

The Formation of Medieval Territories in Mountain areas. A perspective from archaeology and written records at Caramulo (Lafões, central-northern Portugal)*

by Catarina Tente and Daniel Melo

The research that has been carried out in the Lafões/Caramulo area (central-northern Portugal) has made it possible to acquire new data on the formation of medieval territories in a mountainous area. The present paper uses data from written documentation and archaeological data to make a first approach to the study of the of the formation processes of village territories and the different-scale sociopolitical processes that were behind these processes. The focus of this study are two medieval parishes which occupy the most mountainous areas of the present-day municipality of Vouzela. The available data show significant differences between the two, particularly in the configuration of the settlement and its dynamics over time. While in one the settlement areas are quite stable, the other records changes in the settlement structure, with new foundations and abandonments throughout the Middle Ages. As far as it is possible to understand, these differences are fundamentally correlated with the actors who played in each of these territories. In fact, it was social differences of local scales which were mainly responsible for these differences in the definition of territories, ownership of rural properties, size of plots, settlement patterns and surely socio-economic practices. Micro-scale politics have determined different histories and settlement features.

Early Middle Ages, Central Portugal, Micropolitics, Churches, Rock-cut graves, Local elites, Villages, Seasonal settlement.

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Abbreviations:

ANTT = Arquivo Nacional da Torre do Tombo

AUC 1901 = *Anuario da Universidade de Coimbra. Anno Lectivo de 1900-1901*. Coimbra: Imprensa da Universidade, 1901

DMP DP = Azevedo, Rui Pinto de, and Da Costa, Avelino de Jesus (eds.). *Documentos Medievais Portugueses. Documentos Particulares A.D. 1116-1123*. Lisbon: Academia Portuguesa de História, 1980

LP -- Rodrigues, Manuel Augusto (ed.). *Livro Preto. Cartulário de Se de Coimbra*. Coimbra: Universidade de Coimbra, 1999

LT = *Liber Testamentorum Coenobii Laurbanensis*. León: Centro de Estudios San Isidoro, 2008

PMH DC = Herculano, Alexandre (ed.). *Portugaliae Monumenta Historica, Diplomata et Chartae*. Lisbon: Academia das Ciências, 1867

PMH IQ = *Portugaliae Monumenta Historica. Inquisitiones*. Lisbon: Academia das Ciências, 1888

TEP: Morujão, Maria do Rosário (ed.). *Testamenta ecclesiae portugaliae*. Lisbon: Universidade Católica Portuguesa, 2010.

1. Introduction

The present article aims to make a first incursion into the study of the formation of mountain territories, based on written and archaeological records. Contrasting with the neighbouring territories in the Beira Alta province, for the Lafões area we have a larger corpus of documents. The first documents available date back to 928.¹ Lafões itself is mentioned as a defined territory for the first time in a document from 1019.²

It is not easy to reconstruct this territory in the Middle Ages, but it would have covered an area similar to that occupied today by the municipalities of Vouzela, São Pedro do Sul, Oliveira de Frades and minor parts of Castro Daire, Arouca and Tondela (Figure 2).³ It was structured around the Vouga River, which is its defining axis. This river flows from east to west and into the Atlantic about 50 km from Lafões, and has played a fundamental part in the connection between the interior of Beira Alta and the Atlantic façade in all historical periods. The territory was also defined and delimited by two mountain ranges: the Gralheira Massif, to the North, which borders the basin of the Douro River, and the Caramulo Mountain Range, which establishes the watershed between the Mondego river basin.

¹ Document that is signed in *Abozamates* (Moçamedes), located in Lafões (LT, doc 33).

² Specifically, the reference is *castro alohoubeines*, which corresponds to the castle that organized the defense of this territory. PMH DC: doc CCXLIII. In 1030, 18 years later, another document specifically mentions: *In territorium alahobeines subtus monte fuste dicurente ribulo Bairoso*, PMH DC, doc. CCLVIII.

³ Boundaries established by crossing the information available in the Royal Inquiries (*inquirições*) from the thirteenth century, as we have no source that allows a definition of the *territorium alahobeines* in the eleventh century (PMH IQ 1258: 885-933; PMH IQ 1288: 586-627). The map drawn by Paulo Merêa and Amorim A. Girão, which shows a network of dots based on several documents from the eleventh and early twelfth centuries, suggests that Lafões had narrower boundaries in this period. Merêa, and Girão, "Territórios portugueses."

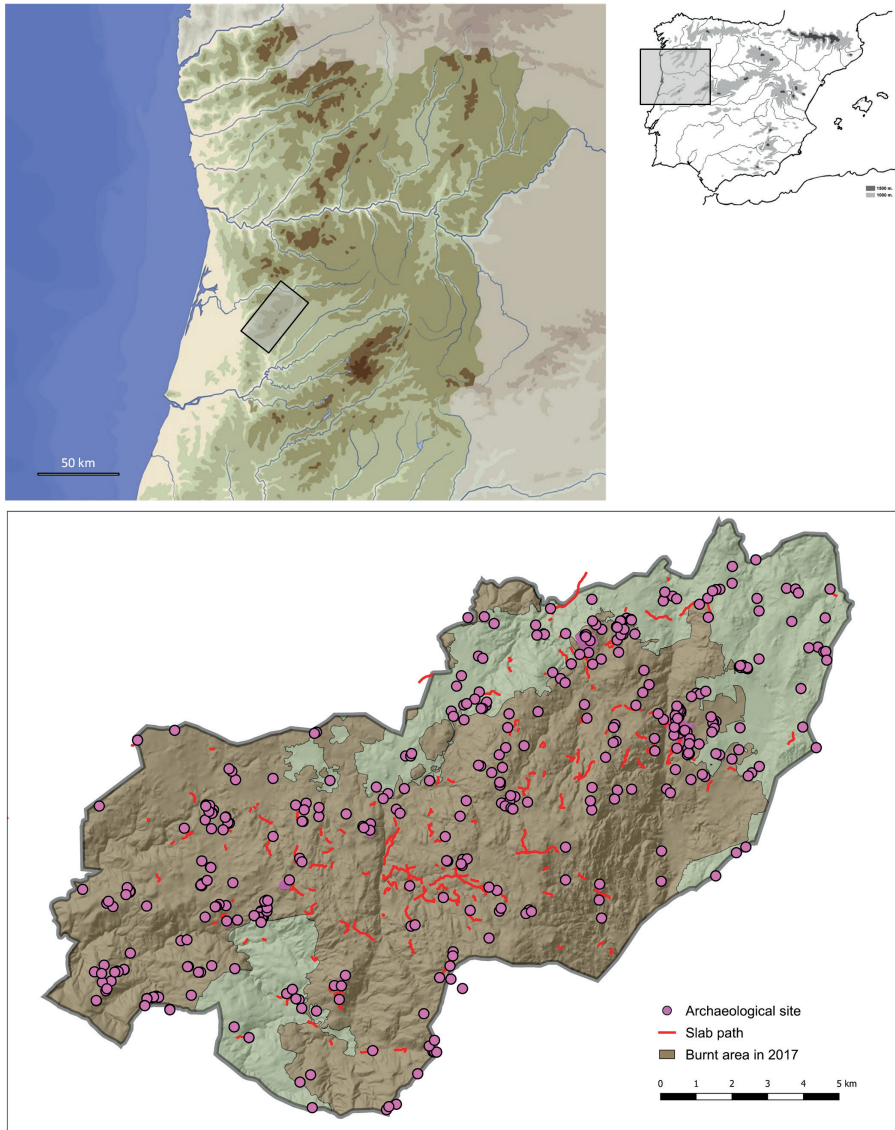


Figure 1. Location of the Caramulo mountain range in central-northern Portugal (above) and map of Vouzela with the burnt area after the 2017 wildfires and archaeological remains (below). Maps by Catarina Tente and Daniel Melo.

