THE PORTUGUESE TERRITORY BEFORE MODERN-DAY PORTUGAL: ROOTS OR PRECEDENTS? A GEO-HISTORICAL REFLECTION

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ABSTRACT

Portugal's identity has given rise to numerous theories. For a long time, many of them have been continuist, founded notably on what was believed to be the *ultima ratio* [last argument]: environmental factors. By considering that a territory like the Portuguese Kingdom around 1250, almost complete from a geographical point of view, was the product of different systems (economical exchanges, links between local communities, political network) and one identity, we shall attempt to look back over many years and study the relationship between the shape of this territory and that of the units that preceded it since in the Roman provinces of Lusitania and Galicia. Is there continuity, repetition or coincidence? Putting aside the problem of borders as such (the crossing of extremely voluntarist limits at precise points), considering that their global (not detailed) outline was always imposed by strong polarisation processes, we shall adopt a comparative approach to these "prefigurations" of Portugal.

KEY WORDS

Geohistory, Territorialisation, Frontiers, Long Term, Portugal.

CAPITALIA VERBA

Regionum descriptio historiae iuncta, De territorio augendo, Fines, Diuturnitas, Lusitania.

Portugal's determination to affirm itself and survive as an entity is apparent from the start of the 12th century, with such intensity and precocity (in comparison with the formation of the State), that the roots of its identity need to be identified before we see the appearance of an autonomous political power. This is an inevitable, but dangerous method: you have to know where to stop (i.e. not go too far back), because, like the great historian of medieval Hispanic identity, C. Sánchez Albornoz, you might be accused of "geological Hispanism" —or, in our case, geological Lusitanism!

Therefore, nationalist theories, for which antiquity and continuity are essential values, taking the Portuguese people's culture back to the Celtic Lusitanians (humanist theory, from the 16th century), or even the Palaeolithic shellfish gatherers, or the dolmen builders (ultra-nationalist theories of the 19th-20th centuries) have not been retained[1]. However, as comparison is key to comprehension in historical reflection, a brief observation of the "archetypes" (in the sense given by specialists in literature) of the Portuguese territory and State would not be devoid of interest.

Moreover, the reference to a distant past is inevitable. Since, even considering a shorter time-frame, between the Arab invasion (711-716 in this part of the Iberian Peninsula) and the 13th century, we have to admit tacitly that the motivating ideology of the Reconquista was the reconstruction of a lost unity; but the unity of what? Beyond the triumph of one faith over another, which was not very territorialised, we need to give a spatial definition. For the Kingdom of Asturias and León, before the secessions it suffered, the point of reference was the Visigothic Kingdom (whose spatial configuration was clear, since it was peninsular, i. e. the boundaries were mainly defined by coastlines). However, the principalities of Castile and Portugal —which came from León— each had its own front against al-Andalus, so which referential space should be "restored"?

With this in mind, there is no point tracing back the ancient evolution in events over many years. It might be better to study the existence of "long-term" structures. With regard to the issue of Portugal's "prefigurations", some people have cited a long-established feeling of identity, transmitted by the collective memory, and the continuity of encompassing or local institutions. Others, following geographical models, have supported the theory of continuity through the territorial (environmental or cultural) dimension[2], since the outline of political and administrative units is very resilient and, through a kind of "memory of

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1. On this subject a good explanation is given by Ribeiro, Orlando. "Formação de Portugal", *A formação de Portugal*. Lisbon: Instituto de Cultura e Língua Portuguesa, 1987: 19-64. The historiographical dimension of this issue is particularly well explained in the introduction by Mattoso in the second edition of the Herculano's History of Portugal: Mattoso, José. "Prefácio", Herculano, Alexandre. *História de Portugal desde o começo da monarquia até ao fim do reinado de Afonso III*, José Mattoso, ed. Lisbon: Livraria Bertrand, 1980-1981 (2nd-4th ed. 1862-76): I, 4-22.

2. This theory of the "distant roots" of Portuguese territory, formulated by J. Cortesão, is maintained and scientifically supported in the summaries by Torquato de Sousa Soares in particular: Soares, Torquato de Sousa. "Carácter e limites do Condado Portugalense (1096-1128)", *Papel das áreas regionais na formação histórica de Portugal. Actas do colóquio, Lisboa 1975*. Lisbon: Academia Portuguesa da História, 1975:

places", can sometimes withstand the most radical changes in social and political conditions.

Indeed, no-one dares to claim that the linear limits of the large entities from the Roman period until the 13th century still remain valid —if indeed they ever existed. However, we might suppose that the establishment of human groups, their economic exchange networks and their languages, etc., constitute objective (unconscious) factors, which occupy virtually the same space for a very long time —since they repeat themselves without sufficient evolutions to entail the modification of their territoriality[3].

However, this spatial dimension, involving numerous factors, is hard to tackle, because the number of specific elements that can be grasped is low, and the resolutely "contemporary" geographical models do not really supply enough methodologies for an efficient review of the ancient spatial systems or their long-term evolution (despite the historical origins of the notion of the term "region")[4]. Moreover, our reflection is inevitably based on the study of maps[5]. However, any possible resemblance of the spatial forms in no way prejudges the social configurations that implemented them: even in the most material mechanisms, the territoriality of a Roman province is not that of a feudal kingdom. And, at the other end of the scale, the capacity for polarisation of an imperial network of *civitates* and roads is not the same as that of a series of medieval bishoprics. Social factors remaining stable over a few generations do not engender —under the pretext that they combine in a complex manner— a spatial structure (a political territory) that remains unchanged in the very long term.

9-22; and finally, Soares, Torquato de Sousa. *Formação do estado português (1096-1179)*. Trofa: Sólivros de Portugal, 1989.

3. On this concept of territoriality, which we use here without can to define it, see more in-depth reflections in Boissellier, Stéphane. "Introduction à un programme de recherches sur la territorialité: essai de réflexion globale et éléments d'analyse", *De l'espace aux territoires: pour une étude de la territorialité des processus sociaux et culturels en Méditerranée occidentale médiévale. Actes de la table-ronde, Centre d'Etudes Supérieures de Civilisation Médiévale (Poitiers), 8-9 juin 2006*, Stéphane Boissellier, dir. Turnhout: Brepols, 2010, forthcoming likewise, the introductory contributions in Mousnier, Mireille; Cursente, Benoît, dirs. *Les territoires du médiéviste*. Rennes: Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2005.

4. See for example the brief chapter devoted to "chronogeography": Bailly, Antoine, dir. *Les concepts de la géographie humaine*. Paris: Armand Colin, 2004: 223-228, which uses above all sociological concepts and refers to a bibliography that has not progressed since 1980. More developed is the collaborative essay by a medievalist and a historical geographer, Boissellier, Stéphane; Baron, Nacima. "Sociétés médiévales et approches géographiques: un dialogue de sourds?", *Être médiéviste au XXIe siècle. Colloque SHMES, Evry-Versailles-Marne la Vallée, 31 May – 2 June 2007*. Paris: Publications de la Sorbonne, 2008 167-177.

5. Notably the excellent Mestre Campí, Jesús; Sabaté, Flocel. *Atlas de la "Reconquista". La frontera peninsular entre los siglos VIII y XV*. Barcelona: Ediciones Península, 1998.

1. A geographical logic?[6]

Even in recent scholarly works, historians believe they are obliged to subscribe to the unbearable "geographical introduction to history"[7], painting once and for all a background of physical and human geography, which, just like a theatrical set, will no longer be involved in the action. I shall try to avoid this trap by only presenting here theories that have already been expounded by Portuguese historians and geographers, in particular with regard to environmental elements that are farthest removed from mankind (main characters of the relief, the position with regard to other countries, climatic features) regarding the formation of Portugal. The problem is worth expressing: just as some ethnographers have tried to see the key to the Portuguese identity in one race (Lusitanian), many geographers, from E. Reclus to the German geographer, H. Lautensach, have tried to see a "natural unit" in the Portuguese territory. The great geographer, O. Ribeiro, a supporter of the culturalist position of a long-standing Portuguese identity, did justice to these theories.

