

MEDIEVAL CASTILE AND THE IMPACT OF CONTEMPORARY MEMORY

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ABSTRACT

Two centuries of historiography have contributed to our knowledge of the artistic, literary, and political spheres of Medieval Spain. However, contemporary historiography has often infused its representations of the era and its institutions with its own ideological aims. Some historians have privileged certain outcomes or regional phenomena over others and debates regarding the existence and extent of “feudalism” have come to occupy a prominent place in the discourse. This article identifies the origins of the term and seeks to explain its use over time, as well as the debates regarding the interpretation of the institution and its effect on state and society in the medieval period.

KEYWORDS

Middle Ages, Castile, León, Sahagún, Contemporary historiography, Feudalism.

CAPITALIA VERBA

Medium Aeuum, Castella, Legio, Sanctus Facundus, Aetatis nostrae Historia, Feudi.

If one follows a Gramscian analysis which places intellectual evolution before political and social change, one can see how the theories of the Enlightenment thinkers regarding the European Middle Ages have engendered significant support. The Italian thinker Lampedusa chronicled Italy's *Risorgimento* and offered this maxim, "Everything must change in order for nothing to change." The thinkers of the French Revolution transformed common wisdom regarding the belief that they had been living in medieval, rather than modern times. Nicolas Masson de Morvilliers argued that in the nineteenth century Spain's political transformations had little regard for the state of social and economic development. The failure of its social progress must therefore be connected in the historical literature to the famous *desamortizaciones*.¹ Historians must be very cautious before applying concepts such as "politics," "economics," and "religion" to medieval society without qualifying that these were structures invented by theorists of the eighteenth century. Medieval society functioned according to distinct principles and institutions which bear little resemblance to those of similar nomenclature that scholars have used more recently. It is not necessary to analyze the origins of all of these concepts —many of which have been well examined by Alain Guerreau²— but this paper will examine a few and apply them to the singular case of contemporary Spain.³

The social memory of the Middle Ages has been essentially maintained through art, principally painting and architecture. Throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the representation of the Middle Ages in art, literature, or history was underpinned by an ideological vision that helped bring about a particularly privileged image of the era as either an exalted or degenerate period in human history.⁴ Nineteenth-century liberals viewed medieval monuments as symbols of the power of an avaricious Church hierarchy which sought to dispossess the population of a third of the country's agricultural lands.⁵ However, these new bourgeois —many of whom were former members of the nobility— were soon confronted by the broader Spanish populace who sought a new interpretation of the works. Soon, Gothic architecture —even the ideologically loaded *neo-mudéjar* examples— became weapons in the conservative battle against liberalism. From the reactionaries' perspective, the work of Gothic architecture embodied collectivism, which opposed liberal individualism. The construction of new buildings, many of which were a veritable pastiche, was intended to counterbalance the destructive *francesada*, considered a disgraceful corollary of the French Revolution. In sum, from a certain perspective, the cathedral expressed —more than any other structure— the social unity of the

1. Álvarez Junco, José. *Mater dolorosa. La idea de España en el siglo XIX*. Madrid: Taurus, 2001.

2. Guerreau, Alain. *L'avenir d'un passé incertain. Quelle histoire du Moyen Âge au XXI^e siècle?* Paris: Le Seuil, 2001.

3. On these debates see Nieto Soria, José Manuel. *Medievo constitucional. Historia y mito político en los orígenes de la España contemporánea (ca. 1750-1814)*. Madrid: Akal, 2007.

4. Cantor, Norman. *Inventing the Middle Ages. The Lives, Works and Ideas of the Great Medievalists of the Twentieth Century*. New York: William Morrow and Co., 1991: 28-29, 43.

5. Barral i Altet, Xavier. *Contre l'art roman? Essai sur un passé réinventé*. Paris: Fayard, 2006.



Medieval period. Considered as the most apt testament to the profound faith of the populace, the cathedral was a symbol of authentic religiosity.⁶

In Spain, as in other European countries, conservative ideology took the form of a historical personage. The Enlightenment thinkers had stood against the authority and omnipotence of God, thereby forwarding a more anthropological argument for the progression of human history. Neo-gothic architecture was therefore a rallying cry, or at least an earnest appeal, for the peaceful cooperation of all social classes under the aegis of theocracy. The memory of the medieval period was used as a red herring, or at least a tool of emotional manipulation.

The medieval period was also a weapon in the conservatives' ideological war. This weapon appeared as if it were inscribed in the past—a longstanding political concept—but in reality it formed part of a larger program of future reactionary activity aimed at securing a kind of historic continuity. Traditionalists sought to embed a sentiment of historic continuity with the Middle Ages in an effort to secure the belief in religion's historical role as the "glue" of society. In the same way, the material reality of architecture was intended to be an optimal ideological vehicle for this neo-religion, which functioned in this period with the assistance of state-sponsored priests. These measures brought forth a new conception of "politics" and created a new vocabulary. "Feudalism"⁷ was considered a period of vibrancy and achievement in liberal Spain, a considerable departure from public perception during the Restoration.

It is not this paper's intention to comment solely on the arguments of a contentious historiographical debate, which continues today and has yet to be resolved.⁸ Researchers agree that medieval society was shaped by political, legal, economic, and social forces. Historians have applied themselves in analyzing these institutions in as much as they formed societies in the period. The highly influential Claudio Sánchez-Albornoz was one of this discourse's most eminent scholars. His work inspired others in the field, and certain among his adherents, including Luis García de Valdeavellano and Hilda Grassotti⁹, followed in his path in their respective works. Their scholarship focuses on some of the most significant examples of feudal-vassal relationships in the feudal hierarchy.

For these historians, it was these "institutions" which conditioned relationships among politically powerful individuals such as a king and his nobles. And it is in the

6. Garcia, Charles. "El palacio episcopal de Astorga, una visión singular de la Edad Media". *Astorica*, 23 (2004): 191-206.

7. Sabaté, Flocel. "L'apparition du féodalisme dans la péninsule Ibérique. État de la recherche au commencement du XXI^e siècle". *Cahiers de civilisation médiévale*, 49 (2006): 49-70.

8. Valdeón, Julio. *El feudalismo*. Madrid: Historia 16, 1992; Valdeón Baruque, Julio. "¿Instituciones feudales o sociedad feudal?", *Les origines de la féodalité. Hommage à Claudio Sánchez-Albornoz*, Joseph Pérez, Santiago Aguadé, eds. Madrid: Casa de Velázquez, 2000: 229-236; Valdeón Baruque, Julio. "El feudalismo hispánico en la reciente historiografía", *Transiciones en la antigüedad y feudalismo*, Carlos Estepa, Domingo Plácido, eds. Madrid: Fundación de investigaciones marxistas, 1998: 131-138, in an article where Julio Valdeón celebrated the ascendance of the term "feudalism" in secondary and higher education.

9. Grassotti, Hilda. *Las instituciones feudo-vasalláticas en León y Castilla*. Spoleto: Centro Italiano di Studio sull'Alto Medioevo, 1969.



analysis of this collective's interactions with other social strata that the historian can reveal the political class' imprint on the entire kingdom of Castile and León in this period. Once defined, the feudal system¹⁰ (in its most classic definition) dictated the expectations of the feudal-vassal contract based on the fief and vassalage pact. In this context, the oath of vassalage would have preceded the protection granted by a lord for his protégé. Protection was established by the award of a benefectum in favor of the vassal. Per this pact, the vassal would obtain the legal status of a concrete benefectum, or a title of land holding providing he remained faithful to his lord. If there were disloyalty or a breach of contract, the status could be withdrawn at any time. Based on this principle, once a king granted dominion over a feudal land to an individual, those who worked on the land no longer worked under the authority of the king. Many scholars have inferred that such concessions would leave the door open to the formation of lordships or seigneurial relationships, i.e. forms of political and social domination which were exercised by the aristocracy over the peasantry. However, knowing that manors or seigneurial estates existed well before the creation of feudal-vassal institutions, and that they continued to flourish long after their decline, these historians—known as “Institutionalists”—proceeded to develop two concepts to explain the functions of this particular social reality. They first examined the feudal regime. According to the Institutionalists, advancement in analyses of the field were the result of analyzing how feudal institutions applied to the entirety of the social body. This history was as concerned with relations between the nobility and the monarch as it was with relations among the nobility, and the medieval political system as a whole. The second conceptual focus concerned the seigneurial system, a term coined to denote this institution's dominance and power over other systems. To this end, élites controlled the support structure of the estates, in which the majority of medieval society lived and worked in the Middle Ages. As these two forms of social organization—the feudal and the seigneurial—did not overlap in time and space, the term “feudalism” is fraught with inconsistencies and can only truly be used in the first context.