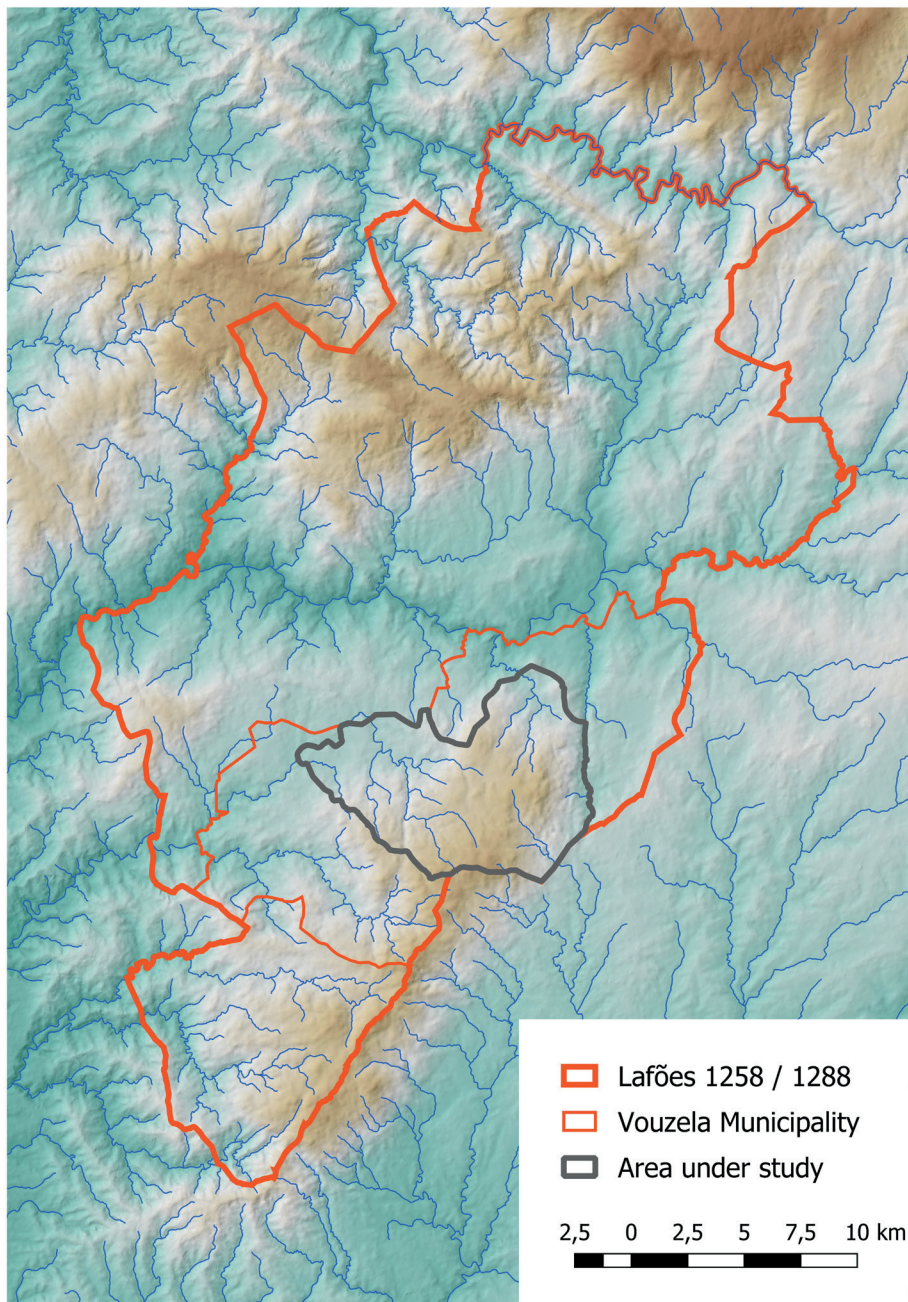


Figure 2. Map of the medieval territory of Lafões, according to documents dated between 1258 and 1288. Map by Daniel Melo and Júlio Rocha (Municipality of Vouzela)

Despite being a medium-altitude mountain range (about 1000 m a.s.l.), Caramulo has a very relevant role in defining the territory, since it divides the coastal platform from the region's hinterland, with both surrounding geographical areas being visible from the mountain tops. It has a very specific climate, more humid than the surrounding areas, and this, among other factors, also led to the definition of specific local historical realities.

In recent years we have been working in a particular sector of this ancient medieval land, belonging to Vouzela. A field survey and inventory carried out since 2016 has enabled the compilation of a more complete body of archaeological evidence for that municipality. The October 15th 2017 wildfires were a tragic event that also favored the identification of unknown archaeological sites by allowing systematic field surveying to be carried out in areas hitherto with a thick vegetation cover. At Vouzela more than 80% of the forest was completely destroyed (Figure 1), thus providing a window of opportunity that allowed for a 400% increase in the number of archaeological sites for all historical periods.⁴

The new data have allowed the start-up of several projects focused on different research topics and periods, from the megalithic occupation of the territory to the study of 20th century mines. This is the case of a new project focused on a small area (Figure 2) that was initiated in 2022. Titled "Ethno-Archaeology of the Beira Alta Mountains (Vouzela-Lafões)" (hereafter, MONS project), it aims to build a coherent and systematic overview of the interactions between the human past and the local landscape.

The idea is to use this area as a case study on micro-history in a *longue durée* perspective. This approach implies a detailed reanalysis of geographic data, archaeological records, written sources and ethnographic testimonies and narratives that allow us to address these rather complex processes. This approach is not new in Iberia. The main references in Spain can be found in the research groups working in the Pyrenees,⁵ the Cantabrian Mountains,⁶ or Sierra Nevada.⁷ These projects reflect the importance of micro-scale analyses for subsequent larger-scale, trans-regional and international comparative studies. As such, the outcome of this project will be a first insight into the connectivity strands between economic systems, socio-political structures and the impact of human activities on the Caramulo landscape that may provide empirical support for a first interpretative model. Geographically, the MONS project is focused on a limited area (around 67 km²), corresponding to the montane parishes of Cambra e Carvalhal de Vermilhas, Fornelo do Monte, and Ventosa (Figure 2), thus a micro-history under a *longue durée* perspective. It is expected that the project will enable the characterization of settle-

⁴ Real *et al.*, "Estratégias."

⁵ Gassiot Ballbé, and Pèlach Mañosa, "La ocupación ganadera." See also Rendu, *Estives d'Ossau*, and Palet i Martínez *et al.*, "Els espais altimontans."

⁶ Fernández Mier, "Campos de cultivo" and "Arqueología agraria."