1.1 Portugal and beyond: land and sea

Firstly, we must take the Portuguese territory as a whole; since it has scarcely evolved since 1297 (Treaty of Alcañices), its present shape is the same as it was during the medieval period —at least after the end of the Reconquista (1250). Beyond its "contents" and in connection with this, the shape that the country has acquired (a rectangle bordering on the sea) explains its territorial functioning and perhaps constitutes an "objective" element of its identity (i.e. one which people in the Middle Ages, with no maps, were not aware of). A regular-shaped territory, which is quite massive despite being slender (560 km from north to south and on average 160 km from east to west), and covering 90,000km², Portugal is made up of a rather narrow coastal band. No part of the country is more than 200 km from the sea, and the frequent disputes with Castile-Léon did not help east-west relations. This coastal character accentuates the country's eccentricity on peninsular and European levels: the whole of Portugal, a country that contains continental Europe's westernmost

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6. See, in French, the useful summary by Ribeiro, Orlando. "La terre et l'homme", *Portugal. Huit siècles d'histoire au service de la valorisation de l'homme et du rapprochement entre les peuples*. Brussels: Comissariado Geral de Portugal para a Exposição Universal e Internacional de Bruxelas de 1958, 1958 (separate edition, in French, of Ribeiro, Orlando. "Um povo na Terra", *Portugal. Oito séculos de História ao serviço da valorização do homem e da aproximação dos povos*. Lisbon: Comissariado Geral de Portugal para a Exposição Universal e Internacional de Bruxelas de 1958, 1958: 33-38). There is an excellent historio-geographical reflection by Durand, Robert. *Histoire du Portugal*. Paris: Hâtier, 1992: 11-14.

7. For example: Duby, George, dir. *Histoire de la France*. Paris: Larousse, 1970-1991; Mattoso, José, dir. *História de Portugal*. Lisbon: Círculo de Leitores, 1992-1994. Its chapters, written by the foremost specialists, are often remarkable and, in their contents, go beyond the determinism that we denounce (preferring a "possibilism"). However, it is their place in the economy of historical reflection that poses a problem: in the foreword, which pays homage to the importance of spatial structures, they can only reveal "long-term" phenomena, whilst the relations between mankind and the environment evolve continuously alongside the social configurations.

point on the Atlantic coast (Cabo da Roca), constitutes an oceanic borders of the Europe. Maritime cabotage facilitates communication in Portugal thanks to its long coastline. Moreover, the fact that the floor of the continental oceanic plateau is extremely rich in fish favours coastal occupation and navigation. The opposition between the open coastal zones and the compartmentalisation of the inland areas, at least in the north of the country, explain why a major land route was established following the coast from Braga to Lisbon —overshadowing the sea route for short trips. This also leads us to reject the theory, more poetical and sentimental than scientific, of a Portuguese "maritime calling".

Thus, although it is not a mere seafront and does have a real hinterland (at least as highly populated as the coastal strip), an area with as few continental features as the future Portugal was naturally polarised by the sea: classically dividing the Iberian Peninsula into three longitudinal sectors (eastern, central and western), the great "Portuguese" Andalusian poet and historian from the end of the 11th century, Ibn Bassam of Santarém, presented the West (*Gharb*) of al-Andalus as a region polarised by Seville, its capital (*madina hadira*), and made up of "the costal areas of the 'Roman' ocean, which belong to this region"[8]. Moreover, the only geographical (material) logic that unifies the country is that the main part of its territory constitutes in general terms the zone the continental plateaux of the Iberian Meseta, where become progressively lower towards the west, forming an amphitheatre that opens up to the Atlantic[9]. Furthermore, the relative enclave-like situation of the country in relation to the Iberian "continent", next to an often hostile neighbouring kingdom, explains why its distant foreign relations were often carried out via the ocean. In this respect, the annexation of the Algarve (the last Muslim territory conquered) in the middle of the 13th century, besides giving Portugal 200 km additional coastline, helped develop navigation. The only province to have difficult relations with the rest of Portugal (due to being isolated by its rugged terrain), whilst offering highly appreciated specific agricultural and maritime production which forced it to trade, the Algarve had to communicate with the outside world —Lisbon in particular— by boat. This link was the first in the history of this country that did not take place using cabotage (because of the absence of any big ports between Setúbal and Lagos), thereby setting the scene for Atlantic navigation.

However, the current predominance of maritime cities (Lisbon, Porto, Faro and Setúbal) was less pronounced from Roman Antiquity until the 15th century (even including the non-coastal cities that were linked to the sea, such as Braga, Coimbra and Alcácer). Indeed, from a geostrategic point of view, the Atlantic is completely different from the Mediterranean in terms of relations between countries: there was no known coast to the west of the 'Mare Tenebrosum' (Dark Sea) before 1492,

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8. On the other hand, it does not specify the Andalusian Levant by the presence of the Mediterranean (but rather by the presence of a military march against the Christians); see the Italian translation of his work in Soravia, Bruna. "L'introduzione d'Ibn Bassam al *Kitab al-dhahira fi mahasin ahl al-djazira*: presentazione e traduzione", *Bataliús II. Nuevos estudios sobre el reino taifa de Badajoz*, Fernando Díaz Esteban, ed. Madrid: Letrúmero, 1999: 253-271.

9. Portugal has an average altitude of 240 m in comparison with 660 m in the case of Spain.

and the countries bordering the Atlantic were the only ones to frequent these waters. However, when Portugal was formed, two seafronts opposed one another for several centuries: one, to the north, from Norway to Galicia, was Christian. And the other, to the south, from Lisbon to Senegal, was Muslim. It was the Iberian Reconquista, moving from north to south, which enlarged the first front to the detriment of the second. And Portugal was where all this disruption took place — leading to many small coastal villages being abandoned. Therefore, the Portuguese coastline did not constitute a "natural condition" from the outset. All the more so because the military insecurity of the coast, linked to the split between the Kingdom of Asturias and the Andalusian State, was made worse in the 9th-10th centuries by Norman pirates. Furthermore, we should not give in to "road determinism", attributing the driving force in the formation of cultural, economic and political units to communications (maritime in this case) —although it would no doubt be preferable to topographic and climatic determinism. Moreover, whilst the current territory has almost as much coastline as terrestrial borders[10], primitive Portugal, with 200 km of coastline and 800 km of continental borders, was far less open to the sea. In other words, once again, it was the Reconquista which, with its north-south orientation, "coastalised" the country.

The final geographical problem is that of the separation from the neighbouring kingdoms of León and Castile (Castile-León was unified from 1037-1157 and the two kingdoms were united definitively in 1230). During the 10th-11th centuries, the future Portugal (between the rivers Minho and Mondego) constituted the southern military march of Galicia (province of León) against al-Andalus: therefore, its formation obeyed a political and military geostrategy. Certainly, the coastal landscape is clearly contrasting. In the north of the "Galician" zone there are *rias*, deep fjords that indent the coast from A Coruña to Vigo, and in the south there is a "Portuguese" coastline, which is far straighter (except for the Aveiro Ria). However, in the inland, this determinism was far weaker. Whilst there was a global topographical opposition between Portugal and the regions farther east, the borders of the incipient Portugal, covering an area between the Minho and Coimbra, were not at all "natural" in their detailed layout —nor were those in the southern part of the kingdom, which were added after 1130. The most notable features of the landscape (the large rivers, and the mountain ranges of the Central System, in particular the Serra da Estrela, and the Algarve Range), globally oriented SW-NE, cut across the country rather than defining it. On the contrary, the Douro and the Tagus rivers, more navigable in the Middle Ages than nowadays, facilitated communication between Portugal and Castile when political ideologies did not prevent it. The border, as it was defined up to 1297, was supported in places by major topographical elements, especially sections of rivers (small parts of the rivers Minho, Douro, Tagus and larger sectors of the Guadiana). However, this was due to loyalty to very old districts more than to the direct influence of natural elements. As for the mountainous landscapes, which

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10. 832 km as opposed to 1,215 (but that is because the terrestrial border, more "political" because it borders on another State, is more indented). The terrestrial border of northern Portugal today is 339 km long and takes a sharp turn southwards to constitute a 876 km long western border.

were supposed to isolate NE Portugal quite clearly, they belonged to a larger series of ranges, in the midst of which the border could have been just as clear elsewhere. As in the whole of Portugal, locally the border used its environmental potential, which could sometimes even prevail, but overall its definition was due to the wishes of men and women and the weight of the past[11].

