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Lines Traced on Mountains: Delimitations and Territorial Disputes in the Western Pyrenees between the Ninth and Eleventh Centuries

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Abstract: The oldest archival records from Navarre and Aragon come from several monasteries that were founded in the ninth century in the Pyrenean valleys. These documents contain a considerable amount of information about how boundaries were drawn, as well as about the settlement of disputes and other land transactions between the monks and peasants. This chapter focuses, firstly, on the role played by dispute settlement in building local political structures and on the legitimating discourse for such structures constructed by the monks. Secondly, it analyses the economic and spatial logic of these conflicts and suggests that two main contending principles lie behind the mechanisms of land appropriation that are deployed in these disputes: appropriation by drawing boundaries and appropriation through the actual use of the land. Finally, it considers the social background of each of these mechanisms and adds some comparative remarks about other regions in western Europe during the early Middle Ages.

Keywords: Navarre, Aragon, Early Middle Ages, disputes, monasteries, boundaries, peasant communities, mountains, space

<L1> Territories, monasteries, and memory

In the early Middle Ages, Navarre and Aragon occupied an east-west corridor of pre-Pyrenean basins and a succession of valleys that descend into them from the Pyrenean ridge. The basins were host to a Mediterranean-style agriculture, and the valleys comprise a variety of mountainous terrains, reaching 2000–3000 m in altitude. These territories were organized around two political entities that emerged following the Arab conquest, the kingdom of Pamplona — that is, Navarre — and the county of Aragon (fig. 13.1). Until its establishment as an independent kingdom in 1035, the county of Aragon was in general subordinate to the kingdom of Pamplona, either de facto or de iure, depending on the period.

As was the case in all of the northern half of the peninsula, the territories of these primitive Christian political entities grew spectacularly in the tenth to twelfth centuries. The first stage of this expansion, in the first quarter of the tenth century, was the conquest by Navarre of part of La Rioja, but the decisive leap was made between the

¹ This paper has been developed within the Grupo de Investigación Historia Comparada de la Alta y Plena Edad Media (Gobierno Vasco IT751-13), and more specifically as part of the research project *Writing Land in the Early Middle Ages: A Comparative Approach to the Relation between Writing and Access to Land* (MINECO, HAR2013-44576-P). The abbreviations used in this paper for editions of charters are listed in the bibliography..

end of the eleventh century and the early decades of the twelfth with the incorporation of vast areas of the Ebro Valley: Huesca in 1096, Zaragoza in 1118, and Tudela in 1119. This inordinate expansion of territory coincided with the Gregorian Reform, such that political and ecclesiastical structures in Navarre and Aragon were radically different from what they had been in the early Middle Ages. We need to keep this in mind if we want to understand the development of the monasteries studied in this article. Over the course of the eleventh century, the older monasteries in the Pyrenees were in effect relegated to a secondary role in peripheral areas of both kingdoms. But before that time, in the ninth and tenth centuries, they had been important, thriving institutions for Navarre and Aragon.

<PLACE FIGURE 13.1 (M) HERE>

Fig. 13.1 The western Pyrenees ca. 900.

The dates indicate the years of the Christian conquest of cities and territories. Map drawn by...

A very well-known letter addressed to Bishop Wiliesindo of Pamplona by Eulogius of Córdoba attests to the vitality of monastic life in the western Pyrenees in the midninth century. Eulogius said he was favourably impressed by what he had seen during his visit in about 848 to three monasteries in Navarre — San Salvador de Leire, San Vicente de Igal, and San Salvador de Urdaspal — and two in Aragon — San Pedro de Siresa and San Martín de Cillas.² In addition to these, three others emerged during the decades following Eulogius's visit: Santa María de Fuenfría, San Julian de Navasal, and the somewhat more distant San Martín de Cercito. This boom in monastic activity was of course inseparable from the development of the kingdom of Navarre and the county of Aragon (fig. 13.2).

The two most important monasteries were San Pedro de Siresa in Aragon and San Salvador de Leire in Navarre. Founded in about 830 on a piece of land belonging to Count Galindo Aznar, Siresa was closely linked to the counts of Aragon during the ninth and tenth centuries. Later, following the birth of the kingdom of Aragon and its expansion to the south, Siresa ended up becoming a priory of the Huesca-Jaca cathedral beginning in 1145. With regard to Leire, the date and the circumstances of its founding are unknown. In any case, it was linked to the Navarrese royal house from the time that

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² Eulogius Cordubensis, "Epistula III (ad Wiliesindum)," in Juan Gil, ed., *Corpus Scriptorum Muzarabicorum*, 2 vols (Madrid: CSIC, 1973), 2:498-503; Albarus Cordubensis, *Vita Eulogii*, ibid., 1:330-43.

this house enters into the historical record around the middle of the ninth century. The monastery even functioned as a royal pantheon during some periods. Unlike Siresa, Leire was able to attract the favour of much of the aristocracy and other notables in Navarre between about 1050 and 1130, thus becoming the most powerful monastery in Navarre.

While the other monasteries also relied on the protection of kings and counts, their influence did not extend much beyond their immediate valleys. In the eleventh century, they were all absorbed by more important institutions: Fuenfría, Cillas, Navasal, and Cercito became dependencies of the Aragonese royal abbey of San Juan de la Peña, while Urdaspal and Igal were subordinated to Leire. Today, the only tangible vestiges of them that remain are some modest ruins.³

<PLACE FIGURE 13.2 (M) HERE>

Fig. 13.2 The monasteries of the early Middle Ages in the western Pyrenees. Settlements discussed in the paper: 1. Añués, 2. Fillera, 3. Lerda, 4. Benasa, 5. Catamesas, 6. Huértalo, 7. Cabañas, 8. Beralevilla.

The oldest traces of these Pyrenean monasteries have come down to us in the form of a heterogeneous group of single-sheet parchments, *pancartae*, and cartularies that were compiled, edited, and organized mainly in the eleventh century, shortly before or after almost all the monasteries had lost their independence. In Leire, the arrival of a French abbot in 1083 led to the composition of an important cartulary called the *Becerro Antiguo*, but the oldest documents were preserved on single-sheet parchments and in a *pancarta*. Conversely, our knowledge of the early history of Siresa relies on a small cartulary that was compiled in the first half of the twelfth century, only part of which is extant. In addition, the large cartulary from San Juan de la Peña, the *Libro Gótico*, whose composition began in about 1060, contains much of the extant documentation from the monasteries of Fuenfría, Cillas, and Navasal.

As a group, this is a modest documentary dossier, whose interest obviously does not derive from its size, since it contains fewer than 50 records, but rather from the

³ Luis Javier Fortún, *Leire, un señorio monástico en Navarra (siglos IX-XIX)* (Pamplona: Gobierno de Navarra, 1993); Antonio Durán Gudiol, *El monasterio de San Pedro de Siresa* (Zaragoza: Diputación de Aragón, 1989); Ana Isabel Lapeña, *El monasterio de San Juan de la Peña en la Edad Media* (Zaragoza: Caja de Ahorros de la Inmaculada, 1989), 24-44.

⁴ DML 1, 3-7.

⁵ CS 1-12.