⁷ Martín Civantos, and Bonet García, "Memola Project."

ment structures, the origins of the common lands, past herding practices, and – most relevant in the case of Caramulo – the evaluation of overall human impact on the mountain landscape.

Our contribution to this volume focuses on a relevant research topic in the region, which is the formation of the village settlement system and its progression to higher mountain sectors. Lafões also seems to be different from the other regions in the centre of Portugal in this regard. Although much data are still lacking, we will argue that this seems to be related to local micropolitical processes taking place in the Early Middle Ages.

2. *The Lafões territory*

Until the tenth century there is no reference in the documentation to settlements, villages, castles, or even people, in this territory. The first mention occurs in 928 and only refers the place where the donation of Villa Cova to the monastery of Lorvão made by countess Onega and her sons was signed and witnessed by Prince Ramiro, then holding court in Viseu (future Ramiro II of Leon).⁸ The document was signed in the village of Abozamates, which has been located in the modern village of Moçâmedes, in the modern municipality of Vouzela,⁹ and therefore integrated in the area that would come to be called Lafões. The visibility of this territory in the documentation is possibly related to the installation of county elites around Prince Bermudo Ordoñez. Manuel Luis Real has argued that Bermudo settled in this region after being defeated in the armed conflict he waged against his brother, King Alfonso III of Asturias.¹⁰ The reason for their installation in Lafões is not easy to discern. It is possible that the choice is related to the fact that this was a border area, as highlighted by Manuel Luis Real and Iñaki Martín Viso.¹¹ As such, it would have provided a refuge for those who were then banned from the royal court. Though this argument is possible, there were certainly other frontier territories that could be equally attractive. Other factors must have influenced this choice. Among them must be the existence of the thermal baths of Roman origin that were in use at São Pedro do Sul, as documented by recent archaeological excavations at the site. Archaeological research succeeded in documenting the foundation of the pre-Romanesque church that was built there in the 9th-10th century.¹² The *ajimez* that can be seen today in the walls of the current nearby São Martinho Chapel likely belonged to the ancient church. The baths may have been the focal point for these elites, as they were in the following

⁸ The document states that the donation is made *pro anima dominissimi nostri domini Ueremudi, dive memorie*; in Real, “A presúria.”

⁹ Fernandes, “Portugal,” 354-5. See also Real, “O Castro de Baiões,” 212.

¹⁰ Real, “O Castro de Baiões” and “O papel das elites.”

¹¹ Real, “O papel das elites;” Martín Viso, “Integración política.”

¹² Mendes-Pinto, and Reis, “Os banhos.”

centuries. It is also not clear where these people were permanently settled.¹³ What seems certain is that they would have established relations with local groups, of an unknown nature, but which may be at the origin of a process of lordship at a local scale that is perceptible from the eleventh century documents. The presence of these elites was somehow responsible for a unique history of Lafões when compared to the other Beira Alta territories. Although there is no written evidence, it may be expected that benefits and properties were distributed during this period, which would have profited certain families (local or non-local). These would have remained in the territory; indeed, we will see them acting in the following century through donations and property transactions in the region, thus reinforcing their local power.

So far we have not been able to identify fire and site abandonment events, such as those documented in other areas of Beira Alta;¹⁴ neither are there rock-cut grave necropolises at Lafões of the kind with a dispersed pattern, like those resulting from peasant family/community initiative.¹⁵ Churches documented in written sources and in the archaeological record in central Portugal are few. In contrast, disperse rock-cut graves are scant at Lafões. Taking the Vouzela territory as a representative sample, only five sites (with a total number of nine graves) were identified.¹⁶ It should be stressed that we are not dealing with a deficiency of survey data, as this is one of the most surveyed areas in the region. So, the presence of several churches and monasteries in an area like Lafões seems to imply a more restrictive control over family or community funerary practices by the ruling social groups. This could explain the scarcity of scattered rock-cut graves.

Although the earlier records do not make it possible to fully document the existence of villages next to the mentioned churches, we presume that the latter were attached to settlements. The lack of data does not allow us to see under what circumstances the founding of churches took place in previously-existent settlements. It is nevertheless significant that, contrary to what occurs in other areas of central Portugal, where various multi-family settlements (likely similar to villages) were abandoned at the end of the tenth century or in the eleventh century, we have not identified a single abandoned settlement in this phase at Lafões. The establishment of a village network in Lafões seems to be earlier than in other territories of Beira Alta. This could explain the difficulty for conventional archaeological surveys in identifying medieval multi-family settlements (or even villages) because these may be under present-day villages. The fact that most of the churches cited in eleventh century documents were located in these villages further reinforces this possibility.

¹³ We do not discuss here the role that the city of Viseu, located less than 30 km from Lafões, may or may not have played in the establishment of these elites in this region. On this subject, see Real, "O papel das elites" and Martín Viso, "Integración política."

¹⁴ Tente, "Rock-Cut Graves."

¹⁵ Martín Viso, "Enterramientos;" Tente, "Rock-Cut Graves."

¹⁶ Tente, Melo, and Ferreira, "Arqueologia funerária."

In this area, the rare examples of villages mentioned before the eleventh century are invariably on the periphery of what would become the *terra* (land) or *termo* (term) of Lafões, especially in its later configuration.¹⁷

3. *The formation of the village network*

The archive of the Pedroso Monastery has preserved three documents: one dated 1019 and two dated 1030. These provide a first glimpse of the internal organization.¹⁸ They mention for the first time the *teritorium alahobeines* or *alahoueines* (Lafões), stretching along both banks of the Vouga River. The head of this *teritorium* was the castle named *castro alahoueines*, with its own judicial institutions, including the *judices alahobeines* and the *multas faces bonas* of the local magnates, who assembled in a sort of *concilium* to render justice. The same documents shed for the first time light on the core area of Lafões. They reveal that, within the *teritorium*, there were already several villages established. In particular, two documents dated to 1030 record the transmission of real estate located in two contiguous villages (*villae*). Both follow a notarial form that describes in detail the location of the two settlements and mentions the surrounding villages. Around *Fikeirosa*, one of the documents¹⁹ listed five settlements, whose boundaries (*terminum*) border with it, all located within a radius of 2 km. The other document mentions the name of three villages bordering *Ibenordinis*.²⁰ Overall, these two documents, although focusing on a very limited area, show the extent to which the formation of the village settlement system was already developed at Lafões in the beginning of eleventh century. Each of the villages had its own well defined limits, which juxtaposed the limits of the neighboring villages, apparently forming a contiguous mesh of villages.

But the process was still ongoing in the following centuries. In fact, sources dated to up to 1258 mention more villages surely located within a 2 km circle around *Fikeirosa/Figeirosa* and *Ibenordinis/Iben Ordonizi*.²¹ Although we cannot be sure if some already existed in 1030, especially the more peripheral ones, others seem in effect to have been established after that date.

On the whole, the formation process of the village settlements in this area seems to have reached a peak in the second half of the eleventh century and

¹⁷ The already mentioned *uilla abozamates* (Moçâmedes) in 928; *spinitello* (Espindelo) and *quintanella* (Quintela), in 950; *uilla de Idolo* (Ribeiradio) in 964. All these *uillae* located on the fringes of Lafões (LT, doc. 33, PMH DC, doc. 61, LP, doc.139).

