from the later sixth through the seventh century. We should stress that, as happened everywhere, local martyrs and saints could always count on the greatest local affection. Nonetheless, the peninsula also participated in the Mediterranean koine, with the consequent interchange of ideas and objects of cult: African, Italian, Gallic, eastern and even Pannonian saints found a home for themselves in Spanish churches.

To maintain the old vision of Hispania as a region detached from the processes that affected the rest of the Mediterranean is to give credit to an historical paradigm intended chiefly to consolidate and define differences among early modern and contemporary nation-states. Hispania was part of a late antique world in which the cult of the saints acquired a central importance difficult to comprehend with our present-day outlooks. Saints’ cults shaped the rhythms and the landscape of daily life, privileging some aspects of life and some physical spaces over others, and opening up enormous possibilities for social representation. The inhabitants of late antique Hispania could find in the cult of the saints and martyrs a perfect substitute for the cultural and religious community of the classical city, along with a new social idiom that was universally understood.

"UNE COTERIE ESPAGNOLE PIEUSE": CHRISTIAN ARCHAEOLOGY AND CHRISTIAN COMMUNITIES IN FOURTH- AND FIFTH-CENTURY HISPANIA

Kim Bowes

Have you changed your ways, sweetest Paulinus? Are the Vasconian woodlands and the snowy hospitality of the Pyrenees and forgetfulness of our sky the cause? What curse shall I not rightfully call down on you, land of Spain?\textsuperscript{1}

The series of letters posted across the Pyrenees to his friend Paulinus by the Bordelais rhetor, Ausonius, drew to a close a deep, decade-long friendship. Paulinus had vanished into Hispania with his new Spanish wife and ensconced himself in uncommunicative silence on her estates. By 393, when the above verses were penned, Ausonius had come to suspect the cause of his friend’s silence, and wondered if Hispania might be to blame. The letter imagines Paulinus in a deserted Spanish countryside, haunting ground of the mad Bellerophon, a vagrant, “avoiding the traces of men.”\textsuperscript{2} For Ausonius, Bellerophon symbolized the radical Christian ascetic and Hispania was both the home and seedbed of such dangerous extremists. Only a few years earlier, Ausonius’ circle of Bordelais amici had collided with Hispania’s newest ascetic radical, Priscillian, who had inadvertently brought about the disgrace and death of two women of Bordeaux, both daughters and wives of Ausonius’ friends.\textsuperscript{3} For Ausonius, Hispania and its denizens were tarred with the brush of extremist religious belief.\textsuperscript{4}

\textsuperscript{3} Urbica was stoned to death by a mob at Bordeaux in 384; she was either the mother of Ausonius’ son-in-law, or the daughter of Ausonius’ grammarian colleague, Urbicus. See Green (1991), 328; Trout (1999), 73–74. Euchrota, wife of Ausonius’ colleague Delphidius, was executed with Priscillian in Trier in 386. See Ausonius, \textit{Prof.} 3.33–38.
\textsuperscript{4} Trout (1999), 67–77.
To a certain degree, modern scholarship has agreed with Ausonius. The extreme pro-Nicene beliefs of Spain's most famous citizen, the emperor Theodosius, have prompted scholars to look to his court and find there an emperor surrounded by a "coterie espagnole pieuse." Maternus Cynegius the idol-smasher, Egeria the pilgrim, the ascetic Melanias the Elder, all displayed varying (and debated) Spanish pedigrees, and all, including the emperor himself, were assumed to derive their faith from some vague "Spanish experience." This gang of fervently pious Spaniards collected around the emperor in Constantinople, some assuming high administrative positions and indirectly influencing Theodosius' religious policy.5

Aspects of this traditional picture have undergone important modifications. McLynn, in this volume, shows that Theodosius himself was a Spaniard in name only, that his pro-Nicene legislation had precedents in earlier edicts, and that rather than being the product of Spanish influence, such legislation was more likely spurred on by eastern, particularly Thessalonican, pressures.7 Bravo, in two recent prosopographical studies of the Theodosian administration, has noted that the Spaniards at court only rarely achieved high-level positions, and that their appearance in relatively large numbers dates from before the accession of Theodosius.8 The *coterie espagnole pieuse* is no longer quite so "Theodosian," or quite so powerful, as once imagined.