1.2 The internal diversity

The Portuguese identity is not remarkable either when one considers the mosaic of landscapes that makes up the territory. J. Mattoso devotes the majority of his important two-volume essay on "the identification of the country" to the "opposition" between the regions —subjecting himself perhaps a little too much to the geographers' determinism[12]. Admittedly, there is a need for research to ensure that the diversity was as pronounced in the Middle Ages. But even if it were less notable, it would not be less significant. This is not at all surprising. Despite the modest size of the country, it is too vast for there not to have been notable local and regional variations.

Geographers have long stressed the topographical contrasts between the coast and the interior; moreover, the interior is in parts characterised by a fold structure (in the centre of the country and the extreme northeast), whilst in others it is very open (especially south of the Tagus). This contrast creates a global altitudinal opposition between one side of the Tagus and the other[13]. This opposition, perhaps greater than the global topographical differentiation between Portugal and Castile, had a great impact. The difficulty in the communication between the north of Portugal, as much (if not more so) inside the country as in relation to Castile, involved a local particularism, whilst the opening up in the south would have meant that the region was more closely linked to the east, had it not been for the old tradition of separation between the provinces of Lusitania and Baetica[14]. Moreover, as we have seen, three large rivers, the Douro (known as the Duero in Spanish), the Mondego (the only one not to be shared with Castile) and the Tagus, cross the country from east to west

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11. A good example of this difference of scale in the complex relation between the environment and political will is the region of Riba Côa: whilst this narrow strip of land between two southern tributaries of the Douro River, currently Portuguese, was colonised by León in the 12th century, this was probably because it belonged topographically to the plateaux of the Castilian Meseta (whose lower part constituted the Luso-Castilian border). However, this landscape identity is also found in the Mirando do Douro area, which belonged to this primitive county of Portugal from the start.

12. Mattoso, José. *Identificação de um País. Ensaio sobre as origens de Portugal 1096-1325*. Lisbon: Editorial Estampa, 1988: I (*oposição*), II (*composição*).

13. 95% of the lands at altitudes of over 400 m are found north of the Tagus, whilst 63% of the land in the south are below 200 m.

14. On a local scale, which is more relevant, this opposition is even more striking in the size of the medieval community territories: miniscule parishes (in the northeast) or small to the north of the end of the River Tagus and of its southern tributary, the Zêzere, and vast or immense municipal territories south of this line.

and compartmentalise it. It is true that it was their use by men, as borders against the Muslims in the south, that created then as clear internal separations.

The climatic contrasts also oppose the north-west, with its oceanic, rainy climate with no great differences between the seasons, to the rest of the country, which becomes increasingly continental as it nears the Spanish border, and clearly Mediterranean southwest of the Tagus. However, the climatic opposition between the coast and the interior is not as great as their topographical contrast. To the north of the Tagus, the oceanic influence penetrates far inland (except in Trás-os-Montes), while these influences are uniformly weak —i. e. even near the coast— in the "Mediterranean" south. These differences combine with the location and the landscape, already mentioned, but also with the quality of the soil (which affects the vegetation), and even the use of the land (largely linked to economic activities and socio-political fiefdom) in order to define the numerous clearly defined "countries". Moreover, this diversity of landscapes, quite astonishing and almost unique in Europe, concentrated on such a small area, generated the major theory of a dualism between "Atlantic Portugal and Mediterranean Portugal"[15]. We might prefer a more lasting dualism between northern and southern Portugal, on either side of an intermediary zone, which stretches from the central mountainous system to the Tagus, to this notion, largely based, in terms of human geography, on ethnogeographical observations dating back to the 19th century. Without achieving demographic, economic and cultural self-sufficiency, the regions of medieval Portugal led most of their existence in an endogenous logic; the slowness of connections, the strength of socio-economic and cultural particularities and, even more so, the parochial mentality (i.e. a localist mind-set), meant that, here, as in the entire medieval West, political unity prevailed over local realities and integrated them very slowly, but without ever destroying them.

It must be concluded that diversity, in terms of the environment, was an asset rather than a handicap, at least when intent and actions (necessarily collective) were strong enough to marke it complementarity. It associated these countries in a global unity, creating *ipso facto* a kind of division of work on a large scale, inevitably developing exchanges of goods and services that create unity —even if the major agricultural and artisanal production was largely represented in all the regions, and even in each territory, and did not constitute an object of exchanges. Some products and means of production cannot be substituted; sea fish have to come from the sea, whilst summer grazing pastures are generally found in the mountains: the tolls in the charters of franchise (known as *forais* in Portuguese), revealed that sea fish was sold all over, and the reconstruction of transhumance journeys shows that there were links between the "countries" at least after the 13th century[16]. Thus we see that landscape diversity is not at all "natural", but instead

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15. Ribeiro, Orlando. *Portugal, o Mediterrâneo e o Atlântico. Esboço de relações geográficas*. Lisbon: Sá da Costa, 1987 (1st ed. 1945 and many further editions after the one we have cited).

16. A recent summary, based on Portuguese works, in Boissellier, Stéphane. "Les recherches sur les déplacements de bétail au Portugal au Moyen Âge, bilan des travaux et éléments de réflexion", *Transhumance et estivage en Occident des origines aux enjeux actuels. Actes des XXVIe journées internationales*

reflects the differences in the form that human control has taken; it is above all a historical diversity.

2. The Roman province of Lusitania

As elsewhere, the Portuguese, and above all their historians, have been fascinated by their Roman past since the Renaissance. Portugal has produced some of the greatest humanists, such as André de Resende. This fascination is legitimate, but often to the detriment of the period following Roman domination: even the most impressive medieval castles could not match the monumentality of the Roman cities of Conimbriga or Mirobriga, and the medieval villages, despite their churches and their high walls, were clearly more rustic than the Roman *villae*, with their mosaics and their thermal baths[17]. Besides, several centuries of Roman Peace, the economic and cultural integration into an empire on the scale of the Mediterranean —when the horses of Lusitania were renowned throughout the Roman world—, images of a lost paradise, contrast with the centuries of war against al-Andalus, and with the progressive relegation of southern Iberia outside of the Mediterranean[18].

It was the Roman political and cultural domination that left the medieval Portuguese culture its most important pre-medieval elements: Portuguese is a Latin language, wine growing and numerous agricultural practices were started by the Romans, and the global polarisation of the territory (several major cities, which were Roman colonies, as well as major roads) resulted from Roman colonisation. However, these significant elements are not specific to this area, since Rome left them across the entire Mediterranean region, and thus they are common to the whole Iberian Peninsula (except the Basque Country and perhaps Cantabria), therefore they do not form part of a regional identity. Moreover, in terms of spatial organisation, a territory constitutes a framework as well as its "contents", and things are less clear from this point of view. It is true that the territory of Portugal, as it appeared around 1250, because of its shape and extent, reproduced quite clearly, although not exactly, a series of three Roman (judicial) districts, the *conventus*, with capitals in Bracara Augusta (Braga), Scallabis (future Santarém) and Pax Julia (Beja) respectively. And even the old border of the Tagus ("internal" border in the old Province of Lusitania), between *Conventus Pacensis* and *Conventus Scallabitanus*,

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d'histoire de l'abbaye de Flaran, 9, 10, 11 septembre 2004, Pierre-Yves Laffont, ed. Toulouse: Presses Universitaires du Mirail, 2006: 163-182.