⁶ SJP 1, 2, 4-15, 17, 30-32, 34, 156.

preponderance of narrative texts. The Pyrenean monks knew perfectly well how to compose charters in accordance with the formularies of the Hispano-Visigothic tradition and they sometimes chose to do so,⁷ but in these *scriptoria* the choice was more often made to utilize the narrative account as a source of legitimacy. The preferred document form was the *notitia*, a kind of text that was not subject to the straightjacket of notarial formularies and thus is able to provide rich data about the relationships between these communities of monks and their surroundings. Leire and Siresa, the two largest monasteries, are the only exceptions to this general rule; they built their discourse of legitimacy on their privileged relationship with kings and counts. This explains why the proportion of charters was clearly much larger than that of *notitiae* in the documents from these monasteries.

<L1> The centrality of territorial conflicts and demarcations

Together with the importance of narrative, another key feature of this documentary dossier is the decisive role played by territorial conflicts and demarcations in the records pertaining to each monastery's origins and development. To a large extent, it is as if these conflicts and demarcations were milestones that gave structure to the relationship between the monasteries and the inhabitants of their surrounding areas.

In the narrative accounts written by the monks, the drawing of boundaries is sometimes presented as the natural, immediate sequel to the construction of a church and the founding of a community of monks. These spaces were vast, extending from one mountain crest to another. Fuenfría, for example, is estimated to have been around 10,000 hectares, and Cillas extended some ten km from north to south. The demarcation of boundaries is also sometimes presented as a mechanism for resolving territorial disputes between the monks and local people, or among peasant communities in the monasteries' areas of influence. In fact, the drawing of boundaries that took place at the founding of a monastery and the drawing of boundaries as a result of a conflict were sometimes presented as the same event: in Navasal this is explicitly stated, and in Cercito the order of the *notitiae* suggests that the drawing of the monastery's boundaries had brought peace to the valley.

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⁷ SJP 5; cf. "Formulae Visigothicae," in Karl Zeumer, ed., *Formulae Merowingici et Karolini Aevi*, MGH LL 5 (Hanover: Hahn, 1886), 579-80 (no. 8 and 9).

⁸ Juan José Larrea, *La Navarre du IV^e au XII^e siècle. Peuplement et société* (Paris-Bruxelles: De Boeck, 1998), 185-90.

⁹ SJP 7, 9, 11.

From the point of view of conflict resolution, these narratives tend to emphasize the pacifying role kings and count in boundary determinations. To do this, the texts emphasize the violence that preceded such determinations: the men of Lerda, Añués, and Fillera had been ready to kill each other over territorial disputes; the rivers around Cercito ran red from the fighting over boundaries between the inhabitants of two areas in dispute; Navasal was destroyed and along with it, its lands. Royal intervention generally took the form of a solemn *perambulatio* ceremony attended by a crowd, after which peace was established. This is not surprising, as it was part of monastic discourse throughout western Europe: a community of monks, protected by kings and counts, established itself wherever chaos, violence, and wilderness reigned and in doing so brought order, justice, and peace to the area.

This is noticeable in the way the drawing of boundaries is described. The sequence of events shows royal perambulation as the mechanism that resolved a dispute. However, the specific procedure does not distinguish it from the setting of boundaries when there was no conflict. In fact, it is the perambulation ritual itself, the physical presence of the rulers and their procession, that was most significant. Thus, in the account of the resolution of a conflict between the monastery of Navasal and its neighbouring communities:

Et venit illo comite Galindo Asnar et invitavit regem Fortunio Garcianes ut parteret illos terminos illis. Et venerunt ad Labasal et steterunt ibi die sabbato et die dominico, et servivit illis abbas dompnus Bancius. Et die lunis manescente, rege equitante suo caballo rosello, cum totos suos barones, et comite cum suos, sic diviserunt illo termino ut fieret de Labasal de illa zema de Iserui quomodo devaddat ad illa spelunca de Lisue et exit in directo ad illa zema de Iati, ac si quomodo aqua vertit [...].¹¹

It should not be forgotten that this document and others like it were not strictly judicial documents. As a revealing contrast, an exceptional document from the cathedral of Jaca shows the endless succession of negotiations, disputes and agreements behind a territorial conflict in the tenth century.¹² This record is similar to the ones we are

¹⁰ DML 3; SJP 7, 9.

¹¹ SJP 7

¹² Manuel Serrano, "Notas a un documento aragonés del año 958," *Anuario de Historia del Derecho Español* 5 (1928) 254-65. See Juan José Larrea, "La condición del campesinado navarro-aragonés entre los siglos IX y XII: una revisión crítica," *En la España Medieval* 29 (2006), 383-409, at 391-92. See also Takashi Adachi, "Documents of Dispute Settlement in Eleventh-Century Aragón and Navarra: King's Tribunal and Compromise," *Imago Temporis. Medium Aevum* 1 (2007), 71-85, which deals primarily with the eleventh century.

examining here, except that in the latter, the monks were silent about important stages and circumstances of the conflict. This silence was a conscious decision and certainly not due to their inability to recount the details. These monastic records are judicial narratives whose logic cannot be considered separately from the overall discourse about the past.

In fact, it is not difficult to perceive the political and symbolic value of the act of setting boundaries. Firstly, the physical presence of the king was highlighted. In the second half of the ninth century, the monarchy of Pamplona was in the process of transforming itself from a fundamentally military form of leadership into a Christian principality.¹³ The delimitation ceremonies contributed to the creation of territory-based governing mechanisms, through the settlement of disputes, the control of collective space, and the physical presence of the king, all linked to churches and monasteries. Furthermore, the relationship between the counts of Aragon and the kings of Pamplona was publicly enacted by such cerimonies. Either the kings confirmed the setting of boundaries made by the counts, or the counts asked them rhetorically to confirm and endorse such boundaries.¹⁴ These ceremonies were also a representation of the seizure of power by the Jimeno family after the change of dynasty in 905: in a text related to the dispute between Benasa and Catamesas, which shall be discussed later, the change of dynasty that had taken place between the two perambulations was expressly recorded.¹⁵

In sum, what these documents describe is, above all, how the monasteries were invested with power over the territories whose boundaries were defined in such cerimonies. We should recall that the investiture not only made the new right of the beneficiary visible; the *potestas* of the grantor was also made manifest. This twofold potential of the investiture is particularly evident in the ongoing creation of political entities such as Navarre and Aragon in this period.

<L1> Building monastic territories by drawing boundary lines

We have thus identified a discourse about the past that influenced the selection of information to be preserved in monastic documents. However, such a discourse did not prevent actual or potential conflicts over real territories: the monks were thus interested

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¹³ Juan José Larrea, "Construir un reino en la periferia de al-Andalus: Pamplona entre los siglos VIII y X," in *Symposium Internacional: Poder y simbología en la Europa altomedieval*, ed. Francisco J. Fernández Conde and César García de Castro Valdés (Oviedo: Trea, 2009), 279-308, at 303-5.

¹⁴ CS 5, 6, 8; SJP 7.

¹⁵ SJP 14.

in having specific events, places, and perambulations recorded. This is why the documents can also be used to answer questions about the economic and spatial meaning of the very act of drawing a line in order to construct a monastic territory.