These revisionist studies have tended to focus on the emperor himself, and on a more exacting history of his administration, while the role of Hispania in the Theodosian narrative has received less critical attention. Pignoli and others were quick to assume that the Spaniards around Theodosius derived their piety from their homeland, where "le christianisme y est pratiqué avec une exceptionnelle ferveur."9 Matthews, the most careful and lucid chronicler of the Theodosian court and its impact on Theodosian policy, was more cautious. He emphasized that the activities of pious Spaniards outside the peninsula were chronicled far better than their lives within it, and that with the exception of the Priscillianist controversy, evidence for Christian practice in Hispania is meager. Thus, Matthews' masterly study was forced to rely heavily on Gallic sources, a solution which made sense given the two regions' close bond, but which, as Matthews himself recognized, had the potential to blur any differences that may have distinguished them.10 The original question, then, remains open: was there something special, something "different," about religious practice in the Iberian Peninsula, something which produced the particularly "intense" piety observed in these aristocrats of the late fourth and early fifth century?

Since Matthews' seminal study, trends in Spanish historiography would seem to have answered his question with a resounding "no." Modern studies have emphasized the degree to which Hispania's religious culture shared in trends common to the late antique world. This shared culture is typically elucidated by selecting various phenomena fundamental to the articulation of late antique societies—for instance, the rise of the bishop, the appearance of pious women, or the creation of new episcopal topographies—and finding examples of these phenomena in the Spanish historical record.11 The recent historiography of Spanish Christianity has thus been a litany of "sameness." This emphasis on sameness over difference is a natural and laudable reaction to the centuries of Spanish scholarship which, as Castillo describes in this volume, claimed Hispania as a well-spring of fervent ur-Catholicism. And yet, in rejecting the ontologically unique, recent Spanish scholarship seems to have thrown out the baby with the bathwater: by insisting on sameness, legitimate discussion of historical difference, both relative and comparative, has all but vanished.12

It should be noted that this discourse of sameness has largely taken place with respect to one category of evidence alone: texts. Material culture and archaeology enter these discussions only as a side-note, usually as proof of whatever trend is under discussion rather than as a discursive element in its own right.13 Matthews himself had hailed archaeology as the greatest hope for catching Spanish Christianity in action, a palliative for the chronic shortage of Spanish texts. Yet

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5 Pignoli (1972), 238.
6 See particularly Strobeker (1963), 107–24; Matthews (1975), chs. 5–6.
7 See also McLynn (1997).
8 Bravo (1996); (1997).
9 Pignoli (1972), 4.
10 Matthews (1975), 145–47; 160.
11 See Fernández Ubiña (2002); Teja (1997); García Moreno (1980); Gurt, Ripoll and Godoy (1994).
12 On sameness and difference, and the fundamental distinction between the ontologically "unique" and the relative "different," see Smith (1990), 32–42 and passim.
13 See particularly García Moreno (1991); (1992).
archaeology can do more than just stand in for missing texts. It speaks with its own language and when examined in its fullness, can describe individual action inscribed within broad-based socio-economic trends in ways that texts do not. Archaeology thus provides a fresh well of material from which a nuanced discussion of sameness and difference might spring.

In consequence, this chapter seeks to take up the problem of the “pious Theodosian Spaniard” through the lens of archaeology, particularly Christian architecture, and to compare the general strands of Spanish archaeology and religiosity to those elsewhere in the Roman West. The first section of paper offers a survey of Hispania’s late antique religious architecture. The period under consideration encompasses the whole of the fourth and the first half of the fifth centuries, providing the Theodosian period of focus with a before and an after, and embracing monuments which can rarely be dated to regnal periods. I will suggest that while Spain’s slow pace of urban, particularly intramural, church building is more or less paralleled elsewhere in the West, the quantity and quality of its rural religious structures, particularly funerary structures, is unique. Christian building in Hispania thus seems to form part of its unusually rich villa culture, and as such, Christian building resources may have been directed inward to the estate, rather than outward to episcopal centers.