17. See the different contributions by: Gorges, Jean-Gérard; Salinas de Frías, Manuel, eds. *Les campagnes de Lusitanie romaine. Occupation du sol et habitats. Table ronde internationale (Salamanque, 29 et 30 janvier 1993)*. Salamanca-Madrid: Ediciones Universidad de Salamanca-Casa de Velázquez, 1994.

18. It might however appear regrettable, that, until the Romantic Period, Antiquity relegated the medieval past (including that of al-Andalus) as a barbaric time not worthy of interest, and that, until very recently, archaeological finds of medieval remains were dug up with hydraulic shovels so as to reach antique levels, on sites that had been occupied continuously or reoccupied.

reproduced in the 5th-6th centuries by the border between the (barbarian) Sueve and Visigoth kingdoms, was reactivated in the 12th century (as a relatively enduring border against the Moors) by the young Portuguese monarchy, and was to be used for a long time as an internal border of the kingdom between the medieval provinces named "between the Douro and the Tagus" and the Alentejo ("beyond the Tagus")[19].

Under Roman domination, these *conventus* were simply subdivisions of larger and probably earlier areas, the provinces. However, the latter cannot be recognized easily when passing from Antiquity to medieval Portugal. Indeed, Lusitania was a clearly continental province, with its capital in Mérida, whilst the Portuguese territory as it stood around 1120 (at its political birth), associated the southern half of the Province of Galicia (capital Braga) and a small (southern) part of the coastline of Lusitania, and thus completely tore these Roman districts apart. However, in its expansion southwards during the 11th-13th centuries, Portugal reconstructed quite precisely the coastal part of Lusitania (in the form of its two *conventus* of Beja and Scallabis), and gave the former provincial border (between Lusitania and Baetica) back its role in the lower course of the River Guadiana —the only Roman border that still exists unchanged[20]. Moreover, the new Portuguese unity destroyed the River Douro as frontier. This river had formerly constituted an enduring border (withstanding all the provincial reorganisations under the Empire) between the Roman provinces of Galicia and Lusitania, but it did not last as an internal boundary in the new country; the role played by the town of Braga was essential in this process.

It was thus on an intermediate scale (that of the *conventus*) that the spatial continuity was clearest, and not on the scale of the higher level of districts; although it should also be noted that the Portuguese territory moved the borders of the *Conventus Scallabitanus* clearly westwards, in addition to making other minor modifications. This was not a minor detail, because a reorganisation, even involving a short distance, shows that a new logic is at work, especially when it takes place several centuries later. Finally, as can be seen by studying the penetration of Christianity, in the detailed "contents" of these vast districts, the centuries after the end of the Roman period were to effect great changes to the polarity within the Gallaecian and Lusitanian area. Under Rome, the strongest organisation (a systematic network made up of local districts, the *civitates* or "urban settlements"[21]) was located south of the Douro and even further south of the Tagus: the *Conventus Baracarensis*

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19. Today historians studying Antiquity are not certain that the River Tagus was used as a border between the *conventus*: Alarcão, Jorge de, dir. *Portugal das origens à romanização* (Serrão, Joel; Marques, António Henrique de Oliveira, dirs. *Nova História de Portugal*, I). Lisbon: Editorial Presença, 1990: 384, 385 (map).

20. Some historians even suggest that the expeditions carried out during the High Middle Ages, by the kings of Asturias and León to Mérida, were aimed at reconstructing the former province of Lusitania. This geostrategic interpretation of often fortuitous military events (at least when they were not repeated in a very lasting form) is dangerous, reproducing the vagaries of "historical geography" of the beginning of the 20th century. In some cases it is impossible; thus, the eastwards expansions by the Portuguese sovereigns, after the kingdom's independence, to the detriment of the "mother" territory of León (north of the Douro), notably in the direction of Zamora, had barely any meaning with regard to Roman Gallaecia or the Sueve Kingdom.

21. Around 20 urban settlements in the *Conventus Scallabitanus* and around 12 in the *Pacensis*.

was not even divided up into civitates, the *Conventus Scallabitanus* had a completely off-centre capital (very far south), and these two districts were separated by a no-man's-land, consisting of a central mountain range (it is also lacking in urban settlements). It was in the Sueve and Visigothic High Middle Ages that the northern part was structured more strongly and central Portugal between the Douro and the Tagus became the heart of a unit, which ended up, in the 13th and 14th centuries, by associating equally to the regions at either end, the one at the north of the Douro and the of the Tagus the south.

The main element that explains a continuity in the global shape of the districts for around 800 years, was that the old civil territories (not just the *conventus* but also, and especially, the *citivates*) formed the framework for Christianisation and thus were turned into dioceses between the 3rd and 7th centuries. Admittedly, in the south of the country, strongly Islamicised after the 10th century, the dioceses ended up disappearing, but the Christian conquerors tried to "restore" them —that is the word used in the medieval charters— to their primitive form in order to reject Islam and affirm, via the idea of continuity, the legitimacy of the Reconquista. Moreover, this diocesan continuity was to constitute the main source of international conflicts for Portugal. Even in the 11th-12th centuries, the regrouping of the dioceses into ecclesiastical provinces (or archdioceses), reflecting obsolete Roman provincial logic, no longer matched the new division into differentiated and rival nations that had existed since the 8th century (and in fact since the Germanic invasions). Moreover, the Roman districts, which originated in military conquest and were used to support colonisation, were divided up in accordance with urban centres; in the West of Iberia, which became Muslim after 711, the Arab civilisation allowed the local capitals to be maintained (Coimbra, Lisbon, Santarém, Évora, Beja, Ossonoba/Faro), except for Idanha. And, in the north, which had remained or rapidly became Christian again, the urban decline of the High Middle Ages did not entirely challenge the centrality of the main former or Sueve-Visigothic capitals (Braga, Chaves, Lamego, Viseu). Much of Portugal's urban framework was thus very ancient, which guaranteed a certain degree of stability to the administrative polarisation of the population and activities.

But if one tries to associate the elements of spatial continuity (or rather "reconstruction") with the continuity of a *cultural* identity, the difficulties begin to accumulate. Indeed, no important cultural criterion allows clear identification of the western *conventus* within the heart of ancient Lusitania. With regard to the degree of Romanisation, the Tagus marks a caesura between the southern precocity of the introduction of a network of *villae* and the northern persistence with the indigenous way of life —which brought the north of Lusitania close to Galicia— and thus many phenomena, such as the geographical distribution of clans and large families, went beyond the province or developed there in a uniform fashion, without the lands of the future Portugal being clearly defined[22].

22. On this point, see the work by Aguilar Sáenz, Antonio; Guichard, Pascal; Lefebvre, Sabine. "La ciudad antigua de *Lacimurga* y su entorno rural", *Les campagnes de Lusitanie romaine...*: 109-130.

3. The Sueve Kingdom and Visigothic unification

After the 4th-5th centuries, the Roman unity was broken up in the West by Germanic tribes (in the Iberian Peninsula by the Vandals, Sueves and Visigoths), which were for many years considered barbarians. On a cultural level, their contribution was uneven: the Germanic languages only left around 40 words in Portuguese —although the adoption of Germanic names (of places and, above all, of people), was very popular, until this died down in favour of saints' names in the 12th century— and the barbarians' technical legacy seems very limited (except for the metalworking industry). However, even as late as the 12th-13th centuries, the political practices of Iberian leaders were greatly influenced by Germanic customs. From a territorial point of view, these peoples founded kingdoms on a largely ethnic basis, thus paying little respect to former districts (except the smallest ones, the *civitates*, and possibly even the *conventus*, which formed the framework of the kingdoms). Despite the numerical weakness of the invaders and their desire to conserve the Roman civilisation, inevitably these new territorial units *sui generis* had a more marked identity than the Roman provinces (conceived to convey Rome's orders in a uniform fashion), even though they corresponded to them in spatial terms. However, the political units which constituted the west of *Hispania* did not clearly prefigure Portugal's territory; but one of them, the ephemeral Sueve Kingdom (411-585) was considered the first case of an "west Iberian" identity awareness.