Let us begin with one observation. The documentary dossier being discussed here includes a remarkable variety of terms used to designate arable and pastoral spaces depending on their morphology and their actual or potential use. These terms differentiate between areas being cultivated (campo), which may correspond to seasonal fields (campos cognitos) and plots within them (fasca); between different types of plots according to their greater or lesser exposure to the sun (solana, opaca); between pastures and shelters for cattle in the lower part of the valleys (pardina, cubile) and in the high mountain areas (estiva); and mention is also made of places where pastures and crops were alternated (monte), forests (silva), meadows (agorral and perhaps erbare), and pastures that were designated in an apparently generic way (pascuero); there was even a specific term for the use of water (acuero). 16 All of this suggests that there was significant and diversified use being made of the entire valley, from the riverbanks to the crests of the mountains.

Looking at the landscape today, marked as it is by rural exodus and extensive reforestation, it is difficult to imagine what it must have been like a thousand years ago, when it teemed with small settlements.¹⁷ These settlements occupied agricultural 'islets' of a few hectares, located on the wide valley floors or on higher terraces. They were the nuclei of large territories engaged in diverse economic activities that can be recognised from the descriptions in the texts: such 'islets' were suited to intensive agricultural use, given the abundant cattle and therefore the availability of manure; the slopes protected from the north wind made it possible to have seasonal crops with different cultivation cycles; 18 the various pastures fed pigs, cows, and sheep and could be combined with summer pastures higher up in the mountains.

<PLACE FIG 13.3 (M) HERE>

¹⁶ SJP 1, 2, 4, 5, 7, 11, 15, 31; CS 3, 5, 6.

¹⁷ Carlos Laliena and Philippe Sénac, Musulmans et Chrétiens dans le haut Moyen Age: aux origines de la Reconquête aragonaise (Paris: Minerve, 1991), 79-82.

¹⁸ On the importance of temporary crops in the medieval agrarian economy in general, see Roland Viader and Christine Rendu, eds., Cultures temporaires et féodalité. Les rotations culturales et l'appropriation du sol dans l'Europe médiévale et moderne. Actes des Journées Internationales d'Histoire de l'abbave de Flaran (Toulouse: Presses Universitaires du Midi, 2014).

Fig. 13.3 The old peasant settlement of Beralevilla (known today as Santa Lucía), originated ca. 900 in one of the valley's small areas of arable land. Photograph by the author.

The economic viability of any of these activities and, consequently, of any community depended on access to the full range of spaces, and not only to arable land. This access involved combining different forms of appropriation and circulation — individual, collective, and supra-local — that overlapped, spread or contracted according to the agricultural, pastoral and forestry cycles. Elisabeth Bille has coined a definition that is apt for any one of these valleys: "un espace modulable dans le temps". ¹⁹ When the monasteries started marking boundaries, no previously traced lines were encountered; instead, these were spaces that had been defined by their very use. The agreements between monks and peasants did not entertain the possibility that the boundary markers and lines might be moved or misplaced; rather, the fear seems to have been that peasants from the surrounding areas might trespass onto the land that the monks wanted to set aside for their own use.

Under these circumstances, the dominant presence of the monasteries was not due to their being supposedly large agricultural centres with labour resources that could be deployed over an extensive area. Quite the contrary: these monasteries were not much larger than any of the small peasant settlements of the area. As an example, Cillas occupied an area of little more than ten hectares on the bank of the Veral river, and Navasal was perched on a terrace of about five hectares, located some 200 m above the same river (Fig. 13.4). The case of Siresa may seem at first glance to be different, because it was at the bottom of a valley broad enough to allow for vineyards to be cultivated. But we know that the monastery had to build its estate gradually by buying, exchanging and receiving donations of numerous small plots that even encroached on the property belonging to Count Galindo Aznar where the church had been established.²⁰ If the viability of the monasteries had depended on their initial economic and human resources, they would have faced very stiff competition from the surrounding communities for access to the different agricultural areas in each valley.

¹⁹ Elisabeth Bille, "Remarques sur les modes de spatialisation des droits et des pratiques sur les vacants en Cerdagne aux XII^e-XIV^e siècles," in *Les ressources naturelles des Pyrénées du Moyen Âge à l'époque moderne. Exploitation, gestion, appropriation*, ed. Aymat Catafau (Perpignan: Presses Universitaires de Perpignan, 2005), 239-52, at 244.
²⁰ CS 1.

<PLACE FIGURE 13.4 (M) HERE>

Fig. 13.4 Location of the monastery of Navasal, on an elevated terrace in the valley of Ansó. The circle marks the ruins of the rural chapel of the Eleven Thousand Maidens, which is the place where the buildings of Navasal originally stood. Photograph by the author

The monasteries were able to thrive because they were recognised (whether willingly or reluctantly is another matter) as having a superior right over the arable, pastures and woodlands, independent of their real use. ²¹ There is no doubt that the monasteries did exploit some land, but more characteristically they limited the amount of land cleared by the peasants – undoubtedly accustomed to cyclical displacements of the crops – while at the same time they ceded areas to be cleared in exchange for tithes. ²² As far as livestock was concerned, the monasteries assumed or intended to assume the protection of pastures against foreign stockbreeders, and, above all, they obtained donations of *estivas* – that is, alpine pastures – that allowed them to practice transhumance. ²³ The combination of winter pastures in the lower valleys and summer pastures on the high mountain slopes has been documented since the Visigothic period, ²⁴ and in the centuries under discussion here, this was apparently dominated by the ruling families and by the pastoral communities located at the north end of the valleys. ²⁵ This activity naturally required the control of the routes used to move cattle.

We should also remember that control of the churches was an instrument for maintaining territorial domination. The monks received some churches and cemeteries by donation, as well as episcopal rights.²⁶ They naturally claimed control over the appointment of priests, which seemed to be the source of endless litigation with their parishioners.²⁷ And, of course, they tried to extended their rights to collect tithes, which was clearly a powerful tool of domination.²⁸ However, it would be a mistake to imagine

²¹ Navasal epitomizes the opposition to this superior power exercised by the monks: SJP 7.

²² SJP 31, 32, 42; CS 5, 6.

²³ SJP 1, 2, SJP 7, CS 3, 6.

²⁴ Enrique Ariño and Pablo de la Cruz Díaz Martínez, "Poblamiento y organización del espacio. La Tarraconense pirenaica en el siglo VI," *Antiquité tardive* 11 (2003), 223-37.

²⁵ Juan José Larrea, "Moines et paysans: aux origines de la première croissance agraire dans le Haut Aragon (IX^e-X^e s.)," *Cahiers de Civilisation Médiévale* 33 (1990), 219-39; "Notas sobre los orígenes del poblamiento del valle de Salazar (Navarra)," in *Villages pyrénéens*. *Morphogenèse d'un habitat de montagne*, ed. Maurice Berthe and Benoît Cursente (Toulouse: CNRS-Université de Toulouse – Le Mirail, 2000), 195-207.

²⁶ SJP 8, 13, 17, 30, 31; CS 7, 12; DML 1, 3, 5, 7.

²⁷ SJP 13, 17; José Ángel Lema, ed., *Colección diplomática de Alfonso I de Aragón y Pamplona* (1104-113) (San Sebastián: Sociedad de Estudios Vascos, 1990), no. 89.

