



[This is a draft text of the talk presented at the 22nd Colloquium of the Comité international de paléographie latine, not a verbatim transcript of the actual presentation]

22nd Colloquium of the Comité international de paléographie latine

Encounters in written culture:
influence, interchange, transfer, reception?

Prague, 14-16 September 2022

Ainoa Castro Correa
Francisco Álvarez López
Universidad de Salamanca

Documentary practices and uses in rural contexts of north-western Iberia

[PP2] Within the context of the transition from Visigothic to Caroline minuscule from the end of the eleventh century until well into the twelfth, our aim today is to address the documentary practices and uses observed within secular communities connected to the parochial church and later monastery of Divino Salvador de Moreira, nearby Porto, as a significant case study to survey how laymen created, used, and kept written records of their transactions in rural contexts of north-western Iberia during that period. Bearing in mind the topic of this year's colloquium, we intend to highlight differences and similarities in manuscript production associated with social groups who resorted to rural scribes instead of monastic ones to keep records of their transactions. With that end in mind, this paper combines three of the perspectives proposed: We will depart from the analysis of the form and function of secular charters made by scribes from both contexts, before considering the graphic systems and styles used in communities of professional scribes with different levels of literacy. Finally, we will briefly assess the mobility of practices and their authors, taking the parish church and the rural monastery as meeting points. As a result of the study of these three perspectives, we intend to provide a clearer picture of the encounters in written culture between rural and central scribes and their respective communities, pondering mutual exchanges, reception of new developments and how cultural interaction could affect the evolution of documentary practices in north-western Iberia, bringing about a better understanding of the practice of writing across all levels of society.

We have organised this paper in the following key aspects:

We will begin by briefly contextualising this research within the frame of our ERC research project: "The Secret Life of Writing: People, Script, and Ideas in the Iberian Peninsula". Then, we will present the proposed method we are applying to the manuscript sources we are working with, particularly to those selected for this paper, following by sharing some of the problems we have encountered, how we intend to surpass them, as well as some of our first results. We will conclude with some remarks that will help us move forward in our work.

[PP3] We are working on an ERC-funded project, PeopleAndWriting, which aims to explore the connection between people of rural communities and the written word in the mediaeval Iberian Peninsula as a key instrument in forging long-lasting personal identities while shaping the interactions within and among social groups. We aim to look at the lives and work of ordinary laypeople and construct their social profile in relation to written communication, analysing how the introduction of writing and writing-based social practices changed society. PeopleAndWriting aims to identify and reconstruct these communities, their family ties, and connections, focusing on the relationship between people and writing from the point of view of the individuals, who recognised and used writing as an integral part of their world, rather than on central institutions, which relied on it for the preservation of their power. With this main objective in mind, the project proposes to apply a triple method – combining historical, diplomatic, and palaeographic analysis – developed from direct work with the nearly 5,000 charters of north-western Iberia from between 900 and 1200 – preserved as originals or copies in single-sheet pieces of parchment – that make up the project’s corpus. We intend to better understand these sources from the point of view of their authors, lay grantors and beneficiaries besides scribes. We aim at reconstructing communities and seeing how the different social groups that formed them interacted among themselves, with, and through writing. It is here that we encounter our first obstacle: we are to focus on lay documents, a typology that hides a variety of social layers within rural society, from rural elites to peasants. How can we identify each on our charters?

[PP4] For instance, in a sale from 1099, Arias sells Paio Gonçalves a plot of land in the area of Custóias for the modest amount of 4 *modii*. Very few details are provided about the social context from which the two parts arrive. The seller, for example, does not have a surname in the *intitulatio*, something often interpreted as a sign of a low social status. This, however, is corrected in the attestations as he signs under the name Arias Osoriz. The same applies to the beneficiary. We are given nothing but his name, which could still be tentatively related to a local elite family. Yet, most elements in this charter (the amount paid for the land, the absence of personal details about the parts involved, the unremarkable graphic quality of the script and the average diplomatic structure) prevent us from establishing with any degree of certainty whether we are dealing with a peasant document or not. It was as a response to this challenge that we had to establish a methodological strategy in an attempt to overcome it. This methodology can be applied to our three main areas of study: historical, diplomatic, and graphic analysis.