Naturally, no-one could predict a morphological relationship between the Sueve Kingdom and 13th century Portugal; even when limiting to the "cradle" of Portugal (the region between the Minho and the Douro, before 1000 AD) and to the neast of the Sueve Principality (which was the Germanic settlment area, between Braga and Porto), it is hard to enter a territorial reflection —and the problem was posed above all (and rightly so) in terms of identity. One therefore has to go beyond the comparison of global forms, and instead consider certain spatial mechanisms.

It would be easy to see the Sueve Kingdom, small and enclosed, as an irredentist region in comparison with the Visigoth hegemony (a kingdom that occupied the whole of the rest of the Iberian Peninsula)[23], just as Portugal will be in relation to unified Spain after the 16th century. Except for its brief clarification in the chronicle by Hydatius, Bishop of Chaves[24], its history is not well known. However, due to its size alone, this small kingdom was perhaps better structured than its huge neighbour, at least in respect of religious administration, since a list of parishes from this period survives today (the very famous *Parochiale suevicum*, a unique document in the Europe), testifying to the density of local districts in the dioceses of Braga and Porto (30 and 25 "parishes" respectively). This vigour was in part due to the evangelising activity of St Martin of Dume/Braga, the "Apostle of the Sueves" (bishop from 550-579), whose renown spread across the entire Peninsula. For a generation, the

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23. All except for a thin coastal strip occupied during the years 530-50 by the Byzantine armies of the Emperor Justinian, who wanted to take the western part of the Roman Empire back from the Germanic sovereigns.

24. Hydace. *Chronique*, ed. and trans. Alain Tranoy. Paris: editions du Cerf, 1974.

Sueve Kingdom stood out (in comparison to its powerful and threatening Visigoth neighbour) due to its monarchy won over by Catholicism (in 559, after an aborted attempt in 448), whilst the Visigoth kings only abandoned Arianism in 589[25]. So, can we say that there was Sueve nationalism beyond the royal Court?

From a territorial point of view (probably more enduring than socio-political identity), the small Sueve Kingdom was more "antique" than medieval, since it corresponded to the entire Roman province of Gallaecia (thus largely facing towards the Bay of Biscay), yet added to the *Conventus Scallabitanus*, torn off the Province of Lusitania —and on account of these features "medieval". As we have already mentioned, the role played by Braga, which became an archdiocese in 448 (at the expense of Astorga)[26], was then essential in the attempts to "conquer" once and for all the ancient border between Galicia and Lusitania —although this was to generate problems, because the ecclesiastical Province of Braga extended beyond the borders of the future Portugal. On the other hand, as the ancient provincial capital of Galicia, Braga did not intend for dominate a district of Lusitania; its stature within the unity of the Sueve Kingdom showed that the cities held greater sway due to their religious centrality than their strictly civil functions.

However, in order to understand the territorial conformation of the Sueve Kingdom, one also has to take into account the Germanic population. However, the Sueves mainly settled in the region between the Minho and the Douro rivers, and above all towards the coast, between Braga and Porto, in other words at the southern end of *Gallaecia*. From this core area, it was logical that their political domination would extend northwards and southwards without much respect for the ancient administrative organisation. Even though the stabilisation of this territory depended largely on military and political events, or a mixture of arbitrary and fortuitous twists and turns, thereafter there was unity between Gallaecia and Lusitania, particularly in the cultural domain. When, during the High Middle Ages, almost all over southern Europe, Romance languages developed from the late Vulgar Latin, there was no distinction between the languages spoken in Galicia and those in the north of (future) Portugal.

The territory of the Visigothic Kingdom, meanwhile, far larger than the previous one, was nothing like the future Portugal, because, although it included its southern half (in fact the coast of ancient Lusitania), it extended over an area which covered the entire Peninsula and even expanded northwards beyond the Pyrenees. And our region remained closely linked, as it did under Rome, to continental Mérida; the link of this southwestern end of the Iberian Peninsula with the rest of the Visigothic

25. Remember that the Germanic peoples were converted to Christianity in its Arian version (condemned as a heresy at the Ecumenical Council of Nicea in 325) and thus dominated the Latin populations who were almost entirely Catholic, which caused the sovereigns serious legitimacy problems —a problem that Clovis and the Francs were able to circumvent by passing directly from Paganism to Catholicism.

26. This transfer in 448, which took place within the Sueve Kingdom itself, did not have political origins, but can probably be explained by the desire of the royal dynasty (which was trying to convert to Catholicism at that time) to locate one of their religious capitals —the other was Lugo— in the area with the strongest Sueve population.

territory was all the stronger since, south of the Tagus, communications with the east were easier. It is this same unspecific colossus that ended up absorbing the territorial outline of Portugal represented by the Sueve Kingdom. From the point of view of future Portugal (in its definitive form after 1250), two points should be highlighted:

- the phase of coexistence between the Sueve and Visigoth kingdoms saw the establishment of a strong border on the Tagus and between the Scallabis and Mérida *conventus*, whilst during Antiquity they were only internal borders in Lusitania;
- after the reunification with the Visigoths, we note the probable deletion of the possible regional identity created by the Sueve Kingdom[27], despite the maintenance of the Roman-Sueve province of Galicia as the 6th province of reunified *Hispania*[28].

Moreover, this deletion was desired by the Visigoth monarchy: the Third Council of Toledo, which sanctioned the adoption of Catholicism and renounced Arianism, affirmed that King Reccared converted the Sueves. And the chronicles "forgot" the evangelisation carried out by St Martin de Braga![29] Therefore, the phase of Sueve unity probably did not create a lasting regional specificity at that time, but it did constitute a precedent that could be referred to when Portuguese separatism developed.

While the Church constituted the main factor of continuity in the Roman territorial (and cultural) heritage, its administrative geography introduced several new elements that should be taken into account. Although, as we have seen, there was continuity in the main ancient cities and, less clearly, in their associated land (the *civitas*)[30], the presence of Christianity modified their functional hierarchy. Firstly, the oldest episcopal sees —and we know that antiquity is an essential factor of legitimation in ecclesiastical usage[31]— were not founded in the administrative capi-

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27. Many authors have underlined the fact that this deletion of identity was given away by at least one clue, the invasion of Visigothic law, attested to late in the "Portuguese" charters from the 10th century by numerous mentions of the Visigothic legal code (*lex Gothorum* or *liber judicum*). However, we should stress the fact that, since these are testimonials made *a posteriori*, after a documentary hiatus of several centuries, they reveal above all a purely administrative continuity, thus a movement driven from above, by a monarchy from Asturias and Léon (which claimed to be the Visigoths' heir), which extended its jurisdiction and influence over the ancient Sueve Kingdom. Thus, nothing proves the legal continuity *in situ* in the Galician region between Minho and Douro, or the original cultural impregnation of this zone.

28. This problem, curiously little studied, was tackled by Mattoso, José. "Les Wisigoths dans le Portugal médiéval: état actuel de la question", *L'Europe héritière de l'Espagne wisigothique. Colloque international du CNRS tenu à la Fondation Singer-Polignac (Paris, 14-16 mai 1990)*, Jacques Fontaine, Christine Pellastrandi, eds. Madrid: Casa de Velázquez, 1992: 325-339.

29. Deswarte, Thomas. *L'Espagne et la papauté: enjeux idéologiques et ecclésiologiques (586-1085)*. Bordeaux: Université Michel de Montaigne-Bordeaux 3 (unpublished habilitation dissertation), 2007: 192-193.