²⁸ Roland Viader, "La dîme dans l'Europe des féodalités. Rapport introductif," in *La dîme dans l'Europe médiévale et moderne. Actes des Journées internationales d'histoire de l'abbaye de*

that the monasteries grew in power through a simple process beginning with the appropriation of churches and only thereafter allowing for the collection of tithes on the lands that depended on those churches in some way. Take the example of Cabañas²⁹: a son of one of the village's notable families had been made lame while fleeing Almanzor's armies and had been delivered as an oblate to San Martin de Cillas, along with the donation of a house and a field. At the time of the *oblatio*, or perhaps later, those notable families agreed to give the church of Cabañas (including its tithes) to Cillas. But an additional component of the *convenientia* was that the inhabitants of Cabañas would be entitled to cultivate a plot of land owned by Cillas for which they would also pay a tithe. The criteria for the payment of tithes often pose a problem to researchers; but in terms of what concerns us here, it suffices to say that the prior control of space was also an instrument for extending the collection of tithes.

In sum, the way these new monastic players were able to gain access to large swathes of land already in use was by exercising their power through the demarcation of monastic territories. The legitimacy of this act of power derived from the fact that monasteries were considered foci of sacredness.³⁰ They housed numerous and powerful relics, practised a far more effective liturgy than the modest rural churches, and ensured that the memory of their benefactors was preserved. They acted both as the stage where the power dynamics of the royalty and the counts was played out and as poles of attraction for notable families. As discussed above, they also acted as beacons of peace, justice and compassion for the crippled and the sick (of the important families, it must be said)³¹.

In symbolic and visual terms, linear limits seemed particularly effective for projecting monastic spaces.³² Moreover, this irradiation of the sacred may have to do

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Flaran, ed. Roland Viader (Toulouse: Presses Universitaires du Midi, 2010), 7-36, also for all the following remarks on tithing.

²⁹ SJP 31.

³⁰ See Alain Guerreau, "Quelques caractères spécifiques de l'espace féodal européen," in *L'État ou le Roi. Les fondements de la modernité monarchique en France (XIV^e-XVII^e siècles)*, ed. Neithard Bulst, Robert Descimon, and Alain Guerreau (Paris: Maison des Sciences de l'Homme, 1996), 85-101; Michel Lauwers, "De l'incastellamento à l'inecclesiamento. Monachisme et logiques spatiales du féodalisme," in *Cluny, les moines et la société au premier âge féodal*, ed. Dominique Iogna-Prat et al. (Rennes: Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2013), 315-38, at 318.
³¹ SJP 10, 31.

³² Pierre Toubert, "Frontière et frontières : un objet historique," in *Castrum 4. Frontière et peuplement dans le monde méditerranéen au Moyen Âge* (Rome - Madrid: École Française de Rome - Casa de Velázquez, 1992), 9-17, at 12; Michel Lauwers and Laurent Ripart, "Représentation et gestion de l'espace dans l'Occident médiéval," in *Rome et l'État moderne européen*, ed. Jean-Philippe Genêt (Rome: École Française de Rome, 2007), 115-71, at 141-42.

with the presence of hagio-toponyms in the mountains along some boundary lines.³³ Didier Méhu makes this point about Cluny, noting how a space organised around a spiritual focus needed to be articulated with the physical reality of the territory over which the monastery exercised jurisdiction.³⁴ This is exactly what was done when a precise continuous line was traced along the lines of ridges – *serra serra, dossum dossum, quantum aqua bertit* – connecting several toponyms, and landscape features, as well as different land units being used in sundry activities. The tracing of these lines was always described as being done all at once, rather than over the course of time, and was sometimes recalled in connection to a solemn *perambulatio* (*quomodo partivit rex*), at other times narrated in the first person (*intramus rasos, veniamus*), and still others, using a verb in the third person, whose subject seems to be the boundary line itself (*et perrexit*).³⁵

In any case, it was no accident that the very genesis of these monasteries was closely associated with the demarcation of their territories in the (often later) memory constructed by these institutions.

<L1> Lines and conflicts outside monastic territories

Let us now undertake an exercise in abstraction. If what has been examined in the previous section is reduced to its basic principles, it can be seen that the drawing of boundary lines introduced a new logic for the appropriation of space. The previous occupants of the territory, as well as the occupants that shared the valleys with the monasteries, delimited space through its actual use, that is, through overlapping cycles of varying intensity and degrees.³⁶ In contrast, whoever could not claim the use of space, but had enough power to impose their access to it, drew a line. In other words, certain actors appropriated space through specific work (whether their own or performed by subordinates is irrelevant here), and others traced a line that in principle was and would be independent from their actual capacity to exploit the land.

One aspect that blurs the distinction between line and use is precisely the relationship between the drawing of lines and conflict resolution: in fact, linear boundaries often

³³ SJP 1, 5, 7, 14, 32; DML 3.

³⁴ Didier Méhu, *Paix et communautés autour de l'abbaye de Cluny (X^e-XV^e siècle)* (Lyon : Presses Universitaires de Lyon, 2010), ch. 3.

³⁵ SJP 2, 4, 7, 11.

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³⁶ In some sectors, however, there may have been some kind of temporary or permanent separation mark: in the violent conflict between the two neighbouring communities of Cercito (SJP 9), *ballatos*, i.e., 'fences' are mentioned.

appeared to be a 'natural' solution to a territorial dispute and this is how they are presented in the texts. Fortunately, the documentary dossier under discussion here contains a couple of cases of conflicts between peasant communities that were resolved by drawing boundary lines. This allows us to approach the issue freed from the symbolic weight attached to the monastic territories and to focus the discussion on the contrast between the lines being drawn and the actual use of the land. The aim is to discover to what extent the use of boundary lines under the pretext of restoring peace between peasant communities also projected a spatial logic characteristic of the dominant groups, who were ultimately responsible for the resolution of such 'peasant' disputes.

Both of these conflicts between peasants occurred in the sector of pre-Pyrenean basins located on the border of Navarre and Aragon. This area was much better suited to agriculture than the Pyrenean valleys: the river's lower vegas had moist and silty soils, good for irrigated crops but also for intensive grain cultivation, as well as for woodlands and pastures for grazing draught animals. However, there were some problems: the susceptibility of many streams to flash flooding caused cyclical damage, so the peasants had to constantly rebuild fragile and non-durable canals. The highest terraces were of mediocre or poor quality, but the climate allowed for more or less extensive cultivation of grains as well as for vineyards.³⁷ Unfortunately, the settlement reorganisation that resulted from setting the border between Navarre and Aragon in the twelfth century, together with the construction of the Yesa reservoir in the 1950s, has radically changed, if not erased, the early medieval settlement pattern.