¹⁸ PMH DC, doc. 243; PMH DC. Doc. 268; AUC 1901, pp. 169-73.

¹⁹ PMH DC, doc. 268.

²⁰ AUC 1901, pp. 169-173: *se deuide per terminum : de albaruas : et Inde per terminum de figeirosa : et Inde per terminum : de uila noba : comodo : se deuide con Ipsas uilas...*

²¹ *Ansianes* (1092-98, LP, doc. 272), *Vilar* (1113, LP, doc. 466), *Sagathanes* (1116, DMP DP, doc. 28), *Novales* (1128, LP, doc. 479), *Casali de Rando* (PMH IQ 1258, 901), *Vayoes* (PMH IQ 1258, 900), *Pemdores* [poor reading of *Prendedores*] (“Cadastró,” 194).

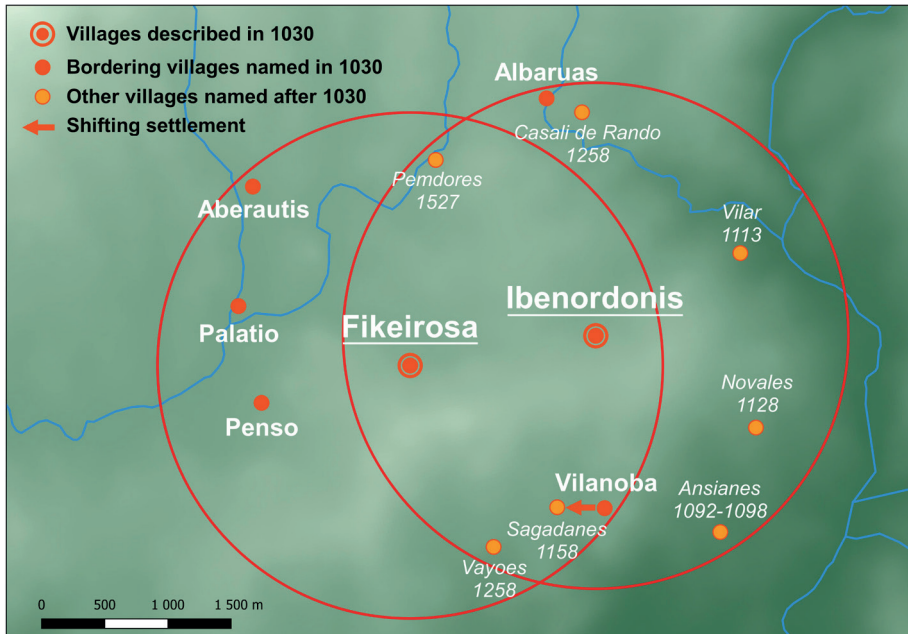


Figure 3. Information on villages in Lafões recorded in two documents dated back 1030 from Pedroso Monastery Archive. Map by Daniel Melo and Júlio Rocha (Municipality of Vouzela).

the beginning of the twelfth century, after the Leonese advances up to the Mondego River, and especially after the conquest of Viseu (1058) and Coimbra (1064). This is also the moment when the former local elites of Lafões began to establish lasting links with the major ecclesiastical centers and the regional political powers, thus emerging from the shadows into the records of monastic and cathedral registries in the region.

The area under study by the MONS project is mentioned for the first time in written sources in 1083, in a document that records the endowment of a small family monastery founded in *Vaucella* (Vouzela).²² It contains the first reference to the settlement of *Confuscus* (a flawed reading of *Confulcus*). Although only this place was mentioned for our study area, the document shows a complex network in adjacent areas, revealing a very dense occupation. We must assume that the situation would be similar in our study area, but we lack documentation.

The church of *Sancta Maria de Ventosa* is mentioned for the first time in 1083, already as a property shared by more than one owner or heir. This is the church that will become in the following century the seat of one of the parishes of our study area. Another document dated from 1104, recorded more

²² LP, doc. 331.

churches in the vicinity of our study area, such as the *ecclesia Sancti Michaelis de Felgosa*, and the *ecclesia Sancti Juliani*.²³

The documentation seems to show that the founding of churches and monasteries goes hand in hand with the establishment of villages. But this may be a misleading idea, since documentation was produced when the direct or indirect interest of religious institutions was at play. Hence, villages are only mentioned when there is already a church. If we look at the Iberian archaeological record, there is no lack of examples of village networks established before the appearance of religious buildings. As an example of this, we can mention the cases of Zaballa, Zornoztegi,²⁴ or even Aistra,²⁵ in Álava, in the Basque Country. Only systematic archaeological excavations in present-day villages could shed light on this issue.²⁶

Another feature that can be deduced from the documentation is that the majority of these churches were built outside the settlements. Maybe this option allowed them to exercise their social and spiritual influence over several small villages and homesteads. Or, since the settlement pattern was essentially scattered, the choice for the location of a church was not an easy decision. In these cases, churches would become centres that organized the settlement network, even before the parish network of the twelfth century.

3.1. *Settlements and villages in the MONS project study area*

The area under study in the MONS project comprises mainly mountainous areas of the Caramulo (Figure 2). For this area there is no documentation prior to the eleventh century; furthermore, none of the available documents (Table 1 and Footnote 34) are comparable in terms of territorial definition to the ones mentioned above from the Pedroso Monastery. For the aim of this paper these documents are relevant to record the moment when villages are mentioned for the first time, which had churches and which have survived until our times.

Although we cannot assume that the first reference to a village is directly related to the moment of its foundation,²⁷ we can notice that there are some patterns. It is possible to identify 38 sites, some were villages but others were probably small settlements. Tables 1 and 2 organize these places/villages ac-

²³ LP, doc. 321.

²⁴ Quirós Castillo, *Arqueología del campesinado medieval*, and *Arqueología de una comunidad campesina*.

²⁵ Quirós Castillo, and Reynolds, *Arqueología de las sociedades locales en la Alta Edad Media*.

²⁶ As examples of older churches in the neighbouring areas, the Sever do Vouga municipality should be mentioned as it is favoured by a much richer collection of documents. The *baselica* or *monasterio Sancti Adree apostoli et Sancti Christofori* is documented for the first time in 964 and its foundation could be older (LP139; LP135). The first known church in Lafões is *Sancto Martino de Balneo* (PMH IQ 1258: 897), already mentioned, whose establishment has been dated from the 10th century. But the *eclesia uocabulo Sancta Maria de Uarzena* (1070) is the first mention in a written record (PMH DC, doc. 490).

²⁷ Villages are usually mentioned for the first time when there is alienation of land plots.

according to their altitude and date of first mention in written documents. It is quite clear that the number of mentions decreases as the altitude increases, and that above 800 m a.s.l. only three localities are mentioned (the current villages of Covas, Covelinho and Adsamo). It also seems clear that the higher the altitude is, the later the settlement is mentioned in the written record. The only exception is Vermilhas, located above 700 m, which appears documented at the end of the twelfth century.