The second section considers the relationship between the rural elite and the episcopate during this period, and interrogates the notion of Spanish elite “piety.” Bishops assume a relatively low profile in fourth- and early fifth-century Hispania. The peninsula’s episcopal network was unusually sparse, its bishoprics scattered across a vast landscape, and its few historically attested bishops were often buffered by local secular powers. I will argue that with important exceptions, the ranks of “pious Spaniards” were dominated not by bishops, but by unusually powerful laymen and women, as well as by lower clergy who often seem to have opted out of episcopal office. The low profile of the Spanish episcopate seems to have resulted in the formulation of alternative concepts of Christian community which side-stepped local bishoprics and their communities. Thus, text and material record both point to the same trend: elite Christian identity in Hispania assumed a Janus-face, turned outward to extra-peninsular sources of holiness, and inward to the estate where the conceptual Christian community centered round the familia and its Christian amici. These alternative conceptions of Christian community had a significant impact on the fourth-century Spanish episcopate and its relationship with the elite, and helped to shape the specific color of Christianity in fourth-century Hispania.

1.1 The religious archaeology of late antique Hispania: the city

When the problem of a “special” Spanish Christianity was elaborated in the mid-1970s, early Christian archaeology in the peninsula was just entering a period of rapid development. The publication of three major surveys of early Christian and Visigothic art and architecture, the establishment of regular conferences dedicated to the subject, and the organization of major research projects on various aspects of late antique society have all helped to produce a radically different picture of late antique Spanish Christendom than existed thirty years ago. The most significant advances have taken place in the urban milieu, with the development of advanced methodology and specialized teams, resulting in a greatly enriched picture of urban church archaeology. Some nine churches in urban or suburban locations are now tentatively dated to the late fourth through first half of the fifth century, not a great number to be sure, but significantly more than were known thirty years ago (see Fig. 1). These include the churches or possible churches at Tarragona (Tarraco), Barcelona (Barcino), San Cugat (Castrum Octavianum), Terrassa (Egara), Valencia (Valentia), Elche (Illici), Seville (Hispalis), and Mérida (Emerita Augusta), although some of these may date outside the period in question. Ongoing excavations in other provincial capitals at Braga (Bracara), Cartagena (Carthagio Nova) and Córdoba (Corduba) have yet to reveal early Christian churches, while other major episcopal centers

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14 The surveys are Palol (1967); Schlink and Haushild (1978) and Godoy (1992). The fruits of a number of these recent research projects can be found in this volume. See also Gurt, Ripoll and Godoy (1994). The conference is the Reunió d’Arqueologia Cristiana Hispanica (cited in the bibliography as RACH I–V). Père de Palol’s introductions to each volume provide an accurate barometer of the conference’s changing philosophy.

15 Two other Tarracoensian churches, Santa Maria de Roses and the basilica of the Neapolis at Ampurias, have recently been dated broadly to the fourth–fifth century without supporting archaeological evidence. See Puig i Griesenberger (1999) and Nolla and Aquilué (1995), respectively. Previous analyses had dated them to the later fifth or sixth centuries.
such as Faro/Estoi (Ossónoba), Granada (Elvira), Toledo (Toletum), León (Legio) and Zaragoza (Caesaraugusta) also remain devoid of known fourth- or fifth-century church structures. In some cases this is due to a dearth of excavations in these cities while in others, for instance Toledo or Córdoba, more extensive work has revealed sixth- or seventh-century churches, but not their earlier predecessors.

The great majority of urban/suburban churches from this period are funerary in function and a number probably served as martyria. The city that boasts the peninsula’s earliest martyriological tradition, Tarragona (Tarraco) has also produced its largest and best-known martyrial church, in the suburban area called Francoli (Fig. 2). The church was built in a pre-existing necropolis, located west of the city, whose heyday in the third and fourth centuries produced a number of fine sarcophagi and sepulchral mosaics, and a number of centrally-planned mausolea with subterranean crypts. While little remains of the church’s structure or liturgical apparatus, it is reconstructed as a large three-aisled basilica that presumably served eucharistic, as well as funerary/martyrial functions. Epigraphic evidence indicates its dedication to the martyred third-century bishop Fructuosus and his deacons Augurius and Eulogius, although whether the church held the bodies of the martyrs or only their relics remains uncertain. New excavations in the church of Santa Eulalia in Mérida (Figs. 3a and 3b) have produced what seems to be the late fourth-century shrine of that martyr, a modest, single-aisled, apsed structure, also surrounded by mausolea and two necropoleis. Only in the late fifth century was the first basilica built over the site. Finally, the early Christian structures at San Cugat (Castrum Octavianum), fifteen miles outside Barcelona, are associated by tradition with the site of the martyrdom of Cucuphas, a native of Scilli in North Africa who was believed to have been martyred at the castrum during the Decian persecutions (Fig. 4). However, no archaeological material has been produced in support of this attribution.