[PP5] With regards to the historical analysis that we are applying to our corpus, a methodological approach has been set up that should help us discern which charters can be labelled ‘peasant documents’ or, at least, non-elitist documents.

Our focus lies with the two (or more) parts engaging in the documented transaction. This normally involves a grantor and a recipient. These two individuals (or groups of individuals), their relationships and the ways in which they engage with their environment are then questioned from three different angles. The first concerns the individual: what are they called? Is a patronymic used? Are there any other labels or titles? Our second concern is with the goods involved in the transaction: what kinds of properties are documented? How are they described? Are there any notoriously prestigious goods or can they be indicative of a particular social status? And finally, we consider the links between people and with the territory: are there any individuals mentioned whose presence or participation in the documented act may point towards an elite assembly? And, similarly, can the properties mentioned in the text, or the people involved in the transaction, be linked or placed in a territory that reaches beyond the local sphere?

[PP6] As for the diplomatic analysis we are also taking a three-stage approach. Firstly, we are considering document typology as a starting point. Thus, although the overwhelming majority of the documents convey property sales, other typologies are also present in our corpus, and they need to be duly considered given their relevance to our understanding of the history of Moreira and its *cartório*. For instance, a significant increase in the number of grants ‘per anima’ or wills is noticeable during the last quarter of the eleventh century, shortly after the monastery’s establishment in its current location. This appears to be the result of a sustained campaign of large property acquisition by the newly re-founded community with the valuable support of the local magnates and patrons, the Trutesendes. Next, diplomatic structure is also considered. Unlike other corpora studied as part of our project (Oseira), Moreira’s documents are strikingly stable with regards to their textual components and the order in which they are presented. However, given this homogeneity, any noticeable variation is worthy of note and study. For instance, the presence of longer, more intricate proems in the protocol may well point to a non-peasant context of production. Similarly, the frequent absence of a symbolic invocation (in the form of a Chrismon) at the beginning of several documents could suggest that the Leonese tradition that was meant to be in use in Portugal at the time was much thinner on the ground than generally expected. Finally, there is the issue of formulas. The use or absence of certain formulaic structures has been identified across the corpus and they could well hint at a particular type of training received by a scribe or a group of scribes. Similarly, this may reflect the overall nature of the document being written and, as Wendy Davies has shown, variations in such formulaic clauses may point toward different regional traditions [W. Davies, *Windows of Justice* (2016), pp. 97-106]. Perhaps a further question to be addressed is why scribes working on the same area, often for the same beneficiary, decide to use, or not, a particular formula (occasionally, this dichotomy may happen with a single scribe: Zoleima).

One final note needs to be made about our diplomatic analysis. The material context in which the documents were written is also assessed as it often provides us with details of great importance for our understanding of the process of production of the document, the material resources used by the scribes and the potential existence of a fully functional scriptorium at Moreira itself. The shapes of the charters (rectangular -written either horizontally or vertically-, square or trapezoidal), the type of parchment used (perhaps a fragment leftover from a larger sheet), whether they were written on the flesh side or on the hair side, whether both sides were used by the scribe, the document’s lay-out, the presence of either ruling or pricking on the parchment, etc., are all aspects that we take good care to note and consider in our analysis of each charter.

[PP7] The palaeographic analysis builds as well upon studying three main aspects: the type of script represented through writing on the parchment surface, how that graphic model was executed, and who was the material author of the charter. Without going into detail about the elements taken into account in relation to each aspect, summarised in the slide, for each charter we are analysing its hand considering the type of script chosen – either Visigothic or Caroline –, its typological variant, degree of evolution of the script and its accordance to the canon – whether the script can be classified as canonised or whether it shows a combination of features of different graphic models or typologies –, the execution of the graphic model particularly with regards to the degree of perfection of the script – as shown in each example and not in each hand since the same scribe might vary between charters –, before going on to analysing in detail the scribe and its context with regards to its training – level of expertise and most likely training centre –, how he developed his career and the cultural and social context in which he could be placed.