Sometimes indicators of a certain progression of settlements in altitude are vague in documents. In the parish of *Sancta Maria de Ventosa*, *Covelo* (575 m) was originally attached to *Gamardos* (c. 480 m), as attested in this sentence: *fuit de focariis foramontanos de Gamardos*. *Ansara* (585 m), was still attached to *Curugeira* (443 m): *est de focaria de Curugeira*.²⁸ This dependence does not seem purely arbitrary since there is a considerable discontinuity between *Gamardos* and *Curugeira* and their respective appendages *Covelo* and *Ansara*. Overall, there seems to be almost a genetic dependence between these places, a sort of offshoot, a fission process that projects people from the lower settlements to the higher altitudes. But we should not assume that this progression in altitude was linear and systematic.

Agrarian expansion seems to have reached its peak by the end of thirteenth century, with the occupation of areas unviable for farming that were promptly abandoned after a short time. The problem is that many of these new settlements are not visible in the written sources.²⁹ These new, incipient settlements (*pobras* or *póvoas*) were established on wastelands or common lands located within the territories of long-consolidated villages and remained subject to the latter. This explains why the Royal Inquiries do not mention them, as they were part of the territory of the older villages.³⁰

The survey carried out by the Royal Inquirers of 1258 in the parish of *Sancta Maria de Ventosa* was quite exhaustive, naming 18 settlements. However, a further six places appear in the later 1527 Census.³¹ Some of these,

²⁸ PMH IQ 1258: 904.

²⁹ In this regard, an excerpt from the 1288 Inquiries is rather enlightening, although it focuses not on our study area, but on a neighbouring mountain range, at the opposite north end of the Lafões territory. This is the parish *Sancti Martini de Cauanhon*. There it is reported that, when this mountain district was populated, at an early date, six villages were founded: *deste tempo que Couas do monte foy poblado foy poblado couas de Rio e deylam e verdozedo e Couelo e Regaufj*. Later, throughout the reigns of Afonso II and Sancho II (1211-48), agrarian expansion progressed in the area and eleven new settlements (*pobras*, or *póvoas*) were founded in common areas within the boundaries of the old villages: *feçeron estas pobras que sse seguen nos Termhos das aldeyas uelhas de susso ditas*. Many of these settlements were not viable, as we can see, because after this surge of occupation, two were already deserted in 1288 (*Brunhedo que ora esta erma a Recia que ora esta erma*), and another five would disappear before 1527.

³⁰ The quoted passage from the 1288 Inquiries is, in fact, an exception. In comparison, none of the *pobras* mentioned in it were named in the previous 1258 Inquiries, which is significant. If that was the rule used by the royal inquirers, the fact that certain settlements were not mentioned in the Inquiries of the thirteenth century does not mean that they did not already exist, especially when it turns out that all the other neighbouring villages are named.

³¹ "Cadastro."

Table 1. Documental references until 1527 to settlements in the MONS project study area, organized by altitude. (1083: LP, doc. 331; 1086: PMH DC doc. 660; 1104: LP, doc. 329; 1138: LP, doc. 309; 1158: ANTT, SCC DP, m. IV, doc. 23; 1185: TEP, doc. 7.1; 1197: ANTT, Santa Cruz de Coimbra, Documentos Particulares, m. XIV, doc. 4; 1207: ANTT, Santa Cruz de Coimbra. Documentos Particulares, m. XIV, doc. 20; 1258: PMH IQ 1258: 903-906; 912-913; 1296: ANTT, Chancelaria de D. Dinis, Livro II, doc. 489; 1527: “Cadastro”, 196-197.)

| Altitude (meters) | Map number | Documental reference to villages and date of the 1st record | Present-day place name | Obs. |
|-------------------|------------|---|---------------------------------|------------------|
| 300-400 | 1 | <i>Vascoya</i> (1258) | Vasconha | |
| | 2 | <i>Sancta Ovaia</i> | Santa Ovaia | Uninhabited |
| | 3 | <i>Cambar</i> (1138) | Cambra de Baixo | |
| | 4 | <i>Cambarino</i> (1258) | Cambarinho | |
| | 5 | <i>Casale Bonum</i> (1258) | Casal Bom | |
| | 6 | <i>Curugeyra</i> (1258) | Corujeira (de Ventosa) | |
| | 7 | <i>Casale</i> (1258) | Casal | Uninhabited |
| | 8 | <i>Figueyras</i> (1258) | Figueiras | |
| | 9 | <i>Levites</i> (1104) | Levides | |
| | 10 | <i>Paredes</i> (1138) | Paredes Velhas | |
| | 11 | <i>Pedes Pontis</i> (1207) | Pés de Pontes | |
| | 12 | <i>Plazias</i> (1258) | Prazias | |
| | 13 | <i>Quintanela</i> (1185) | Quintela | |
| | 14 | <i>Servity</i> (1258) | Silvite | |
| 401-500 | 15 | <i>Taaveiros</i> (1138) | Caveirós de Baixo | |
| | 16 | <i>Villa Noua</i> (1527) | Vila Nova | |
| | 17 | <i>Ygreja</i> (1527) | Igreja de Cambra | |
| | 18 | <i>Ansara</i> (1258) | Ansara | |
| | 19 | <i>Caueiroas superiori</i> (1158) | Caveirós de Cima | |
| | 20 | <i>Cecorili</i> (1258) | Sacorelhe | |
| | 21 | <i>Confuscus</i> (1083) | Confulcos | |
| | 22 | <i>Covelo</i> (1258) | Covelo | |
| | 23 | <i>Curugeira</i> (1258) | Corujera (de Cambra) | |
| | 24 | <i>Picoto</i> (1527) | Picoto | |
| | 25 | <i>Pouoa de Gyeyra</i> (1527) | Agueira | |
| | 26 | <i>Sancta Columba</i> (1158) | Santa Comba | |
| | 27 | <i>Tourelis</i> (1258) | Tourelhe | |
| | 601-700 | 28 | <i>Casale de Ausenda</i> (1258) | Casal de Ausenda |
| 29 | | <i>Mogueiraes</i> (1258) | Mogueirães | |
| 30 | | <i>Ventossa</i> (1185) | Ventosa | |
| 31 | | <i>Carvalhar Redondo</i> | Carvalhal Redondo | Uninhabited |
| 32 | | <i>Carvalal</i> (1258) | Carvalhal de Vermilhas | |
| 701-800 | 33 | <i>Joana Martinz</i> (1527) | Joana Martins | |
| | 34 | <i>Fornelo</i> (1258) | Fornelo do Monte | |
| | 35 | <i>Varmilj</i> (1197) | Vermilhas | |
| 801-900 | 36 | <i>Caualyngo</i> (1527) | Covelinho | Uninhabited |
| | 37 | <i>Covas</i> (1258) | Covas | |
| 901-1000 | 38 | <i>Desamão</i> (1527) | Adsamo | |

Table 2. Documental references until 1527 to settlements in the MONS project study area, organized by date of the first mention in written records. (The references are the same than in the previous table.)