A direct consequence of these theories—which long occupied and even split the historians' guild—was that Sanchez-Albornoz proclaimed that Spain, or more specifically, the Kingdom of Castile and León, did not truly experience feudalism in its earliest forms. The historian of Avila acknowledged that since the late eleventh century a great wave of influences from beyond the Pyrenees had swept across Spain, as evidenced by linguistic transitions in indigenous dialects. He believed that feudal institutions—which historians took to designating in Castile as *prestamos*, or *prestimonios*¹¹, or lastly, *tenencia*—only had minimal interaction with the classic components of feudalism: the fief and the vassalage, as they were defined for this region. A common parallel example was the system existent the region between the Loire and Rhine Rivers. Moreover, according to these same traditional authors,

10. Ganshof, François-Louis. *Qu'est-ce que la féodalité?* Brussels: J. Lebègue, 1944; Spanish edition with foreword by Luis G. de Valdeavellano, Ganshof, François-Louis. *El feudalismo*. Barcelona: Ariel, 1978.

11. Fita, Fidel. “Concilio nacional de Burgos (18 febrero 1117)”. *Boletín de la Real Academia de Historia*, 48 (1906): 387-407, 397: *vel in feodum, quod in Hispania prestimonium vocant, laicis dederit.*



feudal practices of social and political organization would never have affected the whole of the Spanish territories. The *Reconquista*¹² was one factor that would have hindered the emergence of feudalism in the *Maseta*, as it was in a permanent state of war between Christians and Muslims in that period. From this arose the obligation of the Catholic monarchs to become warmongers. Due to constant military threats, the Spanish sovereigns were able to contain the political ambitions of the nobility who sought emancipation from monarchical oversight, contrary to political developments in other parts of the Latin world. That is why the Spanish princes were not obliged to share their sovereignty, or *potestas*, with the *magnates* who had property on land the king believed he controlled uniquely. It is largely for this reason—without forgetting others such as that of the well-known mythical theories of *homo hispanus* and his *idiosincrasia* or beliefs in the “Peninsular embrace of individual liberty”—that Sanchez-Albornoz and his students vigorously defended the notion that medieval Spain was not, strictly speaking, always subject to the evils of feudalism. Sanchez-Albornoz and his followers were also opposed to the theory of the *regeneracionista* which was a notion that culturally dominated Spain in the beginning of the twentieth century, as well as other renewal movements, including Marxism, which was in force in the Peninsula in the mid nineteen-sixties.¹³

Unlike the Institutional view, historical materialism defines feudalism by assessing the “means of production.” It is thus this factor that would have lent a particular configuration to the histories of the social structure. Although the impact of Marxist historiography has been mixed, the modes and relations of production have always been the focal point of the historical analysis of feudalism. Additionally, historians have analyzed the feudal subject’s access to surplus land, or the threat of the land’s appropriation by the ruling class. Regardless of whether they were Marxists or Institutionalists, most Spanish historians in the first half of the twentieth century focused on these themes to explain the functional dynamics of medieval society south of the Pyrenees. This brief presentation would be incomplete, however, if we failed to include another important factor, rarely explicitly mentioned, but one which, despite its silencing, weighs considerably when trying to fully comprehend the viewpoints of Spanish researchers and has fueled many contentious debates over the past décadas. It concerns the history, or rather, the “roman national”,¹⁴ which many intellectuals created to describe the relationship between Spain and Europe, and the membership—or lack thereof—of the Iberian nation in the European continent. In a time when the concept of feudalism is being profoundly

12. Ríos Saloma, Martín. “La ‘Reconquista’: una aspiración peninsular? Estudio comparativo entre dos tradiciones historiográficas”. *Bulletin du Centre d’études médiévales d’Auxerre (Hors série 2: Le Moyen Âge vu d’ailleurs)*. 2008. Centre d’études médiévales-Auxerre. 21st September 2009 <<http://cem.revues.org/document9702.html>>.

13. Rucquoi, Adeline. “Spanish Medieval History and the *Annales*: Between Franco and Marx”, *The Work of Jacques Le Goff and the Challenges of Medieval History*, Miri Rubin, ed. Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 1997: 123-141.

14. Varela, Javier. *La novela de España. Los intelectuales y el problema español*. Madrid: Taurus, 1999.



reassessed—even among those who fully embraced it—many Spanish researchers continue to insist on the strictly “feudal” nature of Peninsular societies.¹⁵

Whether these societies were being defined by their feudal mode of production, or rather by function of the feudal nature of the socio-economic system, the term “feudalism” figured largely in the titles of an overwhelming number of Spanish works. Because of this, it appeared to be extremely difficult to challenge such a designation in Spain, as “feudalism” was such a commonly accepted term.¹⁶ And yet, historiographical renewal seems to have rendered popular attachment to this term obsolete, although it is still considered a convenient definition and is often used by default. While some persist in creating rigid diagrams to explain feudalism, others like Robert Fossier renounced such outdated approaches. These historians rejected the notion that feudal relationships were structurally rigid. Instead, these scholars pointed to the medieval élite—a very small portion of the population—as an example of a feudal social strata which possessed more inflexible relational bonds.¹⁷ In the same manner, rather than dwelling on feudal stereotypes and their implications, Fossier considered it more appropriate to reject the idea of feudal “examples” and concentrated more on the multiplicity of feudal forms which varied by region. This approach offered an advantage by eliminating the notion of a feudal “complex” restrained by archetypes firmly anchored between the Loire and the Rhine.

Thus, rather than trying to establish a typology of the principle aspects of feudalism and compare the histories of the Peninsula and the northern Loire régions,¹⁸ it would be more appropriate to reorient our thinking to escape the

15. Valdeón, Julio. “El feudalismo hispánico en la reciente historiografía”, *Transiciones en la antigüedad y feudalismo*, Carlos Estepa, Domingo Plácido, coords. Madrid: Fundaciones de Investigaciones Marxistas, 1998: 131-138; Salrach, Josep Maria. “Les féodalités méridionales: des Alpes à la Galice”, *Les féodalités*, Eric Bournazel, Jean-Pierre Poly, eds. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1998: 313-388.

16. García de Cortázar, José Ángel. “Estructuras sociales y relaciones de poder en León y Castilla en los siglos VIII a XII: la formación de una sociedad feudal”, *Il feudalesimo nell’alto medioevo. XLVII Settimane di Studio del Centro Italiano di Studio sull’Alto Medioevo*. Spoleto: Presso la sede del Centro, 2000: II, 497-563, 561: *En el siglo XII, aquella sociedad que, a comienzos del siglo VIII, habíamos caracterizado como pluriestructural, se había convertido en una sociedad feudal. Esto es, una sociedad caracterizada por tres conjuntos de elementos: un primero, socioeconómico, la dominación expropiadora de los señores sobre los campesinos; un segundo, sociopolítico, el establecimiento o, al menos, el reconocimiento de una jerarquía de poderes, siempre concurrenciales y, con frecuencia, en disputa, dotados de jurisdicción compartida sobre hombres y tierras que se ha descrito como una pirámide en cuyo vértice superior, en el caso que estudiamos, estaba el rey* (In the 12th century, that society that we had, at the beginning of the 8th century, characterised as multi-structural, had become a feudal society. That is, a society characterised by three sets of elements: a first, socioeconomic, the expropriating domination of the lords over the peasants; a second, socio-political, the establishment or, at least, the recognition of a hierarchy of powers, always competing and, frequently, disputed, endowed with shared jurisdiction over men and lands, that has been described as a pyramid at whose upper vertex, in the case we are studying, was the king).

17. Fossier, Robert. *Enfance de l’Europe, XI^e - XII^e siècles. Aspects économiques et sociaux*. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, Nouvelle Clío, 1982.