A few intramural cathedral churches are also known from excavation, but many more probably await discovery beneath the many unexplored downtowns of modern cities. The best known is the cathedral of Barcelona, whose excavation is ongoing. Set inside and adjacent to the city walls, the church (some 17 m wide, its length uncertain) and western baptistery were built into a Roman house whose overall form was oriented northeast by southwest, an orientation assumed

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17 The excavations at Francoli were carried out by Serra i Vilaró in the 1920s and 1930s and the bibliography is immense. Bibliographies and reviews may be found in del Ano (1979–1989); (1999); Godoy (1992), 187–88.
18 Godoy (1992), 190.
19 Godoy (1992), 190; Y. Duval (1993), 175.
20 Mateos (1999).
21 Barral (1976); Riu i Barrera (1999); full bibliography in Godoy (1992), 207–208.
Figure 2. Francolí basilica, Tarragona. Amo i Guinovart (1999), 173.

Figure 3a. Santa Eulalia, Shrine complex, Mérida. Structure 25 is identified as the shrine of the saint, while 28 and 35 are mausolea. The surrounding basilica is later. Mateos Cruz (1999), fig. 14.
by the later basilica (Figs. 5a and 5b). The baptistery was appended to the southwest of the house, and contained a square or cruciform font. It was laid over the decumanus minor which ran from the city walls to the forum area, and thus, the church’s construction would have caused a major change in the city’s urban fabric and circulation patterns. Recently, some archaeologists have objected that the basilica as described above possesses such irregular orientation and circulation patterns that it cannot have served as the cathedral church. They propose instead that the original cathedral lay to the southeast, still unexcavated beneath the Gothic cathedral (Fig. 5c).

In Valencia, what may be the cathedral area, set adjacent to the Roman city forum, is also being excavated. The earliest definitive church structures date to the seventh century. However, the develop-ment of a fifth-century necropolis in this area, particularly to the east and south of the macellum chapel, has led excavators to suggest that the area may have witnessed cult activity prior to the chapel’s construction, perhaps as early as the late fourth or early fifth century. The locations of the cathedrals of Mérida, Tarragona and Seville

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23 Godoy (1992), 206-207; Bonnet and Beltrán de Heredia Bercero (1999); (2000).
24 The most recent reports are Albiach et al. (1998).
have been identified with high probability, but the sites remain unexcavated and cannot be dated even hypothetically.\(^{26}\)

Finally, one possible urban monastic church from this period has recently been unearthed in Tarragona. Emergency excavations on the site of the Parc Central shopping center, near the Francoli complex, produced the remains of a villa and a church, separated by a

\(^{26}\) On Mérida, see Mateos (1995c), 241; for Tarragona, see Hauschild (1994); Aquilué (1999); Macías et al. (1999), 79–80. At Seville, a baptismal font was discovered in the Alcázar, originally rectangular in shape but later transformed into an octagon. See Bendala Galán and Vegueruela (1980); Blanco Felipeiro (1971), 171. The early font is presumed to date to the fourth or early fifth century.

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Figure 5b. Barcelona, cathedral complex. Oriol Granados (1992), figs 10–11.

Roman road (Fig. 6).\(^{27}\) The villa seems to date to the mid-fourth century and was largely abandoned by the mid-fifth, while the church may date to the mid-fifth century, although the chronological indicators are less than clear. The Parc Central church is a three-aisled basilica, preceded by an atrium surrounded with rooms. This feature, along with the discovery of an inscription to the sainted nun, Thecla, has led its excavators to identify it as a monastic church.\(^{28}\) The numerous graves found in and around the church, and the funerary counter-apse on the church's west end, all indicate that, whatever its daily use, the church also served funerary functions.