With the research objectives mentioned in mind and the method described, let's have a look at those documentary practices and uses in place in the rural area covered by the corpus of the monastery of Moreira, our case study.

[PP8] Moreira's monastery was not born as such, not even in its current location. The first references to an ecclesiastic institution, more likely a parish church or small monastery of some sort, under the name of Moreira come from the 9th century, when it was located some 37 km to the northeast of its current location on the outskirts of Porto. Its history before the 1060s, when it was restored thanks to the patronage of members of a local elite, is yet to be written. After that date though, Moreira excelled as monastery of Canons Regular of St. Augustine.

The corpus of the monastery of Moreira holds records of its early history as a rural centre before becoming an almost urban one, and it is particularly significant for the volume of documents it contains as well as for their life cycle, since most of them belong to what must have been the private lay archive of its patrons, the Trutesendes, who married into the Casa da Maia. As it stands, Moreira's cartório gathers 350 charters, almost all preserved as original documents, single-sheet pieces of parchment, 136 of which date from between 1075-1125. Of those 136, 106 are typologically classified as lay (more than 75%).

Within the context of our research project, we are not interested in the documentary practices connected to the elites as much as in those of the lower rural social classes. We want to know who they were, why did they order the charters, and who were their scribes. Applying the method described, we find these people acting as grantors of many documents addressed to the elite, of some addressed to the monastery – meaning those manuscripts were commissioned by one of the last two groups –, but not usually as grantors and, at the same time, recipients of charters. In fact, of those 106 lay documents only 8 are suggested to meet the criteria. Even looking closely at each of them, we cannot be sure though whether the scribes who we find writing these more likely lay-peasant documents belonged to the monastery of Moreira, to another ecclesiastic centre, or rather to a parish church since they do not explicitly state so. However, content and structure of the text as well as the graphic ability of the scribe in each case provides us with enough evidence to assess form and function and scripts and styles of writing in rural, lay but not elite, context.

[PP9] So what types of documents do we find in this corpus and what were they made for. A quick statistical overview brings about the general picture: among the 136 charters from our selected period (1075-1125) 56% are sales almost exclusively involving only lay people. The percentage is slightly higher for the last quarter of the eleventh century (60%) and consequently a bit lower after the turn of the century (52%). In part, this is due to an increase in the number of donations and wills across the period. This second largest group includes 23% of the charters up to 1100 and 26% between 1101 and 1125. Unlike the sales, which present us with merely lay transactions, donations and, especially, testaments are often directed at the monastic community of Moreira as the sole beneficiary. Similarly, most of the wills granting properties to the monks come from members of the Trutesende clan. Even though these numbers are not sustained across the century, this campaign of property acquisition via grants and donations, transformed this formerly low-key rural establishment into one of the most significant monastic communities in Portugal north of the Douro river.

But what happens if we focus our attention on the 8 diplomas arguably conveying peasant transactions? Well, the picture is not altogether different: 6 of them (or 75%) are sales of discrete plots of land, whereas the other 2 include a donation between two brothers and an exchange of lands between two couples. Of course, one cannot find any references to the

monastery of Moreira in these diplomas, and the Trutesendes are almost completely absent. Almost. In a sale from 1094 (Moreira, maço 4, doc. 49) which, interestingly, runs into its dorse, a late addition was made (perhaps by the same scribe Ioannes) recording that the same property had been later acquired by Argelo Trutesendes. This may well justify the survival of this and, perhaps, most other documents in this corpus.

[PP10] In what concerns the diplomatic structure of these diplomas, they very much adhere to Moreira's tradition for stability and homogeneity: very few variations are found in a structure that regularly opens with an invocation, which may or may not include a Chrismon, followed by an address containing a *salutatio* and a very brief preamble ahead of the beneficiary's name(s), the disposition where the diplomatic action is laid out, a formulaic sanction warning anyone wishing to go against the act recorded in the charter, and finally a dating clause which never includes any geographical reference and the required attestations.