18. The historian Georges Duby was one of the earliest scholars to begin characterizing feudal manors having a dual function of managing land and managing fiscal growth. Duby went on to elaborate this idea in his later works. Duby, Georges. *La société aux XI^e et XII^e siècles dans la région mâconnaise*. Paris: SEVPEN, 1971 (1st ed. 1953): 173-190, 448: *les droits banaux et les redevances domaniales ne sont plus distingués*.



notion of traditional European “perfection” which finds itself opposed to the alleged “imperfection” of Peninsular feudalism. In this case,¹⁹ the problem of Spain, or rather that of its secular *retard* or its *décadence*²⁰ in relation to Europe, has haunted the minds of many intellectuals²¹, researchers²², and historians²³, in Spain since the end of Franco’s regime.²⁴ In addition, rather than perpetuating a debate which

19. Varela, Javier. *La novela de España...*: 20.

20. Ladero Quesada, Miguel Ángel. “La ‘Decadencia’ española como argumento historiográfico”. *Hispania Sacra*, 97 (1996): 4-50, reprinted in: Ladero Quesada, Miguel Ángel. *Lecturas sobre la España histórica*. Madrid: Real Academia de la Historia, 1998: 213-285, 250: *Hay que preguntarse si los historiadores actuales han llevado a cabo esa superación: el rechazo tácito a revisar las cuestiones más polémicas sobre el ser histórico de España es evidente en la historiografía de los últimos decenios, pero el bagaje ideológico que derivó de ellas antaño sigue moviéndose en las “mentalidades colectivas” y corrientes de opinión de nuestra sociedad* (One must ask if the current historians have managed to overcome this: the tacit rejection of revising the most polemic questions about the historical being of Spain is evident in the historiography of recent decades, but the ideological baggage derived earlier from these still moves within the “collective memories” and currents of opinion in our society.)

21. Ortega y Gasset, José. *Personas, obras, cosas...* Madrid: Promoción y Ediciones, 1989 (1st ed. 1916); this selective collection includes works from the conference of 12 March 1910 which the philosopher attended at the company headquarters of “El Sitio” in Bilbao: *por eso el camino de la alegría al dolor que recorreremos será, con otro nombre, europeización. Un gran bilbaíno ha dicho que sería mejor la africanización; pero este gran bilbaíno, don Miguel de Unamuno, ignora cómo se las arreglaba que, aunque se nos presenta como africanizador, es, quiera o no, por el poder de su espíritu y su densa religiosidad cultural, uno de los directores de nuestros afanes europeos* (That is why the path we follow from happiness to pain will be, under another name, Europeanisation. A great Bilbaoan has said that Africanisation would be better; but this Bilbaoan, Don Miguel de Unamuno, did not know how they manage it so that, although he is presented as an Africaniser, he is, whether he wants to or not, through the power of his spirit and his dense cultural religiosity, one of the directors of our European eagerness).

22. *La fortaleza de este mito también fue extraordinaria; la europeización de España continuaba constituyendo algo capital y polémico entre los españoles cultos de los años cincuenta, incluso los sesenta del siglo XX, en pleno régimen de Franco. (Y, en los ochenta, aún se hablaría hasta la saciedad de la incorporación de España al Mercado Común Europeo como de la entrada en Europa, por fin)* (The strength of this myth was also extraordinary; the Europeanisation of Spain continued constituting some capital and polemic among educated Spaniards in the fifties, even in the sixties of the 20th century, in full Franco regime. [And, in the eighties, the incorporation of Spain into the Common Market will still be endlessly described as entry into Europe, at last] Andrés-Gallego, José. “El problema (y la posibilidad) de entender la historia de España y del mundo hispano”, *Historia de la historiografía española*, José Andrés-Gallego, coord. Madrid: Encuentro ediciones, 2003: 339-340).

23. Valedón, Julio; Herbers, Klaus; Rudolf, Karl, coords. *España y el Sacro Imperio. Procesos de cambios, influencias y acciones recíprocas en la época de la “europeización”, siglos (XI-XIII)*. Valladolid: Universidad de Valladolid, 2002.

24. On this vast subject, one can always turn to, “Since 1976, Spanish historians have certainly overcome that earlier collective inferiority complex the study of which had for so long provided some of them with a form of outdoor relief. Even so, in terms of the very European conventions by which it has been inspired, the operation could hardly have been less well timed”, “Modernization and Europeanization”: the two concepts held together by invisible feudal rivets signify the appropriation of medieval history by contemporary propagandists” (Linehan, Peter. *History and the Historians of Medieval Spain*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993: 197, 201). A more optimist perspective is offered by José Ángel García de Córdazar: *Ils ont maintenant surmonté le complexe d’infériorité de n’avoir pas été aussi féodalisés que les habitants de la Loire au Rhin* (García de Cortázar, José Ángel. “Historiographie de l’Espagne médiévale”. *Theoretische Geschichte*, 15 (1988): 312), but he is contradicted by José Antonio Maravall: *Lo que especialmente nos interesa reconocer es que la imagen de nuestra historia se aparta, sí, de la de cualquier otro país, en el conjunto europeo, como la de cada uno de éstos respecto a los demás. No hay una Edad Media uniforme y ejemplar, cuyo paradigma se imponga a todos*



is lodged in the contemporary period, and hence artificial as it resides outside of medieval mental categories, it would be best to demystify these concepts as some have already begun to do.²⁵

Contemporary historiographic discourse has positioned itself within these theoretical debates, which have typically been underpinned by more-or-less concealed nationalist concerns.²⁶ The majority of theories have been crystallized around the histories of popular revolts—or rather “feudal” revolts—such as those in Sahagún.²⁷ The concept of feudal-social urban revolts finds meaning in the dialectic of interpretations of the medieval past in contemporary historiography. For researchers from the past century, the tensions that arose between the Abbot of Domnos Santos and the inhabitants of Sahagún, and their subsequent revolt, were the direct result of the establishment of a juridical lordship. These conflicts were considered as the result of the influence of the northern Pyrenees—a perfect example of the power of the movement known as “feudalization.” Another explanation of the conflict pointed to rapid urbanization in Castile. We can see that, for the first time in the kingdom, villagers experienced a detachment from their traditional rural environments. Although these new urban centres were born out

y que permita considerar como un caso aparte y diferente del resto a aquel que ofrezca modalidades propias. La Edad Media española es un aspecto de la historia medieval de Europa y una matización de su cultura (What interests us especially to recognise is that the image of our history is far, it is true, from that of any other country, in Europe, like that of any other of these compared with the others. There is no uniform and exemplary Middle Ages, whose paradigm is imposed over all of them and that allows it to be considered a separate and different case from the others to that which offers its own modalities. The Spanish Middle Ages is an aspect of the medieval history of Europe and a nuance of its culture) (Maravall, José Antonio. “El problema del feudalismo y el feudalismo en España”, *Estudios de historia del pensamiento español*, Madrid: Ediciones Cultura Hispánica, 1973: I, 466). These two references are titles from Linehan, Peter. *History and the Historians...: 197-198*, n. 95.

25. Medieval Spain was always a special case alongside another other socio-political organization, it was always a unique case in relation to its neighbours. *Debe superarse la bipolarización o contraposición España-Europa, nacionalismo-europeización, tradición-modernización, indígena-extranjero y similares* (The bipolarisation or contraposition Spain-Europe, nationalism-Europeanisation, tradition-modernisation, indigenous-foreign and similar must be overcome) (Sanz Sancho, Iluminado. “Notas sobre la política religiosa en tiempos del rey Fernando I de León y Castilla”, *Pensamiento medieval hispano. Homenaje a Horacio Santiago-Otero*, José María Soto Rábanos, ed. Madrid: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas-Diputación de Zamora, 1998: I, 76); *Han perdido vigencia, igualmente, las perspectivas aislacionistas y buscadoras de lo diferente desde las que se contemplaba el pasado español, y la han ganado las que practican una historia comparada, al mismo tiempo que se ha sustituido una historia político-ideológica por otra de corte económico, social y cultural, de las estructuras de poder...* (The isolationist perspectives and those seeking different ways of contemplating the Spanish past have also lost relevance, while those that practice a comparative history have gained weight, at the same time as a political-ideological history has been replaced by another one economic, social and cultural basis of the structures of power...) (Ladero Quesada, Miguel Ángel. “La ‘Decadencia’ española como argumento historiográfico...”: 282). Unfortunately, one must recognize that certain perceptive insights have not garnered the cultural echo that they warrant: Linehan, Peter. “La Reconquista de Toledo y la supuesta feudalización de Castilla”, *Estudios sobre Alfonso VI y la Reconquista de Toledo. Actas del II Congreso Internacional de Estudios Mozárabes (Toledo, 20-26 Mayo 1985)*. Toledo: Instituto de Estudios visigótico-mozárabes, 1988: II, 27-42.