Formally, these Spanish churches present no great surprises to students of early Christian architecture. The majority show a general preference for the basilica in both congregational and martyrly contexts. The Francoli church is a large (40 × 25m) basilica, three-aisled, flanked by a mausoleum on the north, and a later baptistery to the southeast.\(^{29}\) The Parc Central basilica presents a more complex,
Figure 5c. Barcelona, proposed alternative cathedral complex. Bonnet and Beltrán de Heredia Bercero (2000), 180.

Figure 6. Parc Central complex, Tarragona. Mar (1999), 176.
interior transept design. A number of single-aisled churches have also been identified in Hispania, although the dates of most of these are disputed, as is, in some cases, their church function. The first phase of the church at San Cugat is reconstructed as a single-aisled hall, built against an earlier northern mausoleum. Other single-aisled examples include the church at Terrassa (Fig. 7), whose earliest structural phase is dated to the fifth century—with a possible fourth-century predecessor, or the enigmatic building at Ilici, variously identified as a church or synagogue (Fig. 8). The late fourth-century shrine at Santa Eulalia in Mérida was also built as a modest (13 × 7m) single-aisled structure with an eastern apse. Thus, the small corpus of Spanish fourth- and fifth-century churches seems to reflect Mediterranean church-building trends, yet perhaps retains a certain archaism. The other notable characteristics of sixth- and seventh-century Spanish church plans, such as the so-called counter-apse, tripartite square sanctuaries or cruciform plans, are not obvious in their fourth- and fifth-century predecessors.

Similarly modest and unremarkable is the decoration of these structures. Funerary mosaics for private individuals and occasional mosaic floors form the most common decorative feature and appear in the churches at Tarragona, Mérida, and San Cugat. Wall mosaics, frescoes and liturgical or architectural sculpture are fairly limited and of modest quality when present. The private mausoleum surrounding the churches at Francoli and Mérida show a generally greater wealth of decoration, as well as more innovative design, than do the churches they accompany.

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30 Moro (1987); Moro and Tuset (1997); Moro (1999).
31 Schlunk (1952); Ràmas Fernández (1990); Marquez Villora and Poveda Navarro (1998). The pavement in the structure was laid to mark out three stripes or "aisles." Three fragmentary mosaic inscriptions have been found in each aisle, including one set within a tabula ansata towards the east end. In the southeastern aisle is found the building's only figurative mosaic, a fragmentary marine scene with a boat. The absence of any Christian liturgical equipment, the poor Greek, and the term 'PR(o)' EYXH or "presbyters," in the inscriptions led some investigators to label the building as a synagogue. Other, more recent analyses have emphasized that presbyters are epigraphically attested in Christian buildings as well, and that the marine/boating scene is unlikely to appear in a synagogue, but might better be identified as Jonah and the Whale.
The urban corpus, most notable for its integrity, includes some partially excavated or re-excavated with modern methods, in cases where the architectural alignment, 296

Figure 8. "Church" of Elche, mosaic floor. Schlunk and Haushild (1978), fig. 86.

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regular masses continued to take place in structures built for other purposes, such as homes, warehouses and baths, with only minimal structural alteration.

The absence of major fourth-century Christian architecture in Hispania should not be wholly surprising. As recent scholarship has been at pains to point out, the presence of flourishing Christian communities and martyrial cult, both of which Spain undoubtedly had, did not at this time necessarily entail a concomitant investment in Christian architecture.⁵⁸ Constantinian and post-Constantinian church building was a limited phenomenon, affecting principally the great Holy Land and Roman shrines, North Africa, and a handful of other cities.⁵⁹ In many provincial cities, the domus ecclesiae probably continued as the primary Christian meeting site for decades after the Peace of the Church.⁶⁰ Even in Rome, the intramural community churches of the fourth century were often humble affairs.⁶¹ Urban church building in Gaul may most closely approximate that of Spain in its chronology and modest form and decoration. A longer tradition of urban excavation in France has uncovered a greater number of these churches, and in general it may be that church building got underway somewhat earlier there, with a handful of churches tentatively dated to the late fourth and early fifth century.⁶² Nonetheless, as in Hispania, most Gallic cities received their first churches only in the first half of the fifth century or even later.⁶³ Thus, while monumental Christian architecture in Spain may have had somewhat later beginnings than did its Gallic neighbors, the disparity should not be overstated, particularly given the difficulty in dating church structures generally.

