⁰.

⁷⁶ *Ibidem*, n° 855 (1029), n° 974 (1039).

⁷⁷ *Ibidem*, n° 1074 (1050).

⁷⁸ St. Michael was also cherished by their patrons: Alfonso V gave a bronze chalice to St. Michael of La Vega. *Ibidem*, n° 777, and Munio Muñiz founded yet another monastery of St. Michael in Leon, although it followed much more traditional patterns as it was governed by women belonging to Munio's family. García Leal, Alfonso, *El Registro...*, *op. cit.*, p. 94.

⁷⁹ Sáez, Emilio and Ruiz Asencio, José Manuel, *op. cit.*, n° 781 (1021). He must have died around that time, as this is the only reference, and we find that in 1029 Fernando's heir is not Vermudo but his nephew Munio. *Ibidem*, n° 855.

⁸⁰ Munio Rodríguez declares not having issue at all in 1029. *Idem*, so Rodrigo must have been born in the 1030s and died before 1039, when his mother Razel, acting alone, makes a bequest for his soul and that of his father. *Ibidem*, n° 974.

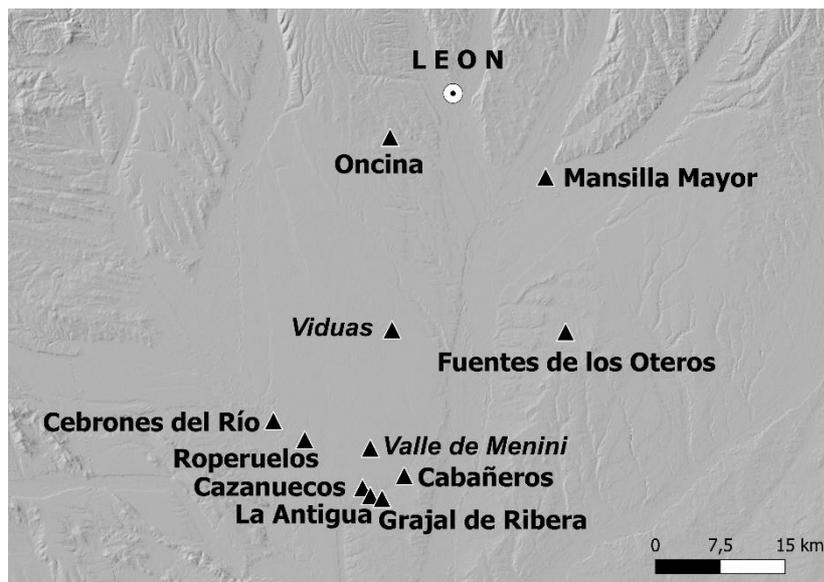


Figure 4. Possessions of Fernando Núñez and his kin.

Everyone in the royal service was not as loyal as Rodrigo, Fernando and Munio. For instance, Vermudo II (985-999) denounced how Gonzalo Vermúdez, governor of the royal castle of Luna, «*revellauit nobis cum nostro castello que vogatur Luna et quum multa bona nostra que intus ad custodiendum a nobis posita erant*»⁸¹; Alfonso V (999-1028) deplored the crimes and depredations of royal possessions committed by his *maior domus* Fromarico Sendíniz, *homo profanum et malignum*, while he was in charge of the *rengalengo* in León and the *mandamentum* of Luna and Babia⁸²; and Vermudo III (1028-1037) complained about how the Galician Sisnando Galiáriz and his brothers «*separaverunt enim se a nobis et a iure et nostro servicio et aplicuerunt sibi alios*», in a narration fashioned in the most classical «feudal revolution» style, including murders, mutilations, robberies of goods belonging to the church and the king, even the capturing of free people to sell them as slaves⁸³.