| Date | Villages and small settlements mentioned in the documents | Altitude (meters) | Obs. |
|-----------------|---|-------------------|-----------------------|
| 1083-6 | <i>Confuscus</i> | 549 | Mention of the church |
| | <i>Sancta Maria de Ventosa</i> | 599 | |
| 1104 | <i>Levites</i> | 451 | |
| 1138 | <i>Cambar</i> | 496 | |
| | <i>Paredes</i> | 420 | |
| | <i>Taaveiroos</i> | 492 | |
| 1158 | <i>Caueiroas superiori</i> | 548 | |
| | <i>Sancta Columba</i> | 589 | |
| 1185 | <i>Quintanela</i> | 431 | |
| | <i>Ventossa</i> | 607 | |
| 1192-213 | <i>Sancti Juliani de Cambar</i> | 500 | Mention of the church |
| 1197 | <i>Varmilj</i> | 730 | |
| 1207 | <i>Pedes Pontis</i> | 423 | |
| 1258 | <i>Ansara</i> | 585 | |
| | <i>Cambarino</i> | 453 | |
| | <i>Carvalal</i> | 741 | |
| | <i>Casale</i> | 435 (Uninhabited) | |
| | <i>Casale Bonum</i> | 475 | |
| | <i>Casale de Ausenda</i> | 652 | |
| | <i>Casale Derreado</i> | Unknown location | |
| | <i>Cecorili</i> | 539 | |
| | <i>Covas</i> | 858 | |
| | <i>Covelo</i> | 575 | |
| | <i>Curugeira</i> | 446 | |
| | <i>Curugeyra</i> | 443 | |
| | <i>Figueyras</i> | 496 | |
| | <i>Fornelo</i> | 776 | |
| | <i>Gamardos</i> | Unknown location | |
| | <i>Mogueiraeas</i> | 610 | |
| | <i>Plazias</i> | 442 | |
| | <i>Sancta Ovaya</i> | 395 (Uninhabited) | |
| | <i>Servity</i> | 474 | |
| | <i>Sesulfi</i> | Unknown location | |
| <i>Tourelis</i> | 587 | | |
| <i>Vascoya</i> | 385 | | |
| <i>Vilares</i> | Unknown location | | |
| 1296 | <i>Carvalhar Redondo</i> | 620 | |
| 1527 | <i>Desamão</i> | 901 | |
| | <i>Caualyinho</i> | 821 | |
| | <i>Joana Martinz</i> | 762 | |
| | <i>Picoto</i> | 567 | |
| | <i>Pouoa de Gyeyra</i> | 600 | |
| | <i>Ygreja</i> | 500 | |
| | <i>Villa Noua</i> | 459 | |

like *Desamão* (today Adsamo, from A-de-Samo), or *Joana Martinz*, seem to denounce their origin, as they are anthroponyms, i.e., the names of their first permanent residents or prominent figure in their foundations.³² Some other settlements still retained the term *póvoa* in their name, such as *Póvoa dos Codessais*, within the boundaries of the village of Fornelo do Monte, or *Póvoa Piquena de Covas*, evidently within the boundaries of Covas.³³ In a document dated to 1296, we can also recognize a stream, the *augua de Covas*, drawing the boundaries between the villages of Fornelo and Covas.³⁴

3.2. *Different parishes, different processes*

It is of note that there are sharp differences between the two medieval parishes under study on the form and dynamics of the respective settlement network. In the parish of *Sancta Maria de Ventosa*, the formation and consolidation of the settlement system was very prolonged, suffering adjustments until very late, with the appearance of new villages and the disappearance older ones in the sources after the thirteenth century. Indeed, three settlements (*Gamardos*, *Vilares* and *Sesulfi*)³⁵ disappear before 1527, while another, *Casale Derreado / casall de Reado*, vanishes shortly after.³⁶ If in the case of thirteenth century *pobras* one can assume the non-viability of some of the settlements, in the case of the above villages it is not easy to understand the causes for their abandonment. In this parish settlements are mostly small, sometimes very small. It is probably significant that, to the Royal surveyors of 1258, only five deserved the name of *villa*, which was usually given to settlements that would be called *aldeya* (i.e. village) in documents post-dating 1288.³⁷ These *villae* are settlements made up of several *casales*, have comparatively larger extensions of arable land, and are separated from each other by stretches of land unsuitable for farming.

On the contrary, in the parish *Sancti Juliani de Cambar*, the settlement system was already fully consolidated in 1258 and did not undergo any noteworthy changes until 1527. In fact, it remains roughly the same today. Each settlement, almost always called *villa* by the 1258 surveyors, seem to have contained several *casalia*.³⁸ Settlements are here generally around 1 km

³² Adsamo and Joana Martins still appear in the seventeenth century under the names of *Povoa de Samo* and *Povoa de Joana Martins*. ANTT, Prontuário, f. 426.

³³ Capela. *As freguesias*, 752.

³⁴ ANTT, Chancelaria de D. Dinis: Livro II, doc. 489.

³⁵ PMH IQ 1258: 904; 906.

³⁶ PMH IQ 1258: 903; "Cadastró," 197. It is no longer mentioned in the parish register of Ventosa, whose records begin in 1567.

³⁷ They are *villa de Cecorili*, *villa de Servity*, *villa de Fornelo*, *villa de Covas* and *villa de Villares*.

³⁸ Clear examples are the *villa de Sancta Columba*, where, apart from other landlords, the Monastery of Santa Cruz had three *casalia*: *de tribus casalibus, que Sancta Crux habet in Sancta Columba* (PMH IQ 1258: 912), or the *villa de Tourelli*, where there was a *casale* belonging to

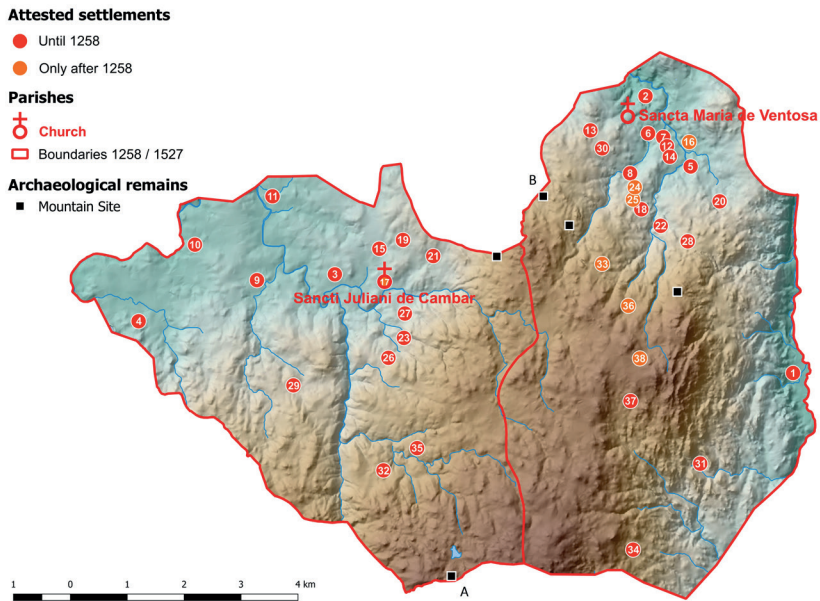


Figure 4. Territories of the two medieval parishes of Sancti Juliani de Cambar and Ventosa, with locations of the attested settlements and archaeological remains of mountain sites. Map by Daniel Melo.

apart, and only in the case of the *Tourelli*, *Curugeira*, and *Sancta Columba* alignment the distance between villages drops to c. 400 m.³⁹

Evidently, the settlement process followed different courses of development in these two parishes. Part of the explanation may lie in the topographic relief, more pronounced in *Sancta Maria de Ventosa* than in *Sancti Juliani de Cambar*. This harsh terrain, very steep and reaching relatively high altitudes (the highest point in our study area reaches 1043 m a.s.l.), mostly unsuitable for agriculture, may have contributed to the difficulties and continuous adjustments of the human settlement in the former parish.