1.2 The religious archaeology of late antique Hispania: the countryside

If urban church building in Hispania can be said to broadly echo, albeit in a slightly delayed fashion, trends elsewhere in the West, the same cannot be said for activity in the countryside (Fig. 9). Christian

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⁵⁸ Cantino Wataghin (1998), 27.
⁶¹ See now Curran (2000), ch. 4.
⁶² For example, Narbonne (Clos-de-la-Lombarde), Marseille, Grenoble, Lyon, Bordeaux, Toulouse, Rouen.
⁶³ For example, Saint-Bertrand-de-Comminges or Fréjus.
⁶⁴ The villa and church of Monte da Cegonha, and the villa and church at São Cucufate, are not included in this survey. In both cases, the early date for the church is unsupported by archaeological evidence. See Allenin and Lopes (1992) and Alarcão, Étienne and Mayet (1992), respectively.
The most obvious distinction between urban and rural Christian structures is a functional one, for rural Christian buildings are most often private mausolea. Exemplary is the mausoleum at Las Vegas de Pueblanueva (Toledo) (Figs. 10a and 10b). Set some five hundred meters from the unexcavated villa, the structure is a large (24m in diameter), double-shelled octagon with subterranean crypt. Entered through the west end, the octagonal center was surrounded by an ambulatory, culminating in an eastern chamber or niche of uncertain function. The crypt was entered from within the building and originally contained three sarcophagi, one of which was a fine example of Constantinopolitan workmanship depicting the Twelve Apostles. Another example is the unusual La Cocosma mausoleum, an east-west oriented, vaulted tetraconch (11.4 x 6.8m), preceded by a narthex.

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Figure 10a. Pueblanueva, mausoleum, plan. Hauschild (1978), fig. 15a.

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Figure 10b. Pueblanueva, mausoleum, axonometric reconstruction. Hauschild (1978), fig. 16.

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45 Two basilican churches, both seemingly tied to Roman villas and both with accompanying baptisteries and/or mausolea, have been dated to the late fourth or early fifth century; these are Las Vegas de Pedraza in Segovia and Las Calaveras near Valladolid. Neither has been completely excavated and their dating is thus hypothetical. For Pedraza, see Calleja Guijarro (1965); Izquierdo Bertíz (1974). For Calaveras, see Regueras and Olmo (1997).

the whole encased in a rectangular outer wall (Fig. 11). The eastern apse of the tetraconch was larger than the other three and in its center, beneath the floor, was set a single east-west oriented marble sarcophagus. Glass mosaic tesserae found during excavation indicate that the walls and/or vaults were decorated with mosaic.

Also vaulted, and also displaying an unusual plan is the mausoleum of La Alberca (Murcia) (Figs. 12a and b). Set adjacent to a villa with fine late antique mosaics, the double-storied mausoleum with apse was oriented west-east and encased in a thick, exterior wall enlivened by regularly spaced buttresses. The function and date of the structure are given largely by its formal parallels with the martyrrium of S. Anastasius at Marusinac, Salona, of early fourth-century date (Fig. 12c). At Marusinac, the martyr's remains were laid in the

crypt apse, while private, family burials were placed in the main crypt chamber and the two were connected by a fenestella confessionis. The absence of this feature at La Alberca has led archaeologists to doubt whether the Spanish structure had any martyrly function.

Spain's most famous rural Christian mausoleum is the monument of Centcelles, but recent work has thrown its funerary function into
doubt. The building in question was a circular vestibule in the villa's newly refurbished residential quarter (Fig. 13a). While the other rooms in this part of the villa seem never to have been finished, this vestibule was roofed with a brick dome and the dome encrusted with a series of mosaics, depicting Christian and secular scenes (Fig. 13b). The mosaics were arranged in three tiers, the lowest depicting a stag and boar hunt, the center a series of Old and New Testament scenes, and the uppermost tier a group of four scenes of seated or enthroned figures, alternating with personifications of the four seasons. The presence of the enthroned figures and a barrel-vaulted chamber beneath the floor led the excavators to identify the building as a converted imperial mausoleum, allegedly that of the emperor Constans (d. 350).