The first conflict to be discussed is that between the villages of Benasa and Catamesas, ³⁸ located in an area physically dominated by — and under the seigneurial jurisdiction of — the monastery of Leire, which overlooks the river from a position 300 m above. During the Middle Ages, this area, now flooded by the Yesa reservoir, teemed

³⁷ Isidro Escagüés Javierre, "La Valdonsella," *Principe de Viana* 6 (1945), 218-344; Salvador Mensúa, *La Navarra Media oriental* (Zaragoza: Diputación Foral de Navarra - CSIC, 1960), 82-86

³⁸ SJP 14. This conflict has received some attention in recent decades: Roger Collins, "Visigothic law and regional custom in disputes in early medieval Spain," in *The Settlement of Disputes in Early Medieval Europe*, ed. Wendy Davies and Paul Fouracre (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 97-104; Larrea, *Navarre*, 273-74; Chris Wickham, "Espacio y sociedad en los conflictos campesinos en la Alta Edad Media," in *El lugar del campesino*. *En torno a la obra de Reyna Pastor*, ed. Ana Rodríguez (Valencia: Universitat de València - CSIC, 2007), 33-60, at 35-36.

with small villages. One of them, Benasa, was just below the monastery.³⁹ Its territory encompassed the lower reaches of the mountain range, the fertile plain on the two banks of the river, and part of the hills bordering this plain to the south. Catamesas was nearby, although it is impossible to know which side of the river it was on; indeed, its territory may also have extended onto both banks.⁴⁰

The *notitia* corresponding to this dispute was composed in 928 at the initiative of Bishop Galindo of Pamplona, an influential figure in this area.⁴¹ The text begins by going back to the past to explain that *in temporibus illis* there was a dispute over the boundaries of Benasa and Catamesas, which was resolved by King Fortun Garcés (r. 880-905) through a ceremonial perambulation:

fecit placitum pro ipso termino, et venit ipse rex cum multitudine virorum et posuerunt terminum. Ipse rex in equo suo pedificando antecedabat, et alii viri post eum. Agmina multitudo confirmaverunt, ipse vero precedebat omnes.

The text then adopts the tone of a chronicle and recalls that King Sancho Garcés I (r. 905–925), the founder of the Jimeno dynasty, had been chosen by God. After recounting his death, the narration returns to the time and place of the document's composition and explains the actions of Bishop Galindo in 928. He gathered the men who were familiar with the monasteries' limits, making more than twenty abbots and priests walk the boundary lines as they had seen Fortun Garcés do long ago. The drawing of the boundaries is then described, and it is recorded that three of the witnesses to the original perambulation swore in the church of San Juan, before the king, that they had closely followed Fortun Garcés's itinerary. The document ends with a long list of the names of the people involved.

The entire ceremony, involving large crowds and arranged into several successive acts, conveyed the idea that the *perambulatio*, linked to the figures and the memory of the kings, was intended to ensure peace. But there are several interesting aspects that reveal a specific logic of territorial domination. Firstly, it is necessary to question the

³⁹ Fortún, *Leire*, 317.

⁴⁰ Jean Passini, "L'habitat fortifié dans la Canal de Berdún, Aragon. X°-XIII° siècles," in *Castrum 3: Guerre, fortification et habitat dans le monde méditerranéen au Moyen Age* (Rome-Madrid: École Française de Rome – Casa de Velázquez, 1985), 91-98, at 92, places the inhabited centre to the south, as he also does for Benasa, but there is no conclusive evidence for one location or another.

⁴¹ José Goñi Gaztambide, *Historia de los obispos de Pamplona*. *S. IV-XIII* (Pamplona: EUNSA, 1979), 94-96.

motives of Bishop Galindo. While it is true that the document says that the *notitia* was written to ensure that there would be no conflict between an ambiguous nos et illos, it had also said previously that the bishop acted pro confirmatione. It is telling that, in a text as rich in details as this one, nowhere does it say that the old conflict had reemerged. Rather it seems that everything was done to affirm the authority of Bishop Galindo over Catamesas. Secondly, the text suggests that the limits were known by those who remembered where King Fortun Garcés walked through between 23 and 48 years earlier: the actual use to which the inhabitants put the land does not seem to have been considered. Thirdly, there is a striking discordance between the Benasa-Catamesas dispute, which gave rise to the *perambulatio*, and the boundaries traced as a result: although it is impossible to locate them with precision, two lines are perfectly identified that descend from the slope to the river bank, more or less perpendicular to it, one to the east and another to the west. If we keep in mind that Benasa and Catamesas were approximately in line with the river and that there were other villages to the east and west of them, it is clear that only one of these lines could have been common to Benasa and Catamesas, and we can grant that it served to ensure peace. However, this was definitely not the case with the other line.

The same questions can be asked about the second dispute, which is recounted in a *notitia* inserted into a charter from Leire. This was a conflict between the villages of Lerda and Añués, on the one hand, and Fillera, on the other, which was resolved through royal intervention. The resolution of the conflict is attributed to King García Íñiguez (850–880), who had given Lerda and Añués to the monastery of Leire. According to the account, the clashes between men from Lerda and Añués and from Fillera had grown murderous. The king was able to restore peace in a ceremony, which was attended by crowds and in which he was accompanied by people from his circle with roots in the area, clergymen and at least one judge.

The three villages are now uninhabited, but we know the precise locations of Añués and Fillera, and the approximate location of Lerda. They are situated in a nearly straight line about 12 km long, with Fillera in the middle. These were probably relatively large villages: Lerda was the burial place of Bishop Basilio of Pamplona in 921; Fillera was located in the area occupied by one of the most important settlements in the region, if not the most important, going back to the High Empire and up to at least Visigothic

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⁴² DML 3.

times.⁴³ The conflict may have erupted around the fertile plains of the final stretch of the Onsella River and the streams that ran parallel to it. Or it might have taken place in the areas used for seasonal crops in the high terraces. In fact, these two possible options are not mutually exclusive. In this region, a village territory was conceived as one in which its inhabitants had the right to make clearings, with the sole exception of some internal areas intended for permanent crops, grassland for draught animals, pastures, and forests for the production of wood.⁴⁴

The *notitia*'s description of the boundaries, drawn according to a linear and circular method (*sicut vertit aqua* [...] *ex inde in suso usque*), allows us to reconstruct the territory of Lerda with confidence, and that of Añués with reasonable precision. The point, precisely, is that these two were the only territories whose boundaries consisted of a circle drawn around them; this was not the case for Fillera, which did not belong to Leire. The king and those who followed him drew two circles north and southwest of Fillera. Therefore, for the most part, the lines that were drawn were not even remotely related to the violent dispute that is said to have given rise to the demarcation of boundaries.⁴⁵

Before introducing the list of witnesses, it is noted that the purpose of the document was so that the men of Lerda and Añués would no longer have any conflicts with or bring suit against those from Fillera, or with those from other neighbouring villages. This contains an explicit justification for the circular delimitation that constituted a compromise between dispute resolution and the construction of a territory. What is distinctive here, as in Catamesas, is that this was not a monastic territory, but one whose day-to-day management and defence appears to have been in the hands of a peasant community. This opens up new potential interpretations, since providing the territory of a peasant community with boundaries that were closed and independent of the real use of space, which undoubtedly affirmed the authority of the bishop or the monastery of Leire in this case, could also benefit the community itself. Somehow, there was a transfer of legitimacy that should put us on guard against two interpretative pitfalls: that of naively imagining that everything can be reduced to an opposition between the way

⁴³ Larrea, *Navarre*, 66-68; Javier Andreu et al., "Una ciudad de los *vascones* en el yacimiento de Campo Real/Fillera (Sos del Rey Católico-Sangüesa)," *Archivo Español de Arqueología* 81 (2008), 75-100.

One can see this clearly in the document that recounts Leire's failed attempt to create a very modest village at the gates of the monastery in 1173: DML 332.