26. Commonly-espoused theories include the “Machadian” theory of the “two Spains.” This theory has Augustinian roots and it has even managed to take on Marxist rhetoric.

27. *Crónicas anónimas de Sahagún*, ed. Antonio Ubieto Arteta. Saragossa: Anubar, 1987.



of the feudal universe, and not outside of it or in reaction to it, we can explain the sudden onset of riots as a signal of the emergence of the desire among the urban elite to gain access to power. Urbanites demanded the support of the monarchy and defied the will of the lords, those who possessed the *terratenientes*. According to this viewpoint, the growing role of artisans and merchants in medieval society provoked a new awareness, one which lent itself to revolts. Therefore, in regards to medieval rebellions where a significant amount of power was at stake, historians asserted that these uprisings were not against the feudal system, itself but rather the greatest evidence for its deep entrenchment in Spain²⁸ and throughout Western Europe.

Julio Puyol belongs to this generation of early twentieth-century Spanish intellectuals. This cohort was composed of individuals who were profoundly marked by the *regeneracionista* epoch. Conscious of the delay that Spain experienced with regard to Europe, the *regeneracionistas* felt invested with a mission to “save” their country by radically transforming it. It goes without saying that in the majority of cases these individuals were prone to grandiloquent literary gestures, full of rhetorical excess rather than serious philosophical reflection or economic analysis. These men were often well-intentioned and heirs of the thinker's line, *arbitristas*, of previous centuries sought to reform the nation's ills with common sense solutions. They projected their criticism and bitterness towards the northern Meseta more than any other region. These “lettered men” who were very attached to their *comarcas* looked to the past,²⁹ notably, the Middle Ages, for answers. For them this period embodied a veritable model of societal order, and a divine source of inspiration in the effort to draw Spain out from the morass in which it was plunged.

Faced with the apathy of the masses, these intellectuals were eventually persuaded that notions of technological and cultural progress as redemptive measures would appeal most to the educated élite of the nation. Julio Puyol was among those who dedicated himself wholeheartedly to this campaign. Contrary to those intellectuals who applied their minds to the lofty realms of the spiritual, aesthetic, or literary, as was the case for those like Ángel Ganivet or Miguel de Unamuno, the prosaic Puyol

28. Portela, Ermelindo; Pallares, María del Carmen. “Revueltas feudales en el camino de Santiago. Compostela y Sahagún”, *Las peregrinaciones a Santiago de Compostela y San Salvador de Oviedo en la Edad Media. Actas del congreso internacional celebrado en Oviedo del 3 al 7 de diciembre de 1990*, Juan Ignacio Ruiz de la Peña Solar, coord. Oviedo: Servicio de Publicaciones del Principado de Asturias, 1993: 313-333, especially 333.

29. This references an excerpt from *terracampino*, Macías Picavea, Ricardo. *El problema nacional. Hechos. Causas. Remedios*. Madrid: Fundación Banco Exterior, 1992 (1st ed. 1899); a notary Julio Senador Gómez: *Faltaba ya muy poco para terminar la Reconquista. Ya no era necesario atraer, con el cebo de las Cartas-Pueblas, tropes de descamisados que fueran a hacerse romper el alma en los lugares fronterizos. Disminuían las reacciones ofensivas de los moros y la tierra podía ser tranquilamente poseída. No había inconveniente en irsela quitando a los que la habían ganado con su sangre; ni en destruir la autonomía local; ni en abolir la libertad civil* (There was then little left to finish the Reconquest. It was no longer necessary to attract, with the lure of Town-Charters, hordes of the shirtless who were willing to break their souls in the frontier areas. The offensive reactions by the Moors were diminishing and the land could be calmly taken. There was no problem in seizing it from those who had won it with their blood and toil; nor in destroying the local autonomy; nor abolishing civil liberties), Senador Gómez, Julio. *Castilla. Lamento y esperanza. Escritos (1915-1935)*. Valladolid: Ámbito, 1992: 75, dated June 9, 1929 *La Libertad*; by the same author Senador Gómez, Julio. *Castilla en escombros. Las leyes, las tierras, el trigo y el hambre*. Valladolid: Ámbito, 1993 (1st ed. 1915).



based his reflection on tangible archival documents and diplomatic sources. While an educator of the uncultivated masses, Julio Puyol tried to put into practice the Promethean ideals he encouraged. Placed between a confluence of contradictory schools of thought—the progressives and “Europeanists” on one side, conservatives or *casticistas* on the other—this scholar undertook the project of transcribing and publishing the first contemporary version of the *Crónicas anónimas de Sahagún*. His objective was no doubt to bring to light the history of everyday people, the *gens de peu*, and to know their lives and customs, as much as it was to uncover legal texts that were the key to forwarding this larger argument. In all, however, his goal was to educate the masses. Puyol wished to encourage the examination of the past as a method of remedying the present, in line with the precepts that had been laid out by Francisco Giner de los Ríos and then continued by the followers of the *Institución Libre de Enseñanza* (ILE). As part of this, Puyol was convinced that Spain had made significant and crucial contributions to western civilization, a fact that he intended to prove with this writings³⁰. Before continuing, we must attempt to identify this man further.

Born in Leon in 1865, Julio Puyol Alonso was a dedicated scholar of the humanities and social sciences. At once an historian, a jurist, a sociologist, a novelist, and a literary critic,³¹ he was particularly dedicated to scholarship concerning his native region. The friendships he formed with men from various political spheres highly influenced his career. Puyol managed to rise to the highest echelons of Spanish politics by employing connections made early in his career in trade and commerce. He was a close friend of Adolfo Bonilla San Martín, an aristocrat who began his career as an historian of law and became the chair of History and Philosophy at the Central University in Madrid. Bonilla was the most celebrated of all the panegyrists, and one of the most influential men of his generation. He was also connected to Don Marcelino Menéndez Pelayo³², who more than anyone symbolized the power of nationalist-Catholic Spain in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Puyol’s closeness with Bonilla did not prevent him from cultivating a friendship with Gumersindo de Azcárate, a man who was a native of the same region as Puyol and a strong proponent of Spanish republicanism as well as a leader at ILE.³³ How could Puyol not flourish as a result of such influences of *Restauración* society?³⁴

30. He transcribed and printed it for the first time, and hence the first Castilian translation of the *Chronicon Mundi*: Tuy, Luc de. *Crónica de España*, ed. Julio Puyol. Madrid: Real Academia de la Historia, 1926.

31. Fernández, Justiniano. “Presentación”, *Orígenes del reino de León y de sus instituciones políticas*, Julio Puyol Alonso. León: Nebrija, 1979 (a reproduction of a first edition, 1926): 7-11.

32. Bonilla San Martín, Adolfo. *La representación de Menéndez Pelayo en la vida histórica nacional*. Madrid: Librería General de Victoriano Suárez, 1912.

33. It is this intellectual who launched his famous polemic against the decadence of Spanish “science” of Menéndez Pelayo. He dared to argue that the absence of respect for one’s freedom of conscience and the lack of common liberal Catholics were responsible for Spain’s slow modernization in relation to its neighbours Azcárate, Pablo de. *Gumersindo de Azcárate. Estudio bibliográfico documental*. Madrid: Tecnos, 1969.