[PP11] Within our group, only two documents seem to deviate from this model. A sale from 1081 (Moreira, maço 4, doc. 21), in which Zendas, Adolfo, Gonçalo and Ermesinda sell Ranulfo and his wife Animia some land in exchange for bread and animals, stands out as it lacks both the sanction as well as the expected attestations. The case of the aforementioned donation of 1101 (Moreira, maço 5, doc. 1) written by the priest Menendo is somewhat different. Here we find a text which has been carefully prepared and includes elements which may not be found in other such grants. The most obvious is the opening preamble justifying the importance of donations and which even includes a reference to the 'lex Gotorum'. The long list of witnesses in the attestation is also quite remarkable.

[PP12] As for their materiality, these 8 items exemplify, yet again, the variety of shapes and forms that characterises the entire corpus. Within this small cohort of potentially peasant charters, even though we find that they were written mostly on rectangular leaves, their shapes and sizes vary greatly (4_01; 4_21; 6_26). Besides, square instances can also be found (4_38; 5_01).

[PP13] We have at least one instance with ruling on its verso (4_49; 4_38?), where the scribe wrote the document's attestations due to lack of space on the recto. Note, however, the fact that he failed to adhere to the ruled lines, something kind common in similar cases. Evidence of pricking can also be found in a sale from 1109 (5_21). As mentioned earlier, these last two examples could well represent parchment leftovers from Moreira's monastic scriptorium which found their way into the writing kit of rural priests in their area of influence.

Moving forward, let's take a look at the graphic systems and styles of writing used by the scribes associated to Moreira: in the next few minutes we will move from a general survey of the full corpus within the chronology of this paper, to focusing only on lay charters, and from them on the 8 classified as more likely peasant ones so we can have a wider perspective.

[PP14] Analysing the types and typologies of the script used by the scribes acting for the monastery (left hand side of the slide) in comparison with those acting for lay agents (right hand side; elite and non-elite appraised together and independently), we can clearly appreciate some differences. Scribes from monastic environment show heavier use of Caroline minuscule particularly through its graphic influence on Visigothic minuscule or round hands, this type the second most common in its canonised version (in the slide; mixed Visigothic script – that is, Visigothic with Caroline minuscule influence – in yellow and

Visigothic minuscule or round in grey). In contrast, scribes working at a lay environment, authors of the lay charters of the corpus, although show a strong influence of Caroline too, even without actually adopting it as graphic model, continue to use cursive Visigothic script, which does not appear in the other group but shows here as the second most common type (in the slide; mixed Visigothic script in yellow and cursive Visigothic in green). The percentage of use of Visigothic minuscule or round remains more or less the same. But, if we compare the type of script used in elite versus non-elite charters we can see how, even though the preferred one in both groups is still the same, there is a significant difference worth highlighting: Mixed Visigothic, with Visigothic minuscule as pole of attraction, is still the main type (in the slide in yellow). However, while in elite charters scribes show a wider range of scripts, including Caroline, in non-elite ones the only options used, besides mixed, were cursive and hybrid (in the slide in green and red).

From this data:

- (i) [PP15] we can state that new trends in writing – meaning, the introduction of Caroline – were welcomed with more intensity in monastic environment, as expected, although not earlier since the first hands in Visigothic script with Caroline minuscule features date from the same year, 1086, in both groups (you can see an example of this mixed Visigothic in non-elite context);
- (ii) [PP16] we can suggest that the fact that cursive Visigothic seems to have been no longer an option from this period on, with the last example dated to 1088 (in the slide), might have been understood in the same way in scribal context – that is, leaving behind those considered as more traditional or older models;
- (iii) [PP17] however, in non-elite context, scribes resorted to mixed and hybrid scripts (one example in the slide), not to canonised Visigothic – such minuscule mixed with Caroline features, or hybrid built from cursive or round forms indistinctly as pole of attraction.

Regarding the amount of hybrid hands – explained in a very simplified way, scribes who merged elements of both Visigothic scripts due to their formative and cultural context –, a higher percentage found in non-elite context, they are so interesting for their strong personality that I am working on their full study, which I hope will be published soon.