⁴⁵ For a rough outline of this demarcation, see Larrea, *Navarre*, 61.

space was organized by the ruling groups versus the way it was organized by peasants; and that of seeing in some judicial inquiries regarding boundaries made among the inhabitants of a certain place equally naive forms of simply ascertaining customary uses of the land.⁴⁶

<L1> A brief comparative overview

Before moving to some final reflections, it is worth briefly recalling some examples from other regions that suggest the structural character of this play of oppositions between line and use. In general terms, it is clear that the construction of monastic territories in the Navarre-Aragonese Pyrenees was a regional manifestation — at the scale of the small polities in these borderlands of Christendom — of a phenomenon common to other areas of western Europe.⁴⁷ More specifically, there is an important historiographical tradition of identifying the different kinds of logic that together determined how territories were constructed. Medieval studies have emphasized the overlapping of different kinds of rights, whether these are enunciated in typically legal terms (*dominium directum* vs. *dominium utilis*) or understood as a variety of situations that it is impossible to reduce to these categories.⁴⁸ The most-recent valuable contribution to this question is the original interpretation proposed by Nicolas Schroeder for a much-studied topic, the colonization of the Odenwald.⁴⁹

Others have pointed out that linear delimitation becomes a form of *vestitio* in the *perambulationes* of the territories of Fulda and Hammelburg.⁵⁰ In the former, the line is represented successively in two different ways. In the original donation dated to ca. 743, the territory of Fulda was described as an ideal space radiating from the newly founded centre (*ab illo loco undique in circuitu, ab oriente scilicet et ab occidente, a*

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⁴⁶ See Lauwers and Ripart, "Espace," 129.

⁴⁷ Yoshiki Morimoto, "Autour du grand domaine carolingien: aperçu critique des recherches récentes sur l'histoire rurale du haut Moyen Âge (1987-1992)," in idem, *Études sur l'économie rurale du haut Moyen Âge* (Bruxelles: De Boeck, 2008), 81-132, at 97-99.

⁴⁸ Chris Wickham, "European forests in the early Middle Ages: landscape and land clearance," in idem, *Land & Power. Studies in Italian and European Social History, 400-1200* (London: British School at Rome, 1994), 155-99, at 167.

⁴⁹ Nicolas Schroeder, "Der Odenwald im Früh- und Hochmittelalter. Siedlung, Landschaft und Grundherrschaft in einem Mittelgebirge," *Siedlungsforschung: Archäologie, Geschichte, Geographie* 33 (2016), 355-87.

⁵⁰ See Karl Rübel, *Die Franken. Ihr Eroberungs- und Siedlungssystem im deutschen Volkslande* (Bielefeld: Delhagen und Klajing, 1904; repr. Aalen, 1968), 53-60, and above all, as regards the transmission of the texts, Edmund E. Stengel, "Die Urkundenfälschungen des Rudolf von Fulda (Fuldensia I)," in idem, *Abhandlungen und Untersuchungen zur Hessischen Geschichte* (Marburg: Elwert: 1960), 40-63.

septentrione et meridie, marcha per quatuor millia passuum tendatur).⁵¹ This way of defining a territory is well-documented since the seventh century in Lindisfarne, Bobbio, and Stavelot-Malmedy.⁵² Some years later, the description of the boundaries reflected the modification of the territory of Fulda to correspond to the actual terrain; these boundaries were now described as crossing particular streams, passing by certain trees and going over specific hills. Another famous example comes from Michelstadt, whose boundaries were defined as having a radius of two leagues when Einhard received it in 815; this definition became much more specific, and the boundary line itself much more extensive when the territory was ceded to Lorsch in 819.⁵³

Another case, which resembles the one that concerns us here more closely, comes from the demarcation of the territory immediately surrounding the monastery of Lorsch, since it entailed two successive and different ways of appropriating the same territory. Indeed, for one or two generations, several members of the aristocratic Rupertine family had cobbled together a patchwork of fields, buildings, pastures, and forests in a peripheral sector of the Bürstadt royal villa, called Lauresham, using the work of their slaves and appropriation mechanisms such as the bifang, which is the equivalent in several German-speaking regions to the southern aprisio. During that time, the use to which the lands were put was sufficient to define the boundaries of this compound space, except for the southern part, where a notch in a tree separated the Rupertine lands from the area occupied by another group. Such was the situation on the last day of May 770. As it had been decided that on 1 June this whole sector would be given to the successful monastery that Count Cancor and his mother had founded there six years earlier, on the very morning of the act of donation a continuous boundary was established that, completed by the river, enclosed a circular space: what was now a monastic territory no longer needed to be legitimated by its actual use.⁵⁴

⁵¹ Edmund E. Stengel, ed., *Urkundenbuch des Klosters Fulda. I. Die Zeit des Abtes Sturmi*, 3 vols (Marburg: Historische Kommission für Hessen und Waldeck, 1956), 1: no. 4, 5 and 83. ⁵² John Blair, *The Church in Anglo-Saxon Society* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 222

⁵³ Thomas Ludwig, "Vor dem Bau der Basilika," in *Die Einhards-Basilika in Steinbach bei Michelstadt im Odenwald. Tafeln*, ed. Thomas Ludwig, Otto Müller, and Irmgard Widdra-Spiess (Mainz: Philipp von Zabern, 1996), 1-23, at 8-9.

⁵⁴ Karl Glöckner, ed., *Codex Laureshamensis. I. Einleitung, Regesten, Chronik* (Darmstadt: Historischer Verein für Hessen, 1929-1936), no. 10 and 167. Accessible online at http://archivum-laureshamense-digital.de/de/codex_laureshamensis/codex.html (accessed 1 January 2017). See Matthew Innes, "Kings, Monks and Patrons: Political Identity at the Abbey of Lorsch," in *La royauté et les élites dans l'Europe carolingienne*, ed. Régine Le Jan (Lille:

The simultaneity of the establishing of a monastery's territory and the drawing of linear borders is something we also find in the royal donation received in 772 by San Salvatore di Brescia, consisting of a part of the royal forest or *gagium* in Reggio with an estimated area of 4000 *iugera*. Abono, *waldeman* of *gagium*, then drew and put in writing a very detailed boundary line that went through fields, pastures, and clearings.⁵⁵

Another relatively common situation had to do with the resolution of disputes by drawing linear boundaries. In 824, also in Italy, there was a famous legal suit between Flexo's inhabitants and the monastery of Nonantola, concerning access to the old royal forest. The linear boundary statements collected in previous charters and judicial records were repeatedly invoked by the *advocatus* of the monastery, not by the *consortes* who claimed longstanding fishing and pasture rights. Back in Germany, another well-known case concerns the *captura*, the Latin equivalent of *bifang*, that someone named Walto and his *socii* gave to the monastery of Fulda in 801. The property's linear demarcation does not seem to have been contemporaneous with the *captura* but rather was drawn in the context of a conflict settled around 827 between Fulda and a group of pioneers. As usual, the description of the plot shows that the area had already been in use before the demarcation was made.

Finally, Saint Gall's *formula* for the distribution of access to the forest between the *pagenses*, on the one hand, and royal, episcopal, and monastic representatives, on the other, is also well known.⁵⁸ It should be noted that this distribution was made *propter diuturnissimas lites reprimendas et perpetuam pacem conservandam*. Since it is related to the widely studied topic of *Markgenossenschaft* (mark community), Saint Gall's

Centre d'Histoire de l'Europe du Nord-Ouest, 1998), 301-24; Magdalene Fecher, *Die Namen der Gemarkung Lorsch* (Gießen: Hessische Vereinigung für Volkskunde, 1941).