But an explanation, perhaps more relevant, may lie in the agents of the respective settlement processes. In the parish *Sancti Juliani de Cambar* an active presence of noble lords is documented at least since around 1100.⁴⁰ By 1258, this prevalence of a lordship element over generations was quite evident. All the villages invariably belonged to knightly families by right of ancestorship, as can be deduced from the sentences *fuit de militibus per avolengam*

Santa Cruz and four others to the Monastery of Pedroso: *Sancta Crux habet ibi unum casale [...] et Petroso habet ibi .iiij. or casalia* (PMH IQ 1258: 913).

³⁹ We should consider *Taaveiroos* (poor reading of *Caaveiroos*) and *Caaveiroas superiori* as the same settlement, although *Caaveiroas superiori* is attested very early on (1158).

⁴⁰ Ventura, "O elemento franco," 91, 101.

or *fuit et est de militibus per avolengam*.⁴¹ The *casalia* and *quintās* (manors) that constituted them were either the property of noble knights or of religious orders, acquired through legacies made by noble families. The entire parish was then exempt from the payment of royal taxes and revenues to the king's official (the *moordomo*).⁴² In contrast, the settlement system in the parish of *Ventosa* was dominated by small and medium landowners, classified by our sources as *foramontaos*. This also explains why documents prior to 1258 are much scarcer in this area. Contrasting with the elites, the range of interest and influence of these farmers was very limited and essentially restricted to their parish. Their legacies are much more modest. Most of the time, they are not true *casalia*, but some generic land (*hereditas*), or even a strip (*leyra*) or a piece (*peza*) of a *hereditas*, or, sometimes, maybe a *vinea* or just a *peza de vinea* (piece of vineyard). The donations recorded were made, not to the great religious centers, but to the local *ecclesia de Ventosa*.⁴³ The small scope of these landowners and the coexistence of multiple small initiatives apparently caused a less regulated, orderly settlement.

4. *Archaeology of mountain seasonal settlements*

The circumstances of the 2017 wildfires provided new data on the medieval mountain sites located above 700 m a.s.l. These can be characterized by a few potsherd scatters and by built structures whose corners and entrances are defined by large stone blocks. Most of these sites are located above 700 m a.s.l.

Ongoing excavations at Lameiros Tapados,⁴⁴ at 730 m a.s.l., are revealing a settlement located near a granitic peak adjacent to arable land, a spring and a natural path to the higher sectors of Caramulo (Figure 5). It is hidden in the landscape, but with excellent visual control over the surrounding territory, namely over the deeply-incised Vouga valley and villages that already existed in the eleventh century. Material culture items indicate the tenth-eleventh centuries. Although we have only carried out one season of excavations, we can already put forward some preliminary conclusions: The site is formed by structures (narrow and elongated) whose wall bases were made of stone and roofs were built with perishable materials; seven to ten different structures have already been identified, more or less with the same size and plan, suggesting a pluri-family settlement. The available archaeological record attests activities related with preparation and storage of foods, and weaving, but metalworking remains are absent. The scarcity of materials (mostly ce-

⁴¹ PMH IQ 1258: 912-3.

⁴² PMH IQ 1288: 612: *toda esta freegesia tragen por onrra que non entra hi moordomo del Rey.*

⁴³ PMH IQ 1258: 903-6. There are also some donations made to the local *bayllia de Ansimir de Alafone* of the Knights Hospitaller (PMH IQ 1258: 905-6; 891).

⁴⁴ Fernández Mier, and Tente, "Transhumant Herding Systems;" Tente *et al.*, "A primeira campanha."

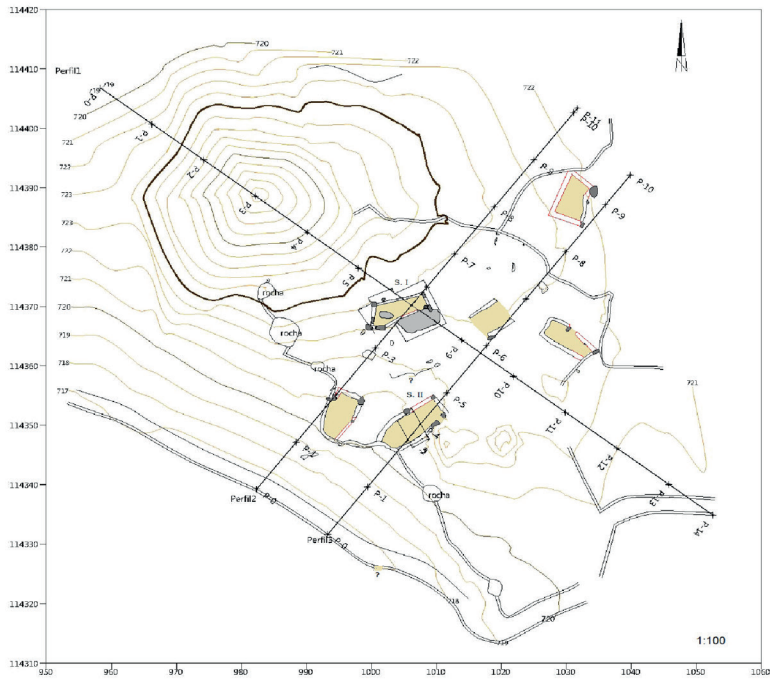


Figure 5 – The archaeological site of Lameiros Tapados (Ventosa). Aerial view (above) and plan of the site with the stone structures identified (below). Plan by José António Tomás and Catarina Tente.

ramics) indicates the structures were cleaned before their last use. In sum, the available data seem to point to a seasonal settlement occupied during the exploitation of summer pastures.

Another site is Tapado das Casas (unpublished), probably a medieval seasonal settlement, at 947 m a.s.l., on a slope with access to several water courses but with little agricultural space (Figure 6). It is also hidden in the landscape but with excellent visual control over Lapa da Meruje, a megalithic monument where an early medieval reuse has been recorded.⁴⁵ The medieval site is organized around a granitic boulder where a rock-shelter also exists; unfortunately, it is eroded by water. Even so, our excavations were able to identify a fireplace likely postdating the eighteenth century. As far as we can infer from the stone structures that we have already identified on the surface, this is the largest site currently known on the mountain.

Last year's excavation characterized two structures. One is similar to those identified at Lameiros Tapados, also with the same large, uncut stones in corners and doorways. This structure seems to have been rebuilt several times, which suggests a long use. However, in the interior we were not able to identify different layers of occupation. A fireplace was identified in the north-east corner. The artefacts are, once again, scarce, but they allow us to infer a domestic use of this structure. It has not been dated by radiocarbon, but the available material culture, namely the ceramics, points to the last centuries of the Middle Ages, likely from the thirteenth century onwards. A reuse during the nineteenth century is also likely, given the find of a gunflint piece. Another structure, whose excavation is ongoing, was built using the granite tors, adding to them a structure of boulders built with uncut stones and perishable materials. It had at least two occupations. The older must date to the Early Medieval period, taking into account a typical ceramic jar that was found in the fireplace. This fireplace is quite similar to one found inside one of the houses at Lameiros Tapados on top of an outcrop. Still in the Middle Ages, this structure was abandoned and a new one was built on top of it. It had a flat floor with huge slabs of stone at the entrance. The scanty ceramics point to the twelfth-fourteenth centuries.