Although I do not have the time now to go into more detail regarding types of scripts used, I would like to mention just two more details:

- (i) First, even though we still have work to do analysing Portuguese corpora, I have to say that I fully subscribe to Ribeiro's words when in his *Dissertações chronologicas* (published in 1819) he praised the peculiarity of “o gothico da Maia”, given that, although the morphological characteristics of the two basic typological variants of Visigothic script are more or less as expected, their execution is really quite characteristic.
- (ii) [PP18] And second, Caroline minuscule and the transitional examples of script before it, at least in Moreira, deserve full attention given that while, at least in Galicia, the graphic model was one or the other with some isolated influences regarding specific morphological aspects, in Moreira's examples it is really a combination of elements.

I hope to be able to focus on studying both aspects in the coming months.

[PP19] Let's briefly proceed with styles of writing. Training and grade, comparing hands working in each group, either ecclesiastic (the diagram to the left) or lay (diagrams to the right; the smaller one a combination of both elite and non-elite charters), also differ. As we can see, while scribes allegedly writing for non-elite agents could be considered more frequently than not to have received or achieved a basic training – see the high percentage

of elementary hands – , those working for the elite show better training which enabled neat charters. As expected, those more skilled scribes would have been the ones working for the monastery – it is logical to assume that they would have also been trained there. There is, however, a considerable percentage of scribes who show an intermediary level of training (in the slide in red): they were not proficient but they were, indeed, functional, and to have charters written, plenty of them, seems to have been a priority in the area:

It is interesting to note that the monastery of Moreira did not have a formal *scriptorium* until after its restoration in 1060, that is, just before the chronological time frame of this paper. However, Moreira's cartório provides clear evidence about the intensity of written production in rural areas dependent on this monastery from its early years, since it was established either as the head church of the ancient parish or as a small double monastery. In fact, this aspect is extremely interesting given that what we see in the analysis of this corpus is a profuse use of writing; organised from the rural elites down also reaching the social groups under their control, both peasants and the middling sort ([PP20] in this slide another example of a charter ascribed to a peasant context). Was there a link between social groups and this myriad of scribes using different scripts with different styles? In other words, were specific scribes linked to specific social groups?

There are many prolific scribes in the cartório (even one case of a scribe for which 30 charters have been preserved), which is in itself remarkable, but only two examples of scribes who wrote for both the monastery and the elite. All the other ones seem to keep to their social group but, within it, worked for different families. In fact, we have found scribes connected to Moreira who were also commissioned to write charters by elite and non-elite groups or monasteries outside its boundaries. Travelling scribes such as the priest Zoleiman, writing profusely for the elite in charters from Moreira as well as from Vairão (some 10km to the north); Invenando, writing for laymen in Moreira, Vairão and Junqueira (almost 20km to the north); or Arias, working in Moreira and Pendorada (50km away). These examples seem to delve into the assumption that the intensity of the use of writing by social classes equivalent to rural elite and below was a reality, at least north of the river Douro.

[PP21] Moreira's corpus is extremely rich; in the volume of documents preserved, their materiality, in number of scribes, of charters preserved for each hand, of types of script and writing styles, of agents involved in making documents... In contrast, it is poor in ecclesiastical documentation; that is to say, this corpus is particularly informative about written production in rural contexts by agents not usually associated with intense written production in this time and area. Everything seems to indicate that we are dealing with a private archive, belonging to the family of those who will directly and clearly be the patrons of the Monastery after its restoration, and that, precisely because this lay archive was created, other details related to external social groups to that dominant family were preserved, passing to the archive of the institution once it was reorganised. In other words, we preserve the memory of some individuals from outside the elite because of the elite's interest in assuring its territorial power, not because of the direct interest of the ecclesiastical institution, as is usually the case.

This distinctiveness suits us, as it fits exactly with what we were looking for in the framework of the project. However it is at the same time excruciating for it is providing such a volume of data that it is taking us much longer than expected to move forward. Still, we have survived the first year of research and have defined a triple working methodology that is bearing fruit. We now have to expand our study to other documentary collections bordering Moreira to contrast the results obtained so far. [PP22]