In fact, during the 980s-1030s, many aristocrats tried to take advantage of the recurrent episodes of political turmoil to increase their local power by renegotiating their relation with traditional authorities and reinforcing their control over land and people. They often used violence to redefine their position in society and impose their own rules. This view was shared by magnates who took the chance to appropriate lands belonging to the king or the church. For example, Count Diego Fernández of Saldaña, who seized the episcopal village of Villa Revelle, near Sahagún, when Alfonso V was in minority, «*dispopulavit eam et levavit ipsos homines qui ibidem erant habitantes ad alia sua populatione*»⁸⁴; or Count Munio Rodríguez, who took advantage of Alfonso V's death to take over ecclesiastical properties⁸⁵ and several royal castles on the Asturian

⁸¹ «rebelled against us with the castle that is called Luna and with many riches that we had stored there so as to be guarded». *Ibidem*, n° 581 (998).

⁸² *Ibidem*, n° 741 (1016).

⁸³ «abandoned their allegiance to us, to the law and to our service, shifting their loyalty towards other people». Lucas Álvarez, Manuel, *La documentación del Tumbo A...*, *op. cit.*, n° 67 (1032).

⁸⁴ «depopulated it and took the people who live there to another populatione belonging to him». Sáez, Emilio and Ruiz Asencio, José Manuel, *op. cit.*, n° 829 (1026).

⁸⁵ As it was later recalled in Floriano Llorente, Pedro, *Colección diplomática del monasterio de San Vicente de Oviedo. Estudio y transcripción*, Instituto de Estudios Asturianos, Oviedo, 1968, n° 32 (1039), n° 37 (1045), n° 76 (1078).

coast⁸⁶. However, the best known cases come from Astorga⁸⁷, where aristocratic actions included the assassination of bishop Jimeno by Pelayo Conde in 1026 and the subsequent assault on the cathedral by Ecta Rapinádiz and his kin, who «*sicut lupis (...) apprehenderunt omnes scripturas et cremaverunt eas zelo diaboli ductus*»⁸⁸. Thus, the family could appropriate some lands belonging to the church without being disturbed⁸⁹. Ecta was an important local lord, and his son Rapinado Éctaz was in charge of the castle of Ulver (El Bierzo) and its district in the 1040s⁹⁰.

This use of violence as a source of social legitimacy led to the redefinition of the identity of local potentates, who shall no longer present themselves as firm sustainers of a traditional «public» order, but rather as proud members of a warrior aristocracy of feudal lords. Consequently, it is no surprising that also warriors of lower rank, such as erstwhile servants of the magnates, took advantage of such turbulent times to affirm themselves as a military elite ruling local communities.

After almost two decades of no mention in historical records, the term *infanzones* reappears c. 1030 to account for such transformation, in a well-known charter concerning the rights held by Castilian counts in Espeja and some other villages in the district of Clunia (Soria-Burgos)⁹¹. Owing to Julio Escalona's careful analysis of the text, we can relate its redaction to the seizure of the county of Castile by King Sancho III of Navarre in 1028 on behalf of his infant son Fernando⁹², who grew up to seize the throne of Leon ten years later.

As the charter refers to the past times of counts García Fernández (970-995) and Sancho García (995-1017), it still presents *infanzones* as military servants of the count who were subordinate to his *merinos* in Clunia, while the count himself could use the lands he owned in the area to reward or punish them according to their service. However, the document shows how the situation had changed in recent years, as *infanzones* had taken over the count's possessions after the death of Sancho, no doubt taking advantage of his son García Sánchez's minority. Apparently, they no longer recognized the authority of Clunia's *merinos* (the charter seems to put an end to their effective rule over Espeja and its area with Sancho García's death in 1017), and pretended to act as autonomous local elites instead. This is precisely the new sense in which the term *infanzones* shall be used in written sources all around the kingdom of Leon since the first years of Fernando I's reign (1038-1065), who seized the throne after the Navarrese-Castilian armies had defeated and killed the last monarch of the Asturian-Leonese dynasty in the battle of Tamarón (1037).

Becoming noble

So when Fernando I was crowned king of Leon in 1038, *infanzones* were already firmly established as *de facto* local elites. Since the following year, their position was acknowledged in reliable charters produced from all over Northwestern Iberia: from Galicia to La Rioja, from the area of Santoña on the Cantabrian coast to that of Toro, on

⁸⁶ After his death, his daughter Aldonza and her husband Piniolo returned them to the king in 1032 in exchange for a *mandatione* in western Asturias. García Leal, Alfonso, *El Registro...*, op. cit., p. 47.