34. *Hago caso omiso de los servicios prestados durante tantos años por el Sr. Puyol, como compañero mío, en el Instituto de Reformas Sociales y en la antigua Comisión del mismo nombre, porque, tratándose de un trabajo corporativo, no le cuadra a él ni me cuadra a mí hacer otra cosa que una mención escueta* (sic) (I pay no attention to the



As part of Madrid society, Don Julio was one of the founding members of the *Instituto de Reformas Sociales*,³⁵ an organization created in 1903 under the leadership of the *Krausistas*, in order to finally give Spain an effective instrument of social action similar to those in existence in other developed countries.³⁶ In 1908, Puyol held the position of Secretary General of the *Instituto*, a position that allowed him to assist Gumersindo de Azcárate. In 1917, Puyol was named the Director of the *Sección de Reformas Sociales*, a service that was housed within the Ministry of the Interior before becoming part of the Ministry of Labour several years later. Julio Puyol dedicated himself intensely to this institution during his tenure. Nothing escaped him. No social conflict or social issue, such as the working conditions or living conditions of labourers, was beyond his grasp, despite the fact that he worked during the period of oligarchic Spain. From his position, he was able to bring together political leaders and union bosses from across the political spectrum, including Francisco Largo Caballero, who was very young at the time.³⁷ In his capacity as an expert member of the Institute, Julio Puyol had to write a number of reports and pamphlets on current social issues such as the eight-hour working day, workplace accidents, or the harshness of working conditions in the mines of Biscay. In many ways the Institute was a perfect microcosm of Spanish society and allowed Puyol to bear witness to the confluence of ideological currents that involved the political and social leadership of the day—from *Krausista* liberal reformism to Catholic social conservatism. In 1907, while he was still secretary, Puyol wrote an extremely detailed account of the conflict that broke out in Mieres, in the region of Asturias.³⁸ Having written of such contemporary revolts, the scholar was able to devote himself to studying social upheavals that took place in the medieval past.³⁹

In 1926, Puyol Alonso published his major work, *The Origins of the Kingdom of León*, a work that had been preceded by a shorter study dedicated to the *abadengo* of Sahagún. It was in this work that Puyol created the theoretical framework which defined the modalities and functions of feudalism in Spain. Alongside this work,

services rendered for so long by Mr. Puyol, as my colleague, in the Institute of Social Reforms and the old Commission under the same name, because, this being cooperative work, it does not occur to either him or me to anything else than a brief mention (sic) (Azcárate, Gumersindo de. "Contestación", *El abadengo de Sahagún. Contribución al estudio del feudalismo en España*, Julio Puyol Alonso. León: Ediciones Leonesas, 1985 (facsimile of the 1st ed. 1915): 331).

35. This *Instituto* was part of the *Comisión de Reformas Sociales*, which was founded in 1883. He later became integrated into the *Ministerio de Trabajo*, or Ministry of Labour, in 1924.

36. Palacio Morena, Juan Ignacio. *La institucionalización de la reforma social en España, 1883-1924: la Comisión y el Instituto de Reformas Sociales*. Madrid: Ministerio de Trabajo y Seguridad Social, 1988.

37. Palacio Morena, Juan Ignacio. *La institucionalización de la reforma...: 494-495, 518-522*.

38. Puyol Alonso, Julio. *Informe acerca de la fábrica y de los obreros de Mieres*. Madrid: Instituto de Reformas Sociales, 1907.

39. The fact that Puyol was interested in medieval *hermandades* is not coincidental. He demonstrated in his work (Puyol Alonso, Julio. *Las Hermandades de Castilla y León. Estudio histórico seguido de las ordenanzas de Castronuño de 1467*. León: Nebrija, 1982 (1st ed. 1913): 7-8) how the *hermandades*, or federations of *concejos*, sought to defend their common interests and in fact rebelled against the "feudal" lords. For more on Puyol's "revolutionary" ideas, see Puyol Alonso, Julio. *Proceso del sindicalismo revolucionario*. Madrid: Real Academia, 1924.



Puyol furthered his argument in *Crónicas anónimas*, which was published several years later.⁴⁰ In it, he presented the “feudal” urban revolts of Sahagún in vivid detail. Contrary to the prevailing wisdom of academic circles at the time, Puyol Alonso illustrated in his essay that not only did feudalism indeed exist in Spain, but it was a more highly developed and benevolent system⁴¹ for the inhabitants of the Peninsula than it was for those living north of the Pyrenees. Puyol provided a modern analysis of feudalism, replete with rigorous and highly documented observations (although many of his interpretations are still considered contentious today.) Rather than insisting on strict and artificial distinctions between feudalism and seigneurialism, Puyol presented a more comprehensive view of feudalism which he argued was principally system organized according to beliefs concerning territory. These beliefs, he argued, encompassed approaches and duties regarding control over the land itself as much as control over those who laboured on it, as well as those whom the populace of Leon called *señorío*.⁴²

Although Puyol was a prominent medievalist and possessed a desire to shed light on Spain’s feudal realities, he also possessed a strong inclination to reform Spain.⁴³ In line with his duties as part of the *Instituto de Reformas Sociales*, he became passionate about the education of the poor, and his social work reflected in his academic pursuits as he devoted three chapters of his essay to the history of popular uprisings. In this way, Puyol demonstrated to the disenfranchised of Spain that their ancestors had not been men who submitted easily to oppression. Had they not fought bravely to demand precious rights and freedoms from the tyrants of the *Restauración*?⁴⁴ Through his writings, Puyol seemed to indicate that the masses

40. Puyol Alonso, Julio. “Crónicas anónimas de Sahagún”. *Boletín de la Real Academia de la Historia*, 76 (1920): 7-26, 111-122, 242-257, 339-356, 395-419, 512-519; Puyol Alonso, Julio. “Crónicas anónimas de Sahagún”. *Boletín de la Real Academia de la Historia*, 77 (1920): 51-59, 151-192.

41. *Tal fué la condición de los solariegos de Sahagún, que aun en los tiempos correspondientes a la puebla de 1085, resulta, sin género alguna de duda, mil veces más ventajosa que la de los vasallos de las abadías benedictinas francesas* (such was the condition of the peasants of Sahagún, that even in the times corresponding to the village of 1085, it was, undoubtedly, a thousand times more advantageous than that of the vassals of the French Benedictine abbeys) (Puyol Alonso, Julio. *El abadengo de Sahagún...*: 252).

42. *De aquí, que la evolución del feudalismo sea, de un lado, la misma de la propiedad, que partiendo de aquel remedo o simulacro de posesión en que consistía el beneficio, llega al grado eminente en el dominio que caracteriza al señorío; y de otro, un proceso de emancipación, por cuya virtud, el beneficiario, sujeto en un principio al dueño de la tierra, aspira a hacerse independiente a todo poder* (Thus, the evolution of feudalism was, on one hand, the same as that of property, that starting from that mimicry or simulacrum of possession in which the benefit consisted, reached the eminent degree in the dominion that characterised the lordship; and on the other, a process of emancipation, for whose virtue, the beneficiary, subject in principle to the owner of the land, aspires to become independent from all power) (Puyol Alonso, Julio. *El abadengo de Sahagún...*: 147).

43. *“La insurrección, considerada desde el punto de vista social”* (*The insurrection, considered from the social point of view*) (Puyol Alonso, Julio. *El abadengo de Sahagún...*: 68).