30. Besides, historians, projecting recent realities on the Roman past, have long believed that a State as centralised and administrative as the Empire —like the modern States we believe to be its heirs— must have covered the territory exhaustively by local dividing and interlocked districts. As revealed by the history of medieval parishes, medievalists now have doubts about this organisation.

31. Together with the east of Baetica and the Tarragona region, the southern half of future Portugal constituted one of the three Iberian zones where the oldest bishoprics were founded.

tals of the *conventus* (except those that were at the same time provincial capitals, as in the cases of Braga and Mérida): in the *Conventus Pacensis*, it was Ébora and Ossonoba that were home to the first Christian communities at the expense of Pax Iulia (Beja), and Olisipo (Lisbon) playing the same role with regard to Scallabis within the *Conventus Scallabitanus*. Furthermore, it was the multiplication of Christian communities in the region during the 5th-7th centuries that obliged the dioceses to multiply in order to organise these masses, thereby breaking the unity of these *conventus*, especially north of the Tagus (where Christianity developed later than in the south but created a closer network). Thus emerged the centres of Pax —which made its ancient civil centrality at least equal to religious centrality— and above all in the north with Aeminium/Conimbriga (Coimbra), Egitania (Idanha), Lamecum, Viseum, Magnetum (Meinedo)/Porto, Dumium and even the ephemeral Aquae Flaviae (Chaves, illustrated especially by its bishop, Hydatius, historian of the beginning of the Sueve Kingdom)[32].

It then became necessary to organise these more numerous episcopal sees into a hierarchy, and it was naturally this new political framework of the kingdoms (Sueve north of the Tagus, Visigothic to the south), which lay behind this hierarchy. However, whilst the ancient provincial capitals were logically transformed into archdioceses (in the case of Braga quite late, in 448, at the expense of Astorga), the barbarian kingdoms no longer corresponded to the Roman provinces: within the Sueve Kingdom, the cities where the bishoprics were located between the Douro and the Tagus (Conimbriga, Lamecum, Viseum and Egitania) were thus dependent on the Archdiocese of Braga —whilst, in an "ancient" logic, they should have been under the religious jurisdiction of Mérida— and this anomaly continued for almost a century after the disappearance of the Sueve Kingdom, until 660. This is the first element of true political continuity for the future Portugal, since, after Portuguese independence, the archbishops of Braga asserted the situation that existed in the Sueve period and legitimated their claims with documents that dated back to that period. This expansion of the *Bracarense* jurisdiction southwards compensated the losses in the north, because Braga was in competition —from the point of view of the Roman province of *Gallaecia* of which Braga was the capital— with another archdiocese, Lugo, which stood like a missionary in a region that remained pagan; and the border between these two ecclesiastical provinces of the High Middle Ages was more or less the northern border of the Portuguese kingdom. Thus, due to a matter of religious jurisdiction, Braga, the political capital of the northwards-looking Sueve Kingdom, was then turned southwards; when Portugal began to become detectable as a kingdom, the old border of the Douro between Galicia and Lusitania was replaced by a border further north, on the rivers Minho and Lima.

It was the Reconquista that was to confirm this global territorial "southernisation" of the western part of the Iberian Peninsula.

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32. Most of these dioceses north of the River Tagus were created at the end of the Sueve Kingdom, and their founding was probably aimed at strengthening this kingdom against the Visigothic upsurge, especially in the "Lusitanian" zone (between the Douro and the Tagus), which constituted the most fragile part of the Sueve Kingdom.

4. The western part of al-Andalus, the Gharb, until the beginning of the 12th century: Lusitania's missing link?[33]

Even if, by the time the kingdom was born, Portugal's "cradle" had been turned southwards for a long time and tended to set itself even further apart from a more clearly northern Galicia, the lasting integration of the entire southern part of the Iberian Peninsula (south of the Mondego as far as western Iberia is concerned) in an Arab-Muslim political and cultural unity, al-Andalus, quite clearly cut the *Portucalense* region off from its links with the south and reduced it to a clearly "northern" isolation —not absolutely, but in terms of its position within the future Portugal. The problem that resulted form this situation was also geographical: once the Kingdom of Portugal was complete (as an globally functioning unit), it was more strongly "al-Gharbian" than Galician (in comparison with ancient Gallaecia). However, as we have seen, the "latitudinal" territorial break-up introduced by the formation of al-Andalus may have led to a legitimisation which endorsed the districts that existed before the invasion.

Crucially, considering the value long attributed to the original contribution made by Andalusian culture, historians have neglected to examine the possibility that a specifically Andalusian territorial construction was transmitted to the Portuguese Kingdom. Noting that Portugal corresponded most of all to the Province of Lusitania (with a border along the River Guadiana south of Badajoz and in particular south of Mértola) in his part that remained Andalusian for longest, historians have rapidly passed through the Visigoth-Sueve centuries, proposing a strong continuity in the ancient districts (the *civitates* and *conventus*) of the Andalusian administrative geography[34]; the best studied case (by a geographer, João Carlos Garcia), from a spatial point of view, is that of the *Conventus* of Beja, which the author of the study believes was perpetuated by the homonymous caliphal *kura* [administrative district][35]. In other words, progressing southwards, did the governors of the *Portucalense* Province of the Kingdom of León, above all the Portuguese kings, reconstruct an ancient territory?

It does not look like they intended to do this. If, as has been suggested, the Galician expeditions against Mérida, which had become Andalusian, during the High Middle Ages, had formed part of the desire to reconstruct Lusitania, King Afonso I of Portugal's attempt to take Badajoz in 1169, which some historians

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33. Much of the information on which our interpretations in this section are based, have been taken from a paper by Picard, Christophe. *Le Portugal musulman (VIIIe – XIIIe siècle). L'Occident d'al-Andalus sous domination islamique*. Paris: Maisonneuve et Larose, 2000 and, to a lesser degree, from Boissellier, Stéphane. *Naissance d'une identité portugaise. La vie rurale entre Tage et Guadiana (Portugal) de l'Islam à la Reconquête (Xe - XIVe siècles)*. Lisbon: Imprensa Nacional - Casa da Moeda, 1998: 46-50.

34. For al-Andalus in general, see Chalmeta, Pedro. *Invasión e islamización. La sumisión de Hispania y la formación de al-Andalus*. Madrid: Editorial Mapfre, 1994; and several contributions by Vallvé, Joaquin. *La división territorial de la España musulmana*. Madrid: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 1986. For Portugal, this idea was studied in particular by Mattoso, José; Brito, Raquel Soeiro de; Fabião, Carlos; Macías, Santiago; Torres, Cláudio. *Antes de Portugal* (José Mattoso, dir. *História de Portugal*, 1). Lisbon: Estampa, 1997.

35. Garcia, João Carlos. *O espaço medieval da Reconquista no Sudoeste da Península Ibérica*. Lisbon: Centro de Estudos Geográficos, 1986.

have attributed to a "Lusitanian continuity", did not seem to have had more than immediate or medium-term strategic objectives. Since the reign of Sancho I, the lands beyond the lower course of the River Guadiana, such as Aroche and Aracena, Huelva, or even Seville, were sought after by the Portuguese kings; the definition of "conquest corridors" during the 12th century, through treaties between Christian kingdoms, has never been very precise in geographical terms, and referred more to Andalusian realities than to the memory of districts predating the invasion in 711. It was through a move backwards by the Portuguese (during the resolution of the "Algarve issue", which constituted a *taifa* astride the Guadiana during the 1230s), and it was not through conforming spontaneously with this that the old border between Lusitania and Baetica was reconstructed.