⁸⁷ Durany Castrillo, Mercedes and Rodríguez González, María del Carmen, «El obispado de Astorga...», op. cit.; Sousa, Jose Alexandre, «Uma nobreza não muito regional. O papel político e social dos infanções de Astorga na primeira metade do século XI (1028-1065)», *Hispania*, n° 261, 2019 (pp. 11-39).

⁸⁸ «like wolves (...) they took all the documents and burned them, driven by a devilish zeal».

⁸⁹ The events are recalled some decades later by Marina, Ecta's daughter-in-law. Caveró Domínguez, Gregoria and Martín López, Encarnación, *Colección documental de la catedral de Astorga*, vol. I (646-1126), Centro de Estudios e Investigación San Isidoro, León, 1999, n° 361.

⁹⁰ Quintana Prieto, Augusto, *Tumbo Viejo de San Pedro de Montes*, León, Centro de Estudios e Investigación San Isidoro, 1971, n° 16 (1043), n° 17 (1047).

⁹¹ Ubieto Arteta, Antonio, *Cartulario de San Juan de la Peña*, Gráficas Bautista, Valencia, 1962-1963, n° 54.

⁹² Escalona Monge, Julio, «Comunidades...», op. cit., pp. 99-101.

the banks of the Duero. Some of these portray *infanzones* acting as small aristocrats who engaged in feuds⁹³, took over ecclesiastical properties⁹⁴, enjoyed hereditary lands (*divisas*)⁹⁵, testified in courts⁹⁶, or developed a relationship of patronage with peasants⁹⁷. In other documents, we find generic clauses mentioning *infanzones* as low-ranking authorities, placed after kings, counts or bishops⁹⁸. This meaning was sanctioned in 1055 by Fernando I and his prelates at the Council of Coyanza, canon VII.1: «*ut omnes comites et infanciones imperantes terre et regales villici, per iusticiam subditos regant et pauperes iniuste non opprimant*»⁹⁹.

In the 1050s, some documents from the eastern domains of Sancho III's sons (Aragon, La Rioja, Castile) provide the first reliable examples of *infanzones* enjoying a special status in local communities, as they are formally differentiated from the rest of the *vecinos*, who are designated as *villanos*¹⁰⁰. Nothing of the kind can be documented in the kingdom of Leon until the reign of Alfonso VI (1065-1109), and such a delay in the western regions could be understood as a result of this shift being a Navarrese innovation.

A few documents produced toward the end of King Sancho III's reign (1004-1035) indicate that he may have been a promoter of this new noble status for warriors in his domains. In 1033, while granting privilege to a certain Gallo Pennero in reward for his aid during the conquest of Agüero's castle (Huesca), the monarch acknowledged the existence of a legal distinction between lands belonging to *infanzones* and those owned by *billanos*¹⁰¹. In the same year, the charter that recorded Sancho III selling a *villa* to the bishop of Pamplona was confirmed by the *milites Pampilonensis*¹⁰², who must be equivalent to the *seniorum Pampilonensium vel Aragonensium* who subscribed a royal document from 978¹⁰³, now officially presented as a warrior nobility. This is the first reliable text from the Iberian regions west of Ribagorza-Catalonia¹⁰⁴ wherein

⁹³ Andrade Cernadas, José Miguel, *op. cit.*, n° 350 (c. 1044).

⁹⁴ Abad Barrasús, Juan, *op. cit.*, n° 9 (1047).

⁹⁵ Serrano, Luciano, *Cartulario de San Pedro de Arlanza, antiguo monasterio benedictino*, Centro de Estudios Históricos, Madrid, 1925, n° 46-47 (1046); Álamo, Juan del, *op. cit.*, n° 27 (1055).