44. *Lo mismo que entonces, la nación sigue viviendo sin leyes, sin garantías, sin tribunales, sujeta al mismo degradante yugo de aquel feudalismo inorgánico que mantiene a España separada de Europa por toda la distancia de una edad histórica; feudalismo de un nuevo género, cien veces más repugnante que el feudalismo guerrero de la Edad Media* (Like then, the nation continues living without laws, without guarantees, without courts, subjected to the same degrading yoke of that inorganic feudalism that keeps Spain separate from Europe by the distance of a whole historical age; feudalism of a new genre, a hundred times more repugnant than the



should view themselves as part of a long and illustrious tradition of Castilians who succeeded in combating oppression and mounting a strong resistance against the Catalans as well as the French.⁴⁵ Puyol even made a public demonstration of his passionate beliefs concerning the Castilian struggle at his own reception at the prestigious *Académie de l'Histoire* in front of Don Gumersindo Azcárate:

Ya nadie podrá poner en duda que en León y Castilla ha existido el feudalismo, aunque acaso tenga razón Secretan para apellidarlo incompleto, como al escandinavo, y en colocar a ambos en tercer lugar, dejando el primero para el nativo, esto es, para el francés, el lombardo y el alemán, y el segundo para el importado de Inglaterra, Italia y Jerusalén. [...] Sin duda alguna, todos los elementos y caracteres propios del régimen feudal hállanse en la historia del abadengo de Sahagún. [...] Los vecinos de Sahagún lucharon con los monjes sin descanso, y son notables sus repetidos levantamientos y asonadas en defensa de la libertad municipal. Y aun cuando sus rebeliones fueran reprimidas y castigadas por los reyes, atentos a complacer al clero más que al pueblo, al fin lograron, en 1255, que se les diese como legislación el Fuero Real.⁴⁶

As Puyol's contributions to the historiography progressed, it was proven that feudalism had reared its barbarian head in the land of Maseta, although the local populace organized a substantial amount of resistance to it. Those in Maseta articulated demands for liberties similar to those being debated in northern Europe. Unfortunately, despite his elevated arguments and fine research, the lessons of Don Julio Puyol (by then a noted academician) were not unanimously accepted. Several years after the emergence of Abadengo de Sahagún, the Spanish philosopher José Ortega y Gasset published his own masterpiece: *España invertebrada*.⁴⁷ In this work, the famous thinker stated:

en España no ha habido apenas feudalismo; sólo que esto, lejos de ser una virtud, fue nuestra primera gran desgracia y causa de todas las demás. [...] Eran, pues, los visigodos germanos alcoholizados de romanismo, un pueblo decadente que venía dando tumbos por el espacio y por el tiempo cuando llega a España, último rincón de Europa, donde encuentra algún

warrior feudalism of the Middle Ages) (Costa, Joaquín. *Oligarquía y caciquismo. Colectivismo agrario y otros escritos. (Antología)*. Madrid: Alianza editorial, 1973: 20, 24).

45. *si consideramos que se trata de una rebelión de vasallos en los comienzos del siglo XII, cuando estaban aún muy lejanas las de los payeses de Cataluña y las de la célebre jacquerie de Francia* (if we consider that this was a rebellion by vasalls at the beginning of the 12th century, when the ones by the payeses in Catalonia and the famous jacquerie in France were still far off) (Puyol Alonso, Julio. *El abadengo de Sahagún...*: 63).

46. Puyol Alonso, Julio. *El abadengo de Sahagún...*: 333-338: "Now nobody can cast doubts over whether feudalism has existed in León and Castile, although perhaps Secretan was right to call it incomplete, like the Scandinavian version, and putting both in third place, leaving the first for the native, that is, for the French, the Lombard and the German, and the second for the imported of England, Italy and Jerusalem. [...] Without any doubt, all the typical elements and characters of the feudal regime are found in the history of the abbacy of Sahagún. [...] The people of Sahagún fought against the monks tirelessly, and their repeated uprisings and riots in defence of municipal freedom are striking. And even when their rebellions were repressed and punished by the kings, keener on a pandering to the clergy than the people, in the end, in 1255, they managed to obtain the Royal Charter as legislation".

47. Ortega y Gasset, José. *España invertebrada*. Madrid: Espasa Calpe-Austral, 1964 (1st ed. 1921).



*repose. Por el contrario, el franco irrumpe intacto en la gentil tierra de Galia, vertiendo sobre ella el torrente indómito de su vitalidad.*⁴⁸

How could one dare such a strongly worded argument?⁴⁹ Was Ortega y Gasset attempting to destroy the carefully crafted work of his predecessors of the *Regeneración* movement? His claims to a “delay” in Spain echoed the work of Joaquín Costa. He linked the failures of Spain to the lack of a true “elite” among the population. He claimed that those who had been in a position to lead the people towards enlightened political ideals had failed to do so. Ortega y Gasset regarded the Visigoths as weak and corrupt, perverted by the decadent lifestyles of the inhabitants of Constantinople and Rome. Somewhere along they way they had lost their feudal warrior ethic which could have invigorated rural Spain. This stands on contrast to the Germanic tribes who populated Spain’s neighbors and preserved their energetic vitality.⁵⁰

It goes without saying that such commentary provoked men like Américo Castro. How could a man like Ortega make such a controversial statement? Outraged by such claims, the philologist could not let them stand. He intended to contradict them by speaking out against historical arguments that rested on imaginary fantasies and outdated ideologies.⁵¹ According to him, if feudalism had not become deeply entrenched in medieval Spain’s social and political structures, it was simply because popular values of tolerance⁵² and social accord prevailed.⁵³ With regards to

48. Ortega y Gasset, José. *España invertebrada...*: 129-132: “in Spain there has hardly ever been feudalism; only that this, far from being a virtue, was our first great misfortune and the cause of all the others. [...] It was the German Visigoths drunk on Romanism, a decadent people who had been wandering around in place and time when they reached Spain, the last corner of Europe, where they found some repose. In contrast, the Frank burst intact into the genteel land of Gall, pouring the indomitable torrent of their vitality over it”.

49. In fact, Ortega y Gasset took up and dramatized the old anthem of the founders of liberal Spain at the start of the nineteenth century. In 1821, Mariano Amadori was the first to deny the existence of “true” feudalism in Spain. He was followed by other thinkers such as Alberto Lista: *el feudalismo, bajo la forma que tuvo entre los lombardos y los franceses, no sólo era desconocido entre los españoles, sino imposible* (feudalism, under the form it took among the Lombards and the French, was not only unknown among the Spaniards, but also impossible) (Lista, Alberto. *Memoria sobre el carácter del feudalismo en España*. Madrid: Real Academia de la Historia, 1828). In reality, all this rhetoric shared a common objective: to dissociate the term “feudalism” from “seigneurial rights” so as to justify aristocratic rights to land management as, in fact, “liberal.” This was so effective that once the new regime was consolidated it took measures to further defend itself from legal threats against these rights, even though it had begun the process of dismantling lordships, as André Borrego stated in his newspaper, *El Español* on 16 December 1836: *Caigan para siempre hasta los últimos restos del feudalismo, pero respétese, conságrese la propiedad particular en manos de los grandes como en la de los pequeños* (Down to the last remnants of feudalism may fall, but the private property in the hands of the great and the small shall be respected and consecrated).

50. Varela, Javier. *La novela de España...*: 200.

51. Castro, Américo. *La realidad histórica de España*. Mexico: Porrúa, 1975 (1st ed. 1954): 41-43, 103.

52. Valero, Juan Miguel. “Américo Castro, la invención de la tolerancia”, *Nuevas miradas, nuevas propuestas. II congreso internacional de la Sociedad de estudios medievales y renacentistas, San Millán de la Cogolla, 10-13 September, 2008*, forthcoming.

53. *La tolerancia de los siglos medios, la convivencia de tres credos incompatibles, impidió la vigencia del régimen gradual del feudalismo europeo —labriegos, artesanos, nobles, clérigos. España se desarticuló en tres gradualismos,*



the revolts of Sahagún, Castro explained them without linking them to “feudal” notions of jealousy and greed that were aroused at the time in response to displays of wealth. Castro also denounced the pogroms that took place throughout Sahagún during the revolts. He deplored the demagoguery of the upheavals, which he believed were partly the result of imbalances between castes, as well as the lack of an intellectual culture among the Clunaic peoples of the north.⁵⁴

Claudio Sánchez-Albornoz did not remain outside of the debate concerning the existence and nature of feudalism in Spain. Rather, it was an intellectual endeavour which occupied the greater part of his life, and one that forced him to remove himself from feelings of nostalgia for his native land.⁵⁵ According to this noted medievalist, Spain, and specifically Castile, never experienced the true emergence of feudalism. His arguments for this rest largely on the notion that the Castilian aristocracy was forced to occupy a liminal political space between an all-powerful monarchy on the one hand, and the indomitable inhabitants of the Duero Highlands on the other. Having such a limited zone of influence, these men embodied the spirit of true Spanish patricians, cultivated, but unable to impose any real form of feudal domination in their lands. Although Castille escaped the feudal mode of socio-political organization, kingdoms on Castile’s periphery such as Catalonia were definitively feudal in their structures. For medievalists such as Avila, the ideology of liberty was so firmly rooted among the Castilian people that no form of authoritarianism could be imposed in the Maseta, contrary to what evolved in other regions of the Pyrenees.⁵⁶ In his highly researched work, *España un enigma histórico*, Sánchez-Albornoz did not rely on Sahagún to further his original arguments. In reality he only employed Sahagún indirectly in order to emphasize the detrimental role that northern European influences had on Spain as well as the Castilian