The main problem to be solved was thus that of the territorial definition of the West of al-Andalus. Towards the north, it seemed to be quite clearly defined, based on control being seized by the Asturians (between Minho and Douro) and the Andalusians (between the Tagus and Mondego) from the middle of the 9th century, through the border march between Douro and Mondego. This "definition", however, is flawed, since in political terms, a large part of the region between the Douro and Tagus remained poorly integrated, politically speaking. However, if you consider that the basic character that defined al-Andalus was its civilisation (its language, religion, social and economic structures) and not its geographical definition or political obedience, Muslim "Portugal" can be defined as the zone that stretched south of the Mondego, where the population had absorbed the Andalusian civilisation deeply and continuously for at least two or three centuries. Things were even less clear in the east, where "Andalusian Portugal" only had potential borders, as in the Visigothic period (and even fewer, since it lacked the continuity of the Roman *Conventus Pacensis* and *Scallabitanus*): the current border was created in this area by Christians from the north during their reconquest, a long time after the formation of al-Andalus. Due to its geographical permeability, the southern part of the future Portugal, especially south of the Tagus, had fluid or even strong relations with the encompassing Andalusian State. As in the past, its main specificity was to constitute virtually the entire Atlantic seafront of a mainly Mediterranean territory[36]. What was new, was that way in which, like Galicia within the Kingdom of Asturias and León, the West of al-Andalus benefited from a global geographical definition, *al-gharb al-Andalus* ("the West of al-Andalus") —whose name after the *Reconquista* was the basis for Portugal's southernmost medieval province, the Algarve.

The eastern delimitation of this Gharb was first given to us by tenth-century geographers, who envisaged it as the western *half* of the Peninsula, the part where the rivers flowed into the Atlantic: we are far from the future Portugal and Roman Hispania! The Andalusian chroniclers and compilers between the 10th and 13th centuries spoke of a West that was smaller and more western, sometimes called *al-*

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36. Which conferred a final territorial specificity, but this time on a very vast scale and from an exclusively Muslim point of view: along with Morocco, western al-Andalus formed the extreme and impassable border of the Arab-Muslim world, and thus a confined zone (the Atlantic Ocean, known as the *al-bahr al-muhit* or the "encircling sea", was seen more as a barrier, the end of the world, than an open border).

gharb/al-maghrib al-aqsa ("the far West"), but which was all the same much "larger" than the future Portugal, including the territories of cities such as Salamanca, Cáceres-Mérida-Badajoz, Niebla-Huelva and sometimes Seville. Without designating a formal administrative organisation, the Gharb of the chronicles was more real than that of the geographers and the anthologists[37], especially when the growing differentiation between the northern Christian kingdoms obliged the Emirate of al-Andalus to organise a differentiated military defence, in the form of three "marches" (*thaghr/s*), eastern, central and western: the western march, also known as the "Lower March" (*al-thaghr al-adna*, because it is further south than the other two), corresponded mainly to the southern border of the Kingdom of León and, by extension, the "westernness" of the Andalusian regions south of this march was better defined. The lasting lack of political definition of the region between the Minho and Tagus rivers also explained why the Gharb stood out in al-Andalus due to being further south than the other regions: when the "Lower March" gained a capital in 929 or 939, it was located in the very heart of the Caliphate, in Badajoz, much farther south than the other military administrative centres, Toledo-Medinaceli and Zaragoza. Paradoxically, then, it was an external action that defined the territory of the West of al-Andalus.

Knowing the end of the story, it is a little teleological to foresee a regional identity in certain political events[38], in particular in the rebellions against the centralism of Córdoba, under the Emirate (756-929), and the Caliphate (929-1031). In the entire Peninsula, rebellions were almost proportional to the distance from Córdoba and the vigour of the local elite, and their particular intensity in the Gharb, during the great *fitna* [civil war] at the end of the Emirate, only expresses an especially pronounced geographical marginality[39]. It is better to focus on structural elements, such as the weakness of the urban network in Western al-Andalus: except for Seville, which is hard to include in the Gharb, in the 10th century only Badajoz (which was only founded around 890[40]) could rival Toledo, Córdoba, Grenada,

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37. The Andalusian chroniclers, who always served the central authorities, based their writings on administrative documents, in particular the minutes of the nomination of local governors. As for the compilers of biographical dictionaries and literary anthologies, we are still uncertain of their topographical logic; thus, in the 13th century, the Andalusian Ibn Sa'id, in his anthology of poets, classed those of al-Andalus in a Gharb that included six "kingdoms" (Córdoba, Seville, Badajoz, Silves, Beja and Lisbon) (Viguera, María Jesús. "El 'reino' de Badajoz en el *Mugrib* de Ibn Sa'id", *Bataliús* II...: 225-248): perhaps taking the 11th century *taifas* as territorial units, he tried above all to establish three parts of al-Andalus (east, centre and west) all similar in size.

38. This approach has been adopted by almost all historians of Portugal, including the author of this text (Boissellier, Stéphane. *Naissance d'une identité portugaise...*).

39. These were simultaneous rebellions but ones that remained purely local (except for the creation of the ephemeral principality of Ibn Marwan in the Badajoz-Mérida area from 875-923) and gave no global political specificity to the region in which they occurred: it was thus an inadequate methodological process, based on the subsequent existence of these regions, which makes us postulate the significance of their regional identity.

40. Here Badajoz played the same polarising role as the —also "new"— city of Porto in the north; we can note that they were founded around the same time (868 in the case of Porto). For more information on Badajoz, see Picard, Christophe. "La fondation de Badajoz par Abd al-Rahman Ibn Yunus al-Jilliki

Almeria, Zaragoza, Valencia or Murcia[41]. More debatable —since it is based on erratic data— is the theory of weakness in the Arab-Syrian and Berber immigration outside of the main southern cities (Beja, Évora, Ossonoba, Silves, Santarém and perhaps Lisbon), which gave the Gharb a more "indigenous" character and thus a stronger pre-Islamic cultural substrate[42]; this conception was largely founded on the (incontestable) fact that the territory of modern-day Portugal north of the Tagus was never strongly integrated (politically speaking) into the Andalusian State, and at most constituted a sort of protectorate. In any case, the problem is badly articulated in these terms, because, if the ethnic factor intervened to a large extent in the political struggles during the first centuries of al-Andalus, it seemed to play a secondary role in the process of cultural integration. If high Arab-Muslim culture was not very apparent in the west (precisely because of the absence of large cities), the conversion to Islam and linguistic Arabisation did not appear to be inferior, the culture of the Mozarab "resistants" stood out more because of its lifelessness, and, in the 12th century, the southern Gharb, on the other hand, was advanced in the diffusion of Muslim mysticism (Sufism). Apart from the above elements, it is not certain that the area west of al-Andalus demonstrated any strong specificities until the end of the Caliphate.

It was only when the Andalusian unity broke up (1009-1031), into a series of regional states, coordinated by the main cities, the *taifas*[43], that an independent (but not unitary) history of the Gharb began, and that we can really study the identity issue, here again in its territorial dimension[44]. There were seven or eight principalities in the Gharb, most of which, in the extreme south, were miniscule; this proliferation, exceptional within al-Andalus, far from being a sign of vigour, rather revealed the weakness of the southernmost western cities, none of which was able to structure a political system beyond a limited perimeter. This proliferation contrasted with the immense northern principality of Badajoz, which is particularly

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(fin IXe siècle)". *Revue des études islamiques*, 49/2 (1981): 215-229, and the different articles on the origins of the city in the two collective volumes: Díaz Esteban, Fernando, ed. *Bataliús. El reino taifa de Badajoz. Estudios.* Madrid: Letrúmero, 1999.

41. If we accept that literary activity was a criterion for urban vigour, we may note (Viguera, María Jesús. "El 'reino' de Badajoz"...: 229) that the territories of the "Portuguese" Gharb south of the Tagus are at the end of the list in the classification by number of pages in the anthology of Andalusian poets by Ibn Sa'id (who, writing in the 13th century, offered us a retrospective of all the Andalusian literary activity since the origins): Silves 21, Badajoz 19, Lisbon 11 and Beja 6 (ranking in 11th, 12th, 13th and 14th place out of 17) compared with 200 for the region of Córdoba, 125 for Valencia and 121 for Seville!