⁹⁶ Mínguez Fernández, José María and Herrero de la Fuente, Marta, *op. cit.*, n° 575 (1055); Herculano, Alexandre, *Portugaliae Monumenta Historica. Diplomata et Chartae, vol. I (773-1100)*, Academia das Ciências de Lisboa, Lisboa, 1867-1873, n° 421 (1059).

⁹⁷ Cavero Domínguez, Gregoria and Martín López, Encarnación, *op. cit.*, n° 304 (1046).

⁹⁸ Ruiz Asencio, Ruiz Albi and Herrero Jiménez, *Valpuesta*, n° 51 (1039); Mínguez Fernández, José María and Herrero de la Fuente, Marta, *op. cit.*, n° 458 (1040); Álamo, Juan del, *op. cit.*, n° 34 (1044, instead of 1047), n° 35 (1045, instead of 1048); García Andrevá, Fernando, *op. cit.*, n° 426 (1058).

⁹⁹ «so that all counts and *infanzones* ruling the land, as well as royal delegates, shall rule over the subjects with justice and do not unfairly oppress the poor». García-Gallo de Diego, Alfonso, «El Concilio de Coyanza. Contribución al estudio del Derecho canónico español en la Alta Edad Media», *Anuario de Historia del Derecho Español*, n° 20, 1950 (pp. 275-633), p. 298.

¹⁰⁰ Canellas, Ángel, «Colección diplomática de San Andrés de Fanlo (958-1270)», *Cuadernos de Historia Jerónimo Zurita*, n° 14-15, 1963 (pp. 281-448), n° 28 (1051); García Andrevá, Fernando, *op. cit.*, n° 189 (1051), n° 515 (1055). This situation is well-documented in Castile thereafter: Álamo, Juan del, *op. cit.*, n° 67 (1073); García Andrevá, Fernando, *op. cit.*, n° 437 (1074), n° 208 (1084) and 535 (c. 1085); Jusué, Eduardo, *op. cit.*, n° 58 (1084). *Infanzones* appear as a regional elite in Abad Barrasús, Juan, *op. cit.*, n° 55 (1090); Jusué, Eduardo, *op. cit.*, n° 88 (c. 1100, instead of 1030 or 1070).

¹⁰¹ Jimeno, Roldán and Pescador, Aitor, *Colección documental de Sancho Garcés III el Mayor, rey de Pamplona (1004-1035)*, Pamiela, Pamplona, 2003, n° 73.

¹⁰² *Ibidem*, n° 86.

¹⁰³ Ubieta Arteta, Antonio, *Cartulario de Siresa*, Zaragoza, 1986, n° 11. Similarly, a 1062 document from Álava uses *miles* as a synonym for the more traditional *senior* (Lacarra, José María, *Colección diplomática de Irache, vol. I (958-1222)*, CSIC, Zaragoza, 1965, n° 23).

¹⁰⁴ Frankish influence being much stronger there, *miles* was used in the new sense since the tenth century. For instance, in Ribagorza we find such a usage in Ubieta Arteta, Antonio, *Documentos del monasterio de Obarra (Huesca) anteriores al año 1000*, Zaragoza, 1989, n° 25 (947).

miles is no longer used in its original sense, but as a mark of aristocratic social status. This usage was continued by Sancho's descendants in royal charters¹⁰⁵, although the new sense of the word would not be widely spread in the kingdom of Leon until Alfonso VI's reign.

Infanzones were definitely accepted as local leaders in the 1070s–1090s, as King Alfonso VI settled several disputes confronting them with ecclesiastical institutions over the control of lands, churches or pastures in Asturias, Leon and Castile¹⁰⁶. They were usually resolved by *convenientia*, so that both the parties could share or divide the disputed estates, or the prelates retained their theoretical supremacy while *infanzones* kept the land.