⁵⁵ Luciano Lagazzi, *Segni sulla terra: determinazione dei confini e percezione dello spazio nell'alto Medioevo* (Bologna: CLUEB, 1991), 16-22. For the online edition of the diploma, see *Codice diplomatico della Lombardia medievale* at

http://www.lombardiabeniculturali.it/cdlm/edizioni/bs/brescia-sgiulia1/carte/sgiulia0772-06-14B (accessed 15 April 2020).

⁵⁶ Cesare Manaresi, ed., *I Placiti del "Regnum Italiae*," vol. 1 (a. 776-945) (Rome: Tipografia del Senato, 1955), no. 36. On the dispute of Flexo, Igor Santos Salazar, *Una terra contesa*. *Spazi, poteri e società nell'Emilia orientale dei secoli VI-X* (Florence: Le Lettere, 2011), 171-74.

⁵⁷ Matthew Innes, "Rituals, Rights and Relationships: Some Gifts and their Interpretation in the Fulda Cartulary, c. 827," *Studia Historica. Historia Medieval* 31 (2013), 25-50, at 39.

⁵⁸ "Collectio Sangallensis Salomonis III. *tempore conscripta*", in Karl Zeumer, ed., *Formulae Merowingici et Karolini Aevi*, MGH LL 5 (Hannover: Hahn, 1886), 403-4 (no. 10).

formula has been discussed by many different scholars over the past century.⁵⁹ I only want to point out here a contrast in the procedure that was established to demarcate each part. There was a clear intention to draw a continuous line for the part belonging to the king and the Church (a villa ad villam, a vico ad vicum, a monte ad montem, a colle ad collem, a flumine N. ad flumen N. – singula per se – sine ullius communion), while the description of the boundaries assigned for the collective use of the pagenses is much more vague.

<L1> Conclusion

To the extent that power is inseparable from its spatial expression, ⁶⁰ an exercise in abstraction that reduces the latter to its basic components can reveal tensions and developments concealed beneath apparently innocent procedures. This article suggests that linear forms of demarcation deserve to be studied in themselves, which has rarely been done. ⁶¹ Of course, this is already present in the work of medievalists in a more or less intuitive way, but rarely as a problem specifically formulated as such. In addition, studies along these lines have been disconnected from each other: Karl Rübel observed the difference between linear and non-linear demarcation, linking the former to stronger political powers, but provided only a reductive ethnic explanation. ⁶² Karl Brandi proposed in a brief essay that the diffusion of linear boundaries was a slow and non-universal process that extended from the early Middle Ages to the end of the Ancien Régime. One important take-away from Brandi's study is the idea that this was a top-down process, beginning on royal and noble lands and then extending to local communities; another is its connection with the territorialisation of power. ⁶³ More recently, Luciano Lagazzi has applied a semiotic analysis to the delimitation practices

⁵⁹ Siegfried Epperlein, *Herrschaft und Volk im karolingischen Imperium*, (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1969), 158-65. Recently Wickham, "Forests," 188.

⁶⁰ Anne Mailloux, "Le territoire dans les sources médiévales : perception, culture et expérience de l'espace social. Essai de synthèse," in *Les Territoires du médiéviste*, ed. Benoît Cursente and Mireille Mousnier (Rennes: Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2005), 223-35, at 225.

⁶¹ I am not referring here to the problem of the borders of kingdoms or states, on which there is an abundant bibliography, nor to the specific ways of marking boundaries on the landscape and their legal treatment, which has long been studied by legal historians: Harald Siems,

[&]quot;Flurgrenzen und Grenzmarkierungen in den Stammesrechten," in *Untersuchungen zur* eisenzeitlichen und frühmittelalterlichen Flur in Mitteleuropa und ihrer Nutzung, ed. Heinrich Beck, Dietrich Denecke, and Herbert Jankhun (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1979), 268-309.

⁶² Rübel, *Franken*, 89-143.

⁶³ Karl Brandi, "Grundfragen historischer Geographie und der Plan des historischen Atlas," in Karl Brandi, *Ausgewählte Aufsätze* (Oldenburg: Stalling, 1938), 469-90.

documented in the early Middle Ages in Italy, based on the anthropological concept of *liminarità*. 64

This paper has analysed some mechanisms that are articulated around linear demarcations:

In the first place, the judicial procedures and the texts they generated are essential for observing both the demarcation practices and the discourses associated with them. The reason seems obvious: judicial acts are privileged frameworks for the exercise of power and for constructing a political discourse. However, the fact that a judicial procedure contributes to deploying a certain spatial logic does not mean that the two things should be confused.

Secondly, churches are presented as a legitimising factor for the control of the surrounding space. The capacity to tithe operated as a key mechanism of domination, although its forms of territorial extension have specific dynamics.

Third, the written document itself forms part of the demarcation practices, insofar as it channels the justifying discourse and ensures the memory of a space defined by a line.

Fourthly, the final cases examined here warn against naive approaches. The fact that linear demarcation was linked to the territorial logic of the dominant groups does not imply that everything can be reduced to their imposition upon a different logic embraced by the peasantry and based on the actual use of the territory. I have shown how the legitimacy derived from the drawing of a line was transferred to certain peasant communities, with profound implications. If a community no longer needed to justify its control of its territory through use, this changed the way it related to neighbouring communities and also the conditions under which its members' access to their own internal spaces was organised.

Finally, I would like to suggest that for all this to work, there must have been some shared form of legitimacy between dominant groups and peasant communities.⁶⁵
Although often treated as marginal issues, appropriation practices – whether they were *presuras*, *aprisiones*, *runcales*, *bifangs*, or the establishing of monastic territories –

⁶⁴ Lagazzi, Segni.

Juan José Larrea and Roland Viader, "Aprisions et presuras au début du IX^e siècle : pour une étude des formes d'appropriation du territoire dans la Tarraconaise du haut Moyen Âge," in *De la Tarraconaise à la Marche supérieure d'Al-Andalus (IV^e-XI^e siècle). Les habitats ruraux*, ed. Philippe Sénac (Toulouse: Presses Universitaires du Midi, 2005), 167-210; Juan José Larrea, "Défricher la terre et se l'approprier. L'accès aux ressources de l'inculte dans le système agraire du haut Moyen Âge," *Vierteljahrschrift für Sozial- und Wirtschaftsgeschichte* 106/3 (2019), 288-328.

were a fundamental aspect of the relationship of medieval society with space. In its very initial moment, any appropriation, whether by *potentes* or by peasants, is merely the expression of a will: it is only later that it is legitimised and makes the control of space visible, either through work or through power.

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DML: Martín Duque, Ángel J., ed. *Documentación medieval de Leire (siglos IX a XII)*. Pamplona: Príncipe de Viana, 1983.