Preliminary conclusions suggest that Tapado das Casas was a pluri-family seasonal settlement dating back to the Early Medieval period but used over a broad period of time, thus contrasting in this regard with Lameiros Tapados, which was abandoned perhaps in the eleventh century.

Although Tapado das Casas was coeval to Lameiros Tapados, it has undergone a different history. Founded in the Early Middle Ages, it continued to be used until perhaps the beginning of the twentieth century. Tapado das Casas was built higher on the mountain and the nearest villages (c. 3 km) are mentioned in 1197 (*Varmilj*) and in 1257 (*Carvalal*) but they are located in lower altitudes, between 730 m and 741 m (Table 2). The case of Lameiros

⁴⁵ Carvalho, "Anta da Lapa;" Tente, and Carvalho, "Mountain Archaeology."

Tapados is quite different. It did not survive until the 12th century, but unlike Tapado das Casas it is located at 730 m a.s.l., curiously at a similar altitude to *Carvalal* and *Varmilj*.

The two sites are located in different mountain parishes. Lameiros Tapados was located in the medieval parish of *Sancta Maria de Ventosa* (current Ventosa and Fornelo do Monte parishes), whose settlement was more scattered and uneven in terms of site sizes (Figure 4). Several failed attempts to found new settlements are documented for this parish, as well as the abandonment of older villages. It is also here that villages located at the highest altitude, such as *Caualyinho* (821 m), *Covas* (858 m) and *Desamão* (901 m), can be found (Table 1). All are at higher altitudes than Lameiros Tapados. It is possible that this seasonal site could have been abandoned as part of the progressive permanent occupation of higher sectors of the mountain. In *Sancta Maria de Ventosa*, the actors were mainly small and medium-sized landowners (farmers) and somehow – or because of that – the management of plots and commons, as well as the expansion and contraction of settlements, was more dynamic.

On the other hand, Tapado das Casas, in the medieval parish of *Sancti Juliani de Cambar* (modern-day Cambra e Carvalhal de Vermilhas parish), has a long history of seasonal use. Its long-lasting stability reflects a similar pattern defined at least since the thirteenth century. This is probably due to the actors at play; unlike in the former parish, these were more diverse and include monastic institutions (with greater or lesser importance and political influence) and lay landlords.

5. *Some possible conclusions*

The MONS project is based on a long-term approach because only from this perspective is it possible to study the construction of a human landscape, particularly when it comes to studying mountain spaces. This is because the territory is more difficult and poses great difficulties. In an almost deterministic way, these difficulties have given rise to similar solutions over time and it is common to find systematic uses of the same spaces and resources. However, it was in the Early Middle Ages that the system of villages that has survived until today was formed and various solutions for more intensive exploitation of the mountain in agro-pastoral terms were trialed. In this sense, this period is particularly important for understanding both the landscape that can be seen today and the socio-economic structures that were behind the configuration of the settlement network and the agrarian system inherent to it. Proving the importance of this period in shaping the landscape is the permanence of many of the villages identified in the documentation and the traditional agrarian system itself, which has been systematically studied using an ethno-archaeological approach and which helps to explain the data from both the documentation and the archaeology. The settlement has remained practi-

cally unchanged to this day, and even the introduction of American products (maize, potatoes, and beans) has not altered this configuration.⁴⁶

Nevertheless, the medieval history of Lafões contrasts greatly with that of the other inland regions in central Portugal, even with other mountainous areas. Analyses of the available written sources, associated with an archaeological study is beginning to show the dynamic in the building of the social landscape. Even at a local (or micro-local) scale, such as the one being worked on in the MONS project, it is already possible to see very significant differences in the construction processes of the village network, in settlement structuring and in the inherent social relations. The area under study has the particularity of being a mountainous area, which necessarily implied adaptation to the orography and the establishment of strategies for the exploitation of the economic resources available, such as water, to offset the scarcity of arable land. This has always been a key aspect in the establishment of human communities here at least since the Neolithic. Water was (and still is) a structural element in agrarian practices as it enabled an increase in cultivable areas and consequently a densification in human occupation of this territory. The existence of thermal waters, recognized at least since protohistoric times, must have been another point of attraction. The thermal baths may also have been the attraction that linked the Asturian prince Bermudo Ordoñez to this region. He was accompanied by county families who were socially connected with him. The presence of these elites at a relatively early stage would have been responsible for the development of a social dynamic that contrasts with what is known for the rest of the Beira Alta region. There are no written sources that can explain or make clear the beginning of local elite ascension. However, in the eleventh century documentation it is possible to identify some of these local elite families and also their strategies to take control of resources. The building of churches and their donation to encompassing institutions such as monasteries is one of the most common features of their strategies. The early medieval social context of Lafões was, from our point of view, responsible for its particular history.

Unlike the evidence from others parts of Beira Alta, no archaeological remains of permanent villages have been found for this time period, which leads us to think that most may be buried under the present-day villages. This suggests that local elites acted over the territories influencing forms of social organisation, socio-economic activities, and even religious practices

The exploitation of river valleys and arable lands in the ninth-eleventh centuries was combined with the exploitation of the more rocky areas of the mountain, probably as pastures. This can be indicated by sites such as Lameiros Tapados, and maybe Tapado das Casas. Some of these settlements were

⁴⁶ American products did determine other forms of cultivation and water management, but this topic still needs to be further investigated and analysed in other contexts, the focus of which is beyond the scope of this paper.

used for centuries while others were abandoned for reasons that are still undetermined but that could be related to the foundation of new permanent settlements (villages?) at altitudes above 800 m at the end of the twelfth century.

With the data currently available it seems that the villages above 650/700 m only gain prominence at the end of the twelfth century. It was around this point in time that the region probably experienced a demographic increase along with pressure from the landowners to increase agro-pastoral production, thus prompting permanent occupation of new mountain spaces. The latter spaces implied the conversion of mountain common lands or pasture fields. Thus, it is expected that some of the latest villages could have been built over these ancient seasonal settlements.

In a first analysis it seems clear that the process was not uniform throughout Lafões. Different local social dynamics may have affected the definition of territories, ownership of rural properties, size of plots, settlement patterns and surely socio-economic practices. As explained above, diverse processes have been detected in the two medieval parishes under analysis. Micro-scale politics have determined different histories and settlement features. At *Sancti Juliani de Cambar* different local and non-local elites controlled most of the arable land, and the settlement apparently stabilized in the twelfth century to become more concentrated and stable. At *Sancta Maria de Ventosa*, the action of small and medium-sized landowner families determined a more sparse settlement (nevertheless densely occupied) and more dynamic, where new foundations and abandonment are documented throughout the Middle Ages. The changes and adjustments that the system undergoes at a very late stage may even reflect an intrusion of new agents, in a late process of manorialization, that is very poorly documented in this parish.

Although, the data are insufficient, it is expected that in the coming years the MONS project will obtain more information in order to confirm or refute the hypothesis that we have presented in this paper.

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