Some references mention the continuing connection between *infanzones* and the great aristocrats, no longer as servants but as vassals linked to them by ties of feudal allegiance. For example, the son of Pelayo Vellidiz – Alfonso VI's *maior in domo regis* in 1086–1095¹⁰⁷ – was the *senior* of the *infanzones* who were in dispute with the monastery of Eslonza over the church of Castrillino (a deserted village next to Villaornate, fifty km south of Leon) in 1088¹⁰⁸. Most revealing is the «*magnum concilium de infanzones, abbates, monachi, laici viri ac milites*» presided by Alfonso VI in Castrojeriz (Burgos) to settle a dispute between the Galician monastery of Samos and Eita Goséndiz, the *vicarium regis* in Larín (Lugo), in 1082¹⁰⁹. There we find some «*infanzones qui erant vassallos de Eita Goséndiz*», who are very much the same as those «*infanzones qui erant in ipsa terra*» who had appeared as companions of the previous *maiorinus regis* in Larín, Ero Peláez, in another *concilium* held in that Galician village in 1074¹¹⁰. Thus, it can be concluded that the authority of royal delegates depended on the influence they held over the local elite of *infanzones*, who exercised power on a small scale. So those who already played a major role in such local networks were probably the most likely to be appointed as *vicarii* by the king.

Additionally, Alfonso VI not only recognized Leonese *infanzones* as *de facto* local elites, but also as a noble class of legitimate landowners with a privileged legal status (in Castile they seem to have enjoyed such a position since the mid-eleventh century)¹¹¹. Under his reign, Leonese sources gradually portrayed *infanzones* as a type of lords in 1084¹¹², as landowners whose estates enjoy a special status in 1089¹¹³, and as local elites specifically differentiated from *villanos* in 1090–1091¹¹⁴. Finally, the charter that

¹⁰⁵ As García Sánchez III of Pamplona in Lacarra, *op. cit.*, n° 8 (1045); Fernando I of Leon in García Larragueta, Santos, *op. cit.*, n° 55 (c. 1051); Sancho Garcés IV of Pamplona in Lacarra, *op. cit.*, n° 16 (1058); Alfonso VI of Leon in Gamba, Andrés, *op. cit.*, vol. 2, n° 157 (1100), etc.

¹⁰⁶ Martínez Díez, Gonzalo, *Colección documental...*, *op. cit.*, n° 340 (1073); Sanz Fuentes, María Josefa et al., *op. cit.*, n° 51 (1075); Ruiz Asencio, José Manuel and Ruiz Albi, Irene, *Colección documental del monasterio de San Pedro de Eslonza, vol. I (912-1300)*, Centro de Estudios e Investigación San Isidoro, León, 2007, n° 57 (1088); Mínguez Fernández, José María and Herrero de la Fuente, Marta, *op. cit.*, n° 900 (1092) and 901 (1093); Sáez, Emilio and Ruiz Asencio, José Manuel, *op. cit.*, no. 1279 (1093).

¹⁰⁷ Gamba, Andrés, *op. cit.*, vol. 1, p. 575.

¹⁰⁸ Ruiz Asencio, José Manuel and Ruiz Albi, Irene, *op. cit.*, n° 57.

¹⁰⁹ Lucas Álvarez, Manuel, *El Tombo de San Julián de Samos (Siglos VIII-XII)*. Estudio introductorio. Edición diplomática. Apéndices e índices, Caixa Galicia, Santiago de Compostela, 1986, n° 4.

¹¹⁰ *Ibidem*, n° 133 (1074). The document of 1082 (*ibidem*, no. 4) gives the names of five *infanzones*: three of them appear also in no. 133, while Rodrigo Gutiérrez is probably the father of Munio Rodríguez and Pelayo Rodríguez, who are also mentioned in 1074.

¹¹¹ In the 1070s the differentiated legal status (*fuero*) of Castilian *infanzones* is mentioned as customary: Martínez Díez, Gonzalo, *Colección documental...*, *op. cit.*, n° 332 (1071); García Andruva, Fernando, *op. cit.*, n° 510 (1075).

¹¹² Sáez, Emilio and Ruiz Asencio, José Manuel, *op. cit.*, n° 1233.

¹¹³ *Ibidem*, n° 1244.