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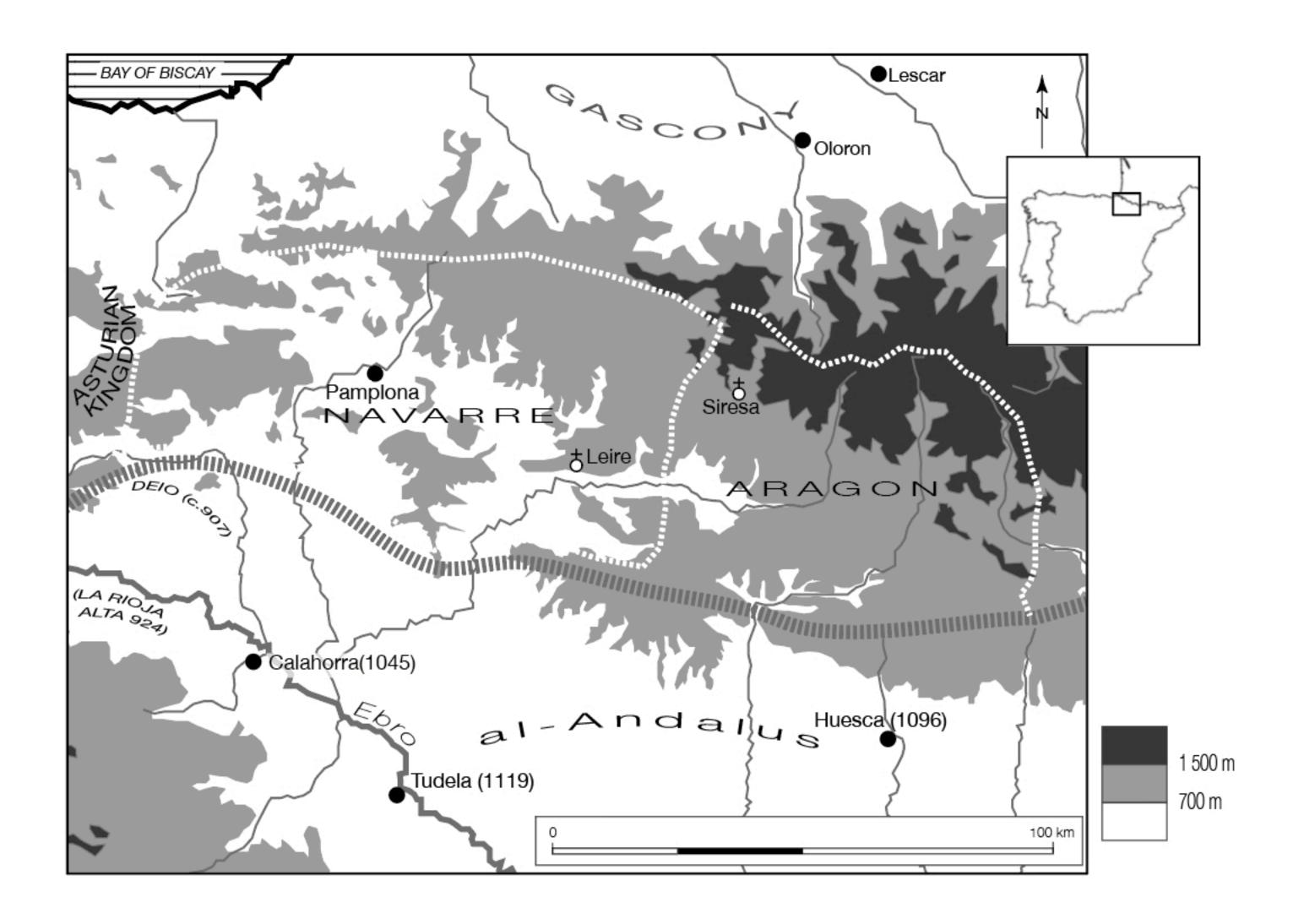
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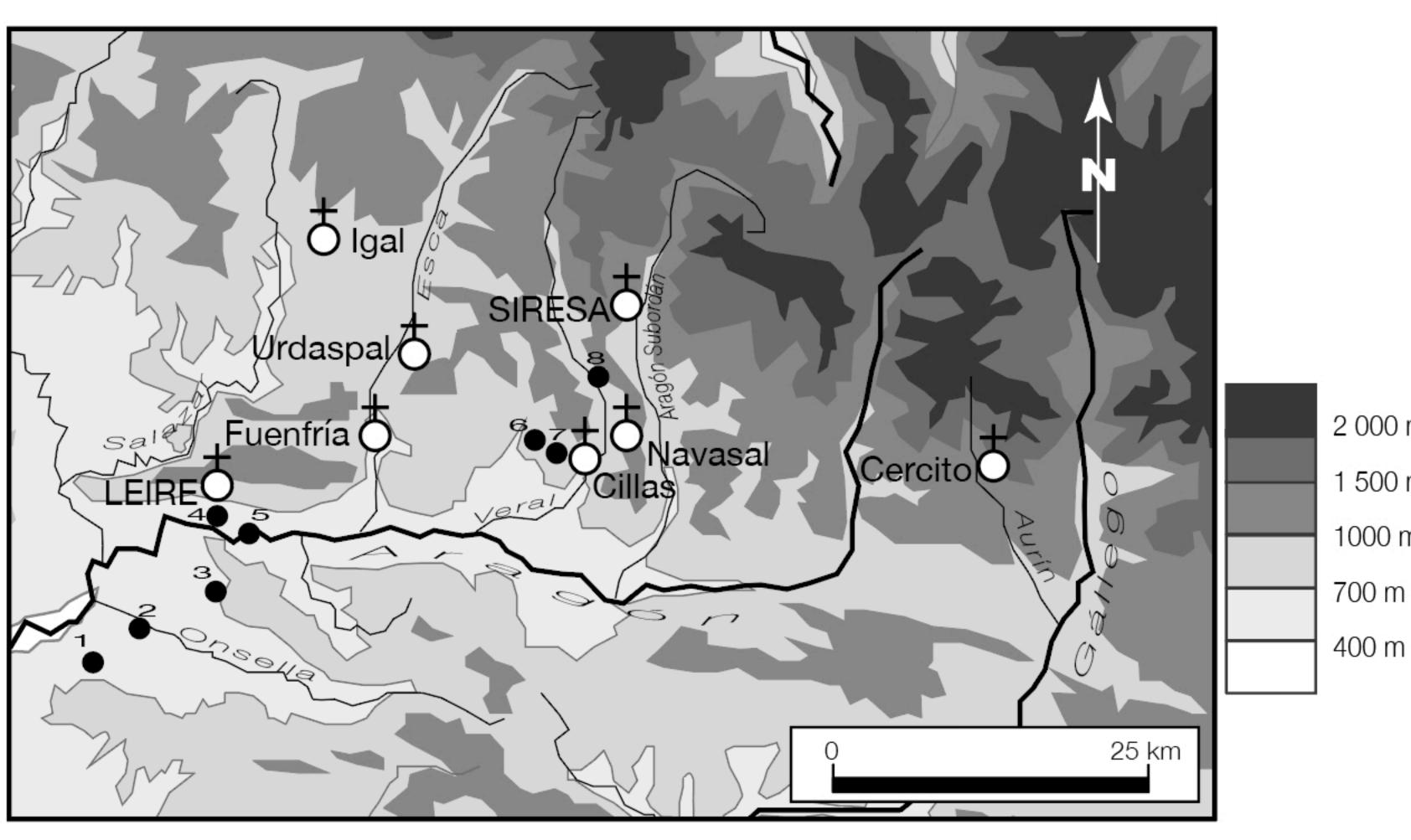
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