*independientes unos de otros, y ahí yace un importante motivo para la ausencia de una sociedad feudal; “El orden vertical, a la europea, fue difícil para los españoles (The tolerance of the middle centuries, the coexistence of three incompatible creeds, impeded the lavalidity of the gradual regime of European feudalism —peasants, artisans, nobles, clergy. Spain became divided into three gradualisms, independ from each other, and here loies an important reasion for the lack of a feudal society; The vertical order, in the European way, was difícil for the Spaniards) (Castro, Américo. *La realidad histórica de España...*: 43, 68, note 26).*

54. Castro, Américo. *La realidad histórica de España...*: 384-386.

55. Sánchez-Albornoz, Claudio. *En torno a los orígenes del feudalismo*. Madrid: Istmo, 1993, reed. (1st ed. 1942).

56. *Allende el Pirineo durante los siglos más característicos de la Edad Media, cuando llegó a cristalizar la típica estructura de vida feudal, lo que cada hombre hacía dependía de lo que era. [...] Al sur del Pirineo, sobre todo en el reino de Castilla..., muchos, muchos hombres fueron distintos o pudieron serlo a compás de lo que hacían; Sin feudalismo porque la reconquista y la repoblación del solar nacional habían ido permitiéndolo a los reyes salvar las crisis feudalizantes de la sociedad castellano-leonesa y los habían ayudado a mantener vivas las esencias últimas de las tradiciones estatales de la monarquía* (Beyond the Pyrenees during the most characteristic centuries of the Middle Ages, when the typical structure of feudal life took root, what each man did depended on what he was. [...] South of the Pyrenees, especially in the kingdom of Castile..., many, many men were different or could be so depending on what they did” “Without feudalism because the reconquest and repopulation of the national site wed the kings to avoid the feudalising crises of the Castilian-Leonese society and had helped them to maintain alive the last essences of the state traditions of the monarchy) (Sánchez-Albornoz, Claudio. *España un enigma histórico*. Barcelona: Edhasa, 1977 (1st ed. 1956): I, 677, 678).



monarchy. His work was also largely a response to historical arguments made by Marcelin Defourneaux, a French historian with whom he profoundly disagreed.⁵⁷

Far from wanting to minimize the contribution of Reyna Pastor's monograph on organized peasant resistance to the seignorial system,⁵⁸ one must admit that current historiography has abandoned historical materialism due to its reductive approach.⁵⁹ However, this will still be considered a touchstone work as the quality of its research will remain widely respected for its deep insights into everyday life in medieval Spain. This book arguably best presents the confluence of feudalism and rural uprisings. It is unique in its portrayal of the events' dynamics as invariably linked, and rural revolt as the rational outcome of feudal structures. The logical conclusion of this argument rests in certain measure on the assumption that the process of feudalization was particularly accelerated in Castile and León during the reign of Alfonso VI, hence creating the extraordinary stress which resulted in the uprisings of the oppressed classes. If we follow this assertion, it appears that the Sahagún peasantry rebelled against an imported European notion of feudalism, as well as those customs and political processes introduced by Alfonso VI by his Burgundian advisors, and those suggested by Clunaic monks.⁶⁰ These monks' goal was to infiltrate the crown's policies and replace outdated Peninsular social

57. *El orgullo desdeñoso por lo hispánico de la clerecía franca, señoreada de la iglesia nacional y los apetitos desenfrenados del poder de la alta nobleza del reino, en conjunción con la inquietud de algunas masas burguesas, de stirpe ultrapirenaica muy reciente, convirtieron a la monarquía en un verdadero campo de Agramante* (The disdainful pride of the French clergy for the Hispanic, lorded over by the national church and the rampant appetites for power among kingdom's high nobility, together with the uneasiness of some bourgeoisie masses, of very recent ultrapyrenean lineage, converted the monarchy into complete bedlam) (Sánchez-Albornoz, Claudio. *España un enigma histórico...*: II, 428). In Spanish historiography, Patrick Henriët documented the populations who were ruled by Cluny. Patrick Henriët: *Les Clunisiens étaient en effet* (Sánchez-Albornoz) *largement responsables de l'introduction du féodalisme dans la péninsule* (Henriet, Patrick. "Moines envahisseurs ou moines civilisateurs? Cluny dans l'historiographie espagnole (XIII^e-XX^e siècles)." *Revue Mabillon*, 11 (2000): 155). See also: Defourneaux, Marcelin. *Les Français en Espagne aux XI^e et XII^e siècles*. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1949.

58. *La simultaneidad y repetición relativas están mostrando, a nuestro entender, las líneas de fuerza por las que pasan los conflictos más importantes de la formación feudal en su época de expansión. La índole de los conflictos revela las contradicciones profundas de esa sociedad, contradicciones que forman parte de su estructura misma y que la llevarán a su negación, a su propia deestructuración. La intención es entonces mostrar las contradicciones entre las clases principales y antagónicas de una formación en fase de estructuración y consolidación* (The relative simultaneity and repetition show, as we see it, the lines along which the most important conflicts of the feudal formation passed in its times of expansion. The nature of the conflicts reveals the profound contradictions of that society, contradictions that form part of its structure and which led it to its negation, its own destructuring. The intention is then to show the contradictions between the leading and antagonistic classes of a formation in a phase of structuring and consolidation) (Pastor, Reyna. *Resistencia y luchas campesinas en la época del crecimiento y consolidación de la formación feudal. Castilla y León, siglos X- XIII*. Madrid: Siglo veintiuno, 1980: 14-15).

59. *je n'hésiterai pas à dire que nos présupposés idéologiques, appliqués au Moyen Âge, pourraient bien nous cacher le vrai: un rejet de corvée ne peut être simplement une forme de 'lutte des classes'* (Fossier, Robert. "Le petit peuple au Moyen Âge: approche et questions", *Le petit peuple...*: 13).

60. Reilly, Bernard F. "Santiago and Saint Denis: the French Presence in Eleventh-Century Spain". *The Catholic Historical Review*, 54 (1968): 467-483.



structures with entirely new ideologies based on their own artistic and cultural worldview.

Peasant rebellions against Spanish lords, and —to some extent— the bourgeoisie, captivated late twentieth-century historians. Their work was in many ways linked to the movement begun by Julio Puyol several decades prior. What better text to guide them than *Crónicas anónimas de Sahagún*? This work more than any other illustrated the importance of rural political resistance movements among Spanish villages.⁶¹ The region between Compostella and Lugo was a hotbed of twelfth century popular politics, and many lines of analysis developed in the modern age to explain this unique regional phenomenon. Thanks to contemporary research, historians can follow each political act, each angry gesture, riot, or collective action against the seigneurial order or the religious establishment.⁶² Interestingly, the peasant rebels often succeeded in their revolts. In Sahagún, the insurgents managed to wrest a significant amount of personal and entrepreneurial freedom from their oppressors.⁶³ However, it is important to note that in the Middle Ages in Spain —as elsewhere in Europe— the individual did not necessarily enjoy greater freedoms in urban zones than he did in the countryside.⁶⁴ Regardless, academic interest in this exciting period remains high.⁶⁵

The widespread interest generated by medieval revolts —in Sahagún and across Spain— has led to the creation of various schools of thought on their origins and meanings. One such thinker was Americo Castro, the founder of the communitarian-

61. *En la lucha entablada por los burgueses contra el régimen señorial bajo el que viven, se persiguen unos comunes objetivos... Estos, fundamentalmente, serán dos: por una parte, conseguir garantías de máxima libertad en su actividad económica [...] Por otra parte, una organización concejil autónoma e independiente les servía indiscutiblemente para asegurar aquella libertad individual entendida desde perspectivas radicalmente económicas* (In the struggle entered into by the bourgeoisie against the seigneurial regime under which they lived, pursued common objectives... There were, fundamentally two of these: on one hand, win guarantees of maximum freedom for their economic activities [...] On the other, an autonomous and independent council organisation unquestionably served them to ensure that individual freedom understood from radically economic perspectives) (Gutiérrez Nieto, Juan Ignacio. "Tipología de los movimientos sociales del siglo XII en León y Castilla". *Hispania*, 141 (1979): 31).