42. Theory still supported recently by Sidarus, Adel. "Novas perspectivas sobre o Gharb al-Ândalus no tempo de D. Afonso Henriques", *D. Afonso Henriques e a sua época. 2° Congresso histórico de Guimarães. Actas do congresso. 2. A política portuguesa e as suas relações exteriores.* Guimarães: Câmara municipal de Guimarães - Universidade do Minho, 1997: 249-268.

43. The Arab chroniclers spoke rather about kingdoms, vizirates or emirates; the term *taifa* comes from an expression used to describe these kinglets as *muluk al-tawa'if* (the party kings or petty monarchs).

44. However, the truly territorial character of these entities was again cast into doubt, and historians recognise more networks of fidelities and dependences than a structure materialised by borders. Naturally, each network had its own extension, which constituted its borders and obeyed rules: it became denser and allowed for a real administrative exercise of power by drawing closer to the cities.

interesting since it probably reveals what the enigmatic "Lower March" was like[45]; its size inferred that the weakness of the cities was even greater in the centre of the future Portugal, since none of them was able to establish itself locally against the distant capital of Badajoz. The geography of the primitive southern *taifas* —which were quickly annexed to the Kingdom of Seville— showed us, rather than existing districts, the new polarisation induced by the evolution in the urban network: the emergence of Badajoz, Mértola, Huelva/Saltès and Silves, the decline of Beja, and the possible inertness of Lisbon, Santarém and Alcácer do Sal (al-Qasr Abu Danis, the Roman Salacia). Except for the *taifa* of Badajoz, whose specific (military march) structures were coupled with a strong Berber population, we might surmise, against a historiographical current that is still very present, that the factors concerning the formation of the southern principalities were not very ethnical but rather socio-economic and political, at least in the Gharb. It was the large, long-established local families (Arab, except in Ossonoba —which became Shantamariyyat al-Gharb— where converted indigenous families prevailed) that took power, backed by their wealth, their network of clients and the holding of senior positions in the caliphal administrations.

The Andalusian division in the 11th century was not reflected in the formation of the Portuguese Kingdom, nor was the bipartition of its Christian north between the provinces of Porto and Coimbra. Admittedly, the political identity was probably stronger in the framework of the *taifas* than in the administrative districts within a political unity, but the memory of the political legitimacies faded fast —even faster in this case, since the last local emirs were discredited for their powerlessness in the face of the Christians. Even after 1050-60, when the southernmost principalities were founded in the vast Kingdom of Seville, the division of the Gharb between the *taifas* of Badajoz in the north and Seville in the south, on either side of a purely artificial line crossing the lower Alentejo, would not leave any detectable trace in Portuguese geography or culture —maybe because the direct descendants of those who experienced this situation were those who were defeated and who had little influence on the formation of subsequent local identities in the change of political domination[46].

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45. This is the most interesting hypothesis in the article by Valdés Fernández, Fernando. "Consideraciones sobre la marca inferior de al-Andalus", *Castrum 4. Frontière et peuplement dans le monde méditerranéen au Moyen-Age. Actes du colloque d'Erice-Trapani (Italie) tenu du 18 au 25 septembre 1988*, Jean-Michel Poisson, ed. Rome-Madrid: École française de Rome-Casa de Velázquez, 1992: 85-98.

46. Without mentioning the populations north of the *taifa* of Badajoz, which were annexed by the Christian rising in the second half of the 11th century (thus during the "pre-Portuguese" phase of the western Reconquista), the older inhabitants of the region of Leiria or of Lisbon and Santarém, in the years 1130-40 could remember the final *taifa* period (in the 1090s) perfectly well, when Portugal was born and these regions were annexed.

5. Conclusion

The cult of the "long duration" should not lead us to anachronism, especially when we debate with a certain degree of generality and when we use a regressive process. The complex combinations of factors are eminently progressive, even when they include the most lasting elements, such as those linked to the environment. The repetition of political units in a roughly identical area should thus be considered with care. We cannot limit the analysis improperly to political and administrative mechanisms and to spatial voluntarism implemented by the supreme authorities (located in Rome, then in Braga and Toledo, later in Oviedo and finally in León): the territoriality of an area like post-Reconquista Portugal cannot remain the same for a millennium. The persistence, or even continuity of the layout (specifically the boundaries) of a governmental spatial entity, while admitting that there is a political will for "restoration", might be completely out of step with the "contents" of the territory; however, it is the contents that constitute the real driving force behind territorialisation, even on a large scale.
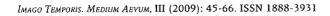
The cultural uniformity (due to the power of seduction of the Roman model on the local elite), and the strong economic integration in Roman Hispania and perhaps under the Andalusian Caliphate, turned the urban centres into staging posts for a generalised movement, and the provinces and *conventus* (or *kura/s*) into a conventional, purely administrative framework, without a marked identity; starting in the Sueve period, the identity processes, on a local or supralocal scale of larger the dioceses, and the communities of inhabitants, made the districts[47] an aggregate of solidarities within the elite, and a network of pacts with the supreme leaders. Even though there was continuity in the higher administration (notably in the location of the authorities in the main cities), this reticular logic modified the spatial mechanisms[48]. Moreover, 13th century Portugal, like almost all the other Iberian kingdoms, came from the fusion of a northern "cradle" and its expansion zone in al-Andalus: there was a slim possibility that, in these two areas with very different cultures, the administrative traditions could combine in order to reconstruct a broken framework, whether by continuity or restoration.

In order to pose the problem in classic terms —which incidentally are not very appropriate, as P. Geary[49] has demonstrated— and to widen the discussion beyond the territorial dimension, we might ask the following question: did the Nation precede the State in Portugal? J. Matosso's great thesis, showing the importance in the 11th century of the "new nobility" (feudal) of the *infanções* in the emergence

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47. In this case, the Sueve Kingdom and the Lusitanian Province of the Visigoth Kingdom, then the *Provincia Portucalensis* of the Kingdom of Asturias and León, and the large western *taifas* succeeding the Caliphate.

48. Focusing on the coincidences of locations and boundaries: Garcia, João Carlos. *O espaço medieval da Reconquista...: 24*, considered that the social mechanisms (basically the economic and administrative polarisation of cities) implementing them have been perpetuated from Antiquity up to the Reconquista.

49. Geary, Patrick J. *Quand les nations refont l'histoire. L'invention des origines médiévales de l'Europe.* Paris: Aubier, 2004 (translation of: Geary, Patrick J. *The myth of nations. The medieval origins of Europe.* Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003).

of a regional princely power, suggested on the one hand that society precedes the State (but a "society" limited to the local power holders), and, on the other hand, that the roots of Portugal should be found in the not too distant past. Therefore, Portuguese political unity did have *precedents*; precedents, but without direct connections between these situations of unity, because the context was very different in each period: in the form of a Roman province or a barbarian kingdom, we observe a certain territorial and administrative entity, which is reproduced several times, without superimposing itself precisely and never involving the entire medieval Portuguese territory. But the cultural and social personality of the region was not yet as clear as it would be after independence; however, it is just this personality that allows us to speak of identity continuity; in fact, and this is an essential point[50], there was no continuous transmission of specific political power since the Antiquity.

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50. We should recall that, in ancient societies where it was hard to circulate information through the population (i.e. there was no "mass culture"), the feeling of belonging existed above all on a local level, where it was based on everyone knowing each other. Beyond the objective identities (community of the environment, language and lifestyle), a population spread out over several thousand (or tens of thousands) km² and broken up by the parochial mentality, cannot reveal an identity *feeling* if there is no common object for this feeling to be crystallised, in other words a political power (if possible sacred), capable of creating social integration.