¹¹⁴ Mínguez Fernández, José María and Herrero de la Fuente, Marta, *op. cit.*, n° 858 (1090); Sáez, Emilio and Ruiz Asencio, José Manuel, *op. cit.*, n° 1256 (1091).

recorded the *convenientia* between the bishop of Leon and the *infanzones* of the Bernesga valley in 1093 acknowledged the latter's nobility, defining them as «*militēs non infimis parentibus ortos, sed nobiles genere necnon et potestate, qui vulgari lingua infanzones dicuntur*»¹¹⁵. It is not surprising that an undated notice c. 1110-1130 mentions that a certain Garcia Ovéquiz from the recent past «*fuit infancone de patre et de matre*»¹¹⁶.

By the early twelfth century, nobody remembered the origins of *infanzones* as servants of the aristocracy, so nobody thought of trying to avoid anachronism by referring to them as such when manipulating old charters. It was a truth universally acknowledged, that they had always been a nobility of blood.

Conclusions

The historical record for *infanzones* in Northwestern Iberia provides valuable insights into the process of social mobility, with the political crisis around the 980s–1030s marking a turning point in the shift from individual to structural mobility¹¹⁷.

Before this period of turmoil, social ascent was limited to those *infanzones* who benefitted from extraordinary circumstances, such as external factors altering the *statu quo* in their area. For example, the foundation of a monastery by a magnate in the Arnoia Valley enabled Nausti Vimáraz's family to take advantage of the changes in the local patterns of power and rise to the *comitatus* within two generations. However, as Amancio Isla Frez concluded in his study on Galician *infanzones*, such outstanding examples of upward mobility remained exceptional and had little continuity. For instance, Vermudo II's installation of some *sui infanzones* in the *comitatus* of Abeancos was just an ephemeral exception, as the district was usually ruled by members of the same family of magnates¹¹⁸.

Fernando Núñez and his kin present a more representative case, as they lived in a time of political instability in which both traditional authorities and customary aristocratic identities were changing, so warriors were offered new opportunities for social ascent. Not in vain, it is precisely during Fernando's lifetime that we have references to *infanzones* being invested by the kings with the administration of some Galician districts, however anecdotal these appointments might have been¹¹⁹.

In any case, the most relevant transformation involving the social role of *infanzones* at the time was not that some individuals were raised to offices customarily held by magnates, but the structural mobility of the group as a whole, establishing themselves first as *de facto* local elites and finally as a nobility of status and blood. Logically, the earlier phases of this process are poorly documented, whereas we are much better informed about the official recognition of their new position since the mid-eleventh century.

This raises the issue of the connection between the evolution of concepts and social change, a major question underlying the well-known debates around the so-

¹¹⁵ «knights born not from low-rank parents, but from those of noble birth and authority, who are called *infanzones* in vernacular language». *Ibidem*, n° 1279.

¹¹⁶ «was an *infanzon* from his father's and mother's side». Fernández Flórez, José Antonio and Herrero de la Fuente, Marta, *op. cit.*, n° 304.

¹¹⁷ For the uses for medieval history of this classical sociological distinction, see Bove, Boris, «Réflexions sur les hommes nouveaux et l'ascension sociale au Moyen Âge, de Leudaste à Jacques Coeur, en passant par Pareto», ed. Musset, Benoît, *Hommes nouveaux et femmes nouvelles, de l'Antiquité au XXe siècle*, Presses universitaires de Rennes, Rennes, 2015 (pp. 37-57); Carocci, Sandro and Lazzarini, Isabella, eds., *Social Mobility in Medieval Italy (1100-1500)*, Roma, Viella, 2018, pp. 9-20.

¹¹⁸ Isla Frez, Amancio, *La sociedad gallega...*, *op. cit.*, pp. 149-150.

¹¹⁹ Lucas Álvarez, Manuel, *La documentación del Tumbo A...*, *op. cit.*, n° 59; Andrade Cernadas, José Miguel, *op. cit.*, n° 552.

called «feudal revolution»¹²⁰. As Chris Wickham has recently noted, the main finding of the supporters of the «revolution» model can still be considered valid; that is, the idea that «local practices of domination, which had always existed informally in the countryside but had been regarded as illegal by legislators (...) henceforth, after 1000 (or 1050, or 1100, depending where one was), *constituted* legality»¹²¹. A different question, however, is how quickly these changes occurred, as new concepts usually only appear in written sources once the new social realities they refer to are firmly established.