The original publications include, among many, Hauschild (1965) on the architecture; Rüger (1969) on the ceramics, and Schlunk (1988) on the mosaics.


A recently published conference, however, has cast doubt on the building's function and date. The four enthroned scenes have been identified as images of the villa's *dominus*, or less plausibly as depictions of a bishop or a married seigniorial couple. The ceramic evidence used to date the villa's late antique remodeling has been pushed slightly later, to the early fifth century, and the "crypt" is alleged to

Arce (2002b).

be of medieval date.\textsuperscript{34} While many of these objections are not wholly convincing by themselves, the fact remains that Centcelles can only with difficulty be understood as an aristocratic mausoleum. Christian funerary traditions on the peninsula, as we have outlined them above,

consistently find the mausoleum as a separate structure, set apart from the villa proper. Even if the villa was partially abandoned when the "mausoleum" was constructed, as the excavators claim, a *dominus* willing to pay for the expense of gold-glazed mosaics would surely have constructed a proper mausoleum with stand-alone, topographic visibility, one of the hallmarks of such monuments. Thus, it seems most likely that that the domed room at Centcelles with its mosaics was simply an unusually ornate vestibule.

While the preponderance of Christian rural monuments are private mausolea, two sites, Marialba (León) and Villa Fortunatus (Huesca), may be identified as martyr shrines or martyrial *memoriae*. The shrine at Villa Fortunatus was built into one of the villa’s dining rooms, whose entrance area was modified to form a tripartite “sanctuary” with a miniature (3.4m x 1.1m) crypt (Figs. 14a and b). Access to this crypt was controlled by a series of projecting walls forming a kind of chancel, and the crypt itself was simply a sunken area reached by four small steps. Given the size of the sunken area and its evocation of crypt architecture, excavators have labeled it a pseudo-crypt and suggested that it probably held a reliquary. In another area of the villa was found a mosaic inscribed with the name “Fortunatus” bisected by a chrismon; it is not clear if this mosaic preceded the construction of the shrine or was contemporary with it. At Marialba, a large (23.4 x 16.3m), free-standing apsed building, perhaps a pagan temple, was set near what appears to be the ruins of a late Roman villa (Fig. 15). The building was converted to Christian use by the insertion of thirteen carefully-constructed and contemporary graves into its apse, and by the addition of a narthex and groin vaulting. The insertion of the graves and the contemporary modification of the structure points strongly to martyrial function, as does a local legend of thirteen soldier saints, though this can be traced no earlier than the thirteenth century.

The difficulty of making functional distinctions between the private mausolea on the one hand, and these quasi-public martyria or *memoriae* on the other, is highlighted by one of the most significant and controversial discoveries of recent years, the site of Carranque (Fig. 16a). The villa boasts some of Hispania’s finest late antique figural mosaics, including one inscribed panel wishing happiness to a certain “Materius.” This inscription, plus the general wealth of site, has led the excavator to identify its patron as none other than Materius Cynegius, Theodosius’ praetorian prefect and anti-pagan hammer. Adjacent to the villa is an apsed building, identified as a temple or *nymphaeum*, and a large domed building which has been

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50 Vifayo (1970); Castillo in the present volume.
59 OFICINA MA[—are] /Pingit hirinvis /Vtere Felix Materne /Hunc /Cubiculum. For a review of interpretations of this inscription see now Gómez Pallarés (1990), 149–52.
60 Fernández-Galiano and Ayllón (2001).
identified as a Christian church and dated, along with the villa, to the late fourth century (Fig. 16b).

This so-called church complex is in fact two complexes: the domed building preceded by a grand entrance portico, and a tetracoonch mausoleum with two seemingly contemporary tombs and its own attached portico. The whole complex reaches some 70m in length. While the near-complete destruction of the domed building has made

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61 The two complexes are alleged to have been planned together, although the execution of the mausoleum complex may slightly post-date that of the main complex. Additionally, it is not clear if the tetracoonch mausoleum was entered solely through the U-shaped portico group, or also through the main entrance portico, to which it is also attached.
it difficult to trace its original disposition, it seems to have been constructed in an *opus mixtum* and laid out as a centrally planned cross-in-square, its dome supported by piers and lateral barrel vaults