62. Henriët, Patrick. "Moines envahisseurs ou moines civilisateurs?...": 145-152.

63. Portela, Ermelindo; Pallares, María del Carmen. "Revueltas feudales...": 313-333. The theme of bourgeois selfishness is well-known. Many have asserted that multiple factors led this class to betray the interests of the general population to further their own ends. Reyna Pastor: *otro aspecto de la mentalidad burguesa, la conservadora, pactista e individualista, encarnada en los grupos que, tratando de salvarse, depusieron llorosamente su actitud y dejaron abandonados a sus antiguos aliados* (another aspect of the bourgeoisie mentality, the conservative, pactist and individualist, embodied in the groups that, trying to save themselves, tearfully deposited their attitude and left their old allies abandoned to their fate) (Pastor, Reyna. *Las primeras rebeliones burguesas en Castilla y León, (Siglo XII: análisis histórico-social de una coyuntura*. Buenos Aires: without publisher, 1965: 95).

64. Gibert, Rafael. "Libertades urbanas y rurales en León y Castilla durante la Edad Media", *Les libertés urbaines et rurales du XI^e au XIV^e siècle*. Brussels: Pro Civitate, 1968: 187-219.

65. Werner, Ernst. *Stadtluft macht frei. Früscholastik und bürgerliche Emanzipation in der ersten Hälfte des 12 Jahrhunderts*. Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1976.



differentialist model of Spanish historical interpretation.⁶⁶ This approach did not generate as strong a following as Castro or his devotees expected, however. This can be explained to some extent by the desire of many Spanish historians to integrate Spanish history into the history of that of Europe as a whole, so that its past would not seem divorced from that of the rest of the continent. It is also true that more advanced research techniques made such mechanistic and simplified models *dépassé*.⁶⁷ *La rebelión de los burgos*⁶⁸ is one of the last works to have been dedicated to the history of popular revolts in medieval Castile and León and remains one of the most insightful analyses of this epoch. Other notable, but far less reliable accounts of this period include those of Salvador de Madariaga⁶⁹ and Marcelino Menéndez Pelayo.⁷⁰ As curious as it may seem, the outdated theories of Américo Castro do elaborate on the notion of “race”, an idea introduced by Don Marcolino that Castro employed to explain certain elements in Spanish history. Salvador Martínez has endeavoured to convince scholars that before the arrival of Burgundian monks, Spain lived in peace and harmony and saw its eminent traditions disrupted and then destroyed by the importation of feudalism. We can also derive from this line of thinking that the arrival of feudalism was so incongruous with Peninsular sensibilities that its structures deteriorated the “good and balanced” nature of the *Homo Hispanus*.

66. Freedman, Paul. “The Return of the Grotesque in Medieval Historiography”, *Historia a debate. Medieval*, Carlos Barros, ed. Santiago de Compostela: Historia a Debate, 1995: 9-19, 18-19.

67. In what regards criticism of these approaches, Kamen, Henry. “La expulsión de los judíos y la decadencia de España”, *Judíos. Sefarditas. Conversos. La expulsión de 1492 y sus consecuencias*, Ángel Alcalá, ed. Valladolid: Ámbito, 1995: 420-433; *No creo necesario aducir ejemplos de las aberraciones a que las aplicaciones tel-quel de las teorías de Castro puede llevar. Sobre todo, cuando se convierten en moda o receta de éxito, social o académico* (I don’t believe it necessary necesario adduce examples of the aberrations in which the tel-quel applications of Castro’s theory can lead. Especially, when they become a fashion or recipe for social or academic success) (Yndurain, Domingo. “La crítica histórica y literaria de Américo Castro y su escuela: hacia una valoración”, *Judíos. Sefarditas. Conversos...*: 585).

68. Martínez, Heraclio Salvador. *La rebelión de los burgos. Crisis de estado y coyuntura social*. Madrid: Tecnos, 1992.

69. Madariaga, Salvador de. *Mujeres españolas*. Madrid: Espasa Calpe, 1972.

70. *Elementos en parte útiles, en parte dañosos para la cultura nacional, trajeron los auxiliares ultrapirenaicos de Alfonso VI: tentativas feudales, unas abortadas, otras que en mal hora llegaron a granazón, produciendo el triste desmembramiento del condado portugués; fueros y pobladores francos, exenciones y privilegios, dondequiera odiosos, y aquí más que en parte alguna por la tendencia unitaria y niveladora del genio español. Al mismo paso, y por consecuencia del influjo francés, alteróse nuestra liturgia sacrificándola en aras de la unidad, pero no sin que a nuestro pueblo doliese...* (Elements in part useful, in part damaging for the national culture, brought Alfonso VI’s auxiliaries from over the Pyrenees: feudal attempts, some aborted, others which at a bad time took hold, producing the sad desmemberment of the Portuguese county; French charters and settlers, exemptions and privileges, anywhere odious, and here more than in other places for the unitary and levelling tendency of the Spanish nature. At the same step, and as a result of the French influx, altered our liturgy sacrificing it for the sake of unity, but not without our people suffering...) (Menéndez Pelayo, Marcelino. *Historia de los heterodoxos españoles. I. España romana y visigoda. Período de la Reconquista. Erasmistas y protestantes*. Madrid: Biblioteca de Autores Cristianos, 1998: 401). A century of historical research, only to find oneself back at the starting point! To be convinced of such, it is necessary to read the piece that Menéndez Pelayo devoted to the Clunises where one can find the same themes and the same accents as in the work of Salvador Martínez.



Myths often recount past glories, and the *Crónicas anónimas* share in their simple logic which often point to a foundational moment in history. One such moment was the founding of the Abbey of Domnos Sanctos. Historians must adopt a critical distance from such chronicles and reject any ideological interpretations of the Middle Ages. The serious historian must call into question even the supposed date of the transcription of these chronicles, as an ex-post viewpoint is often highly flawed.⁷¹ Oftentimes, the early historians of Sahagún tried to assuage present-day anxieties surrounding depressing era in which they lived by projecting the region's history into a glorious past. This method of bringing to light a magnificent past in order to inspire the construction of a brighter future was imitated even by many scholars in the twentieth century. By basing their interpretations on a mythical narrative—even with the best of intentions—these historians reduced history to fiction.

Many historians did not attempt to remove their contemporary biases from their historical interpretations, and continually read the past through the prism of present-day social problems and complexities.⁷² Ironically, these historians' acts had at least one benefit—that of inspiring the next generation of academics to correct the scholarship and renew their intellectual faith in the chronicles of the past. Thus, the recent historiography has given us insight not only into the world of the Middle Ages, but also the mentality of contemporary scholars and their dedication to positively moving medieval scholarship forward.

71. Garcia, Charles. "L'anonymat individuel au service d'une identité collective: l'exemple des "Chroniques anonymes de Sahagún" (XII^e siècle)", *Identités méditerranéennes. Reflets littéraires, Université de Poitiers, 18-20 novembre 2004*. Paris: L'Harmattan, 2007: 97-110.

72. *En la sociedad medieval el antagonismo por excelencia se daba entre los campesinos, por una parte, y los señores, por otra. Los enfrentamientos entre ambos, dijo hace años M. Bloch, eran tan frecuentes en la Edad Media como lo son en la sociedad industrial contemporánea los conflictos entre los obreros fabriles y los patronos. Este postulado nos parece válido, sin duda, para la Castilla medieval* (In medieval society, the antagonism per excellence was between the peasants, on one hand, and the lords, on the other. The clashes between them, as M. Bloch stated some years ago, were as frequent in the Middle Ages as the conflicts in contemporary industrial society between factory workers and the owners. This postulate seems valid to us, undoubtedly, for medieval Castile) (Valdeón Barúque, Julio. "Revueltas en la Edad Media castellana", *El Chivo expiatorio. Judíos, revueltas y vida cotidiana en la Edad Media*. Valladolid: Ámbito, 2000: 169).