That seems to have been precisely the case with *infanzones* in the kingdom of Leon: as we have seen, a consistent set of references presenting them as servants of the aristocracy in 966-1011 is followed by a hiatus of several decades, until a new sense of the term, portraying them as local elites, is attested since c.1030 in Castile, and since the early 1040s in the rest of the kingdom. This conceptual innovation should not be seen as the sign of a sudden and violent social rupture taking place contemporaneously with the seizure of power by the Navarrese dynasty, but as the result of a much more complex process of social mobility which had gradually changed the status of *infanzones* during the previous decades.

Although many early *infanzones* were probably warriors (as indicated by their similarity to Frankish *pueri* and the mentions of their *atondos*)¹²², it is significant that the oldest textual references do not explicitly acknowledge such a condition. It is not until the Espeja charter (c. 1030) that the military duties of *infanzones* in the late tenth and early eleventh century are clearly mentioned, appearing as a means of obtaining land due to the count's favor. The political relevance of warriors in those turbulent times surely allowed them to obtain material benefits from the magnates they served, but the new emphasis on the military identity of Leonese aristocracy provided also a powerful source of legitimation for *infanzones*. From now on, they could fashion themselves no longer as mere servants, but as proud warriors. Both factors must have helped to consolidate their influence over small village communities. Although *infanzones* had been long familiar with the exercise of local power as customary authorities and agents of the aristocracy, their explicit presentation as a group of specialized warriors allowed them to redefine themselves as a privileged elite, positively differentiated from their peasant neighbors by virtue of their behavior, their values, and even their appearance.

Written sources do not offer much information on such a process of identity redefinition concerning 980s–1030s *infanzones*, but fortunately the *fuero* of Castrojeriz provides a slightly later parallel: a fascinating record of oral memories arrogantly recalling the violent deeds performed by the local community of warriors

¹²⁰ See two recent surveys of the European debate by Mazel, Florian, *Féodalités (888-1180)*, Belin, París, 2014, pp. 637-648; and Wickham, Chris, «The 'Feudal Revolution' and the Origins of Italian City Communes», *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, n° 24, 2014 (pp. 29-55). For the particularly relevant case of Catalonia, it is worth comparing the classic model by Bonnassie, Pierre, *La Catalogne du milieu du Xe siècle à la fin du XIe siècle. Croissance et mutations d'une société*, Université de Toulouse-Le Mirail, Toulouse, 1975-1976, with the new perspectives offered by Ruiz-Domènec, José Enrique, *op. cit.*, and Sabaté i Curull, Flocel, *La feudalización de la sociedad catalana*, Universidad de Granada, Granada, 2007. In recent years, the nature and evolution of aristocratic power in the kingdom of Leon has been assessed in monographs such as Calleja Puerta, Miguel, *El conde Suero Vermúdez, su parentela y su entorno social. La aristocracia asturleonés en los siglos XI y XII*, KRK, Oviedo, 2001; Carvajal Castro, *op. cit.*; Fernández Conde, Francisco Javier, Mínguez, José María and Portela, Ermelindo, *El reino de Hispania (siglos VIII-XII). Teoría y práctica del poder*, Akal, Madrid, 2019; or Sánchez Badiola, Juan José, *El territorio de León en la Edad Media. Poblamiento, organización del espacio y estructura social (Siglos IX-XIII)*, Universidad de León, León, 2004.

¹²¹ Wickham, Chris, «The Feudal Revolution...», *op. cit.*, p. 33.

¹²² For the military meaning of *atondo*, see Torres Sevilla-Quiñones de León, Margarita, *El Cid y otros señores de la guerra*, Universidad de León, León, 2000, pp. 36-37.

throughout the 1030s–1100s¹²³. Following the alleged original text of the *fuero* granted by García Fernández in 974 and some rather vague references to the counts following him, the narration becomes significantly much more concrete since the times of King Sancho III, who ruled Castile in 1028–1034. From that moment on we have the account of some realistic, precise *fazañas* referring to specific facts, places and names, and becoming especially telling under the reigns of Fernando I and Alfonso VI. All of them involve the warriors of Castrojeriz pursuing any officer who had taken forfeits from them, and taking reprisals on royal possessions and king's servants (with a especial focus on Jews). Most compelling is the report elaborating their reaction to the fact that the *merino* of Alfonso VI's sister *domna* Urraca had confiscated some goods from them as forfeit, and stored them in the infanta's *palatio* in the *villa* of Icinaz. They recalled how they went there, «*et rumpimus villa et palatio, et bibimus illo vino quanto potuimos, et illud quod non potuimus bibere dedimus de manu per terra*»¹²⁴. Here performative violence – and boasting about it – is presented as a key element of the identity of warriors, being a capital instrument to assure, demonstrate and maintain their privileges.

In a similar way, the notice recording oral memories referring to the alleged tenth-century privilege of Berbea-Barrio and its confirmation by count Sancho García (995–1017) is followed by a much more concise report on how the aim of royal *merinos* to collect an *omicidio* forfeit in those villages in 1085 produced *valde altercatio*, resulting in their formal recantation¹²⁵.

It is not unlikely that Castilian counts had actually granted some concrete exemptions to their military servants in Castrojeriz and Berbea-Barrio (although their original tenor was lost as they were «improved» more than a century later), but the main point is that in both cases violence is presented as the means through which warriors managed to preserve their privileges. And not merely preserve, as their quarrelsome attitude certainly allowed them to conquer new benefits: it is worth noting that, whilst the exemptions whose alleged preservation was at stake in eleventh-century disputes concerned just some concrete forfeits (*omicidio* in Berbea-Barrio, *homicidio* and other *pignora* in Castrojeriz), at least the fierce inhabitants of Castrojeriz were granted a much more extended privileged position by the *fuero* dating from 1100–1131¹²⁶. Those fighting on horseback (*caballeros*) were then granted the noble status enjoyed by *infanzones*, echoing the social ascent the latter had experienced themselves some decades before.

The example of the *caballeros* of Castrojeriz shows that upward mobility of warriors was not just a development limited to a couple of decades around the year 1000, but an ongoing process linked to the consolidation of a feudal society along the eleventh–twelfth centuries. Scholarly focus on the «feudal revolution» has proven extremely fruitful, but it has somehow overshadowed the great transformation of aristocratic power in Western Europe during the years 1060–1150, as noted by Thomas Bisson¹²⁷. The kingdom of Leon is no exception: while the social ascent of *infanzones* during the 980s–1030s could be understood as connected to a general «feudal revolution» pattern, in fact the dismantling of the old order was a much more gradual process, with a durable tension between tradition and innovation. The old world and

¹²³ Muñoz y Romero, Tomás, *op. cit.*, pp. 39–40.

¹²⁴ «we broke through the villa and the palace, and drank all the wine we could, and poured the one we could not drink on the earth».

¹²⁵ García Andreva, Fernando, *op. cit.*, n° 536.

¹²⁶ The *fuero* gives reliable textual references to its «confirmation» by Alfonso VI and his wife Isabel, who reigned in 1100–1107, then by his son-in-law Alfonso I of Aragon, and finally by Alfonso VII as he reconquered Castrojeriz from Alfonso I in 1131. So its extant dispositions can be dated to c. 1100–1131.

¹²⁷ Bisson, Thomas N., *The Crisis of the Twelfth Century. Power, Lordship and the Origins of European Government*, Oxford University Press, Princeton – Oxford, 2009; Barthélemy, Dominique, *La France des Capétiens (987–1214)*, Seuil, París, 2015, pp. 163–243, even speaks of a «mutation de l'an 1100».

the new coexisted for a long time, until since the mid-eleventh century the scales clearly tipped in favor of change. During the following decades, warriors would gradually manage to be recognized as legitimate landowners and members of the nobility, while instilling fear in ecclesiastical scribes and even imposing their own perspective on some written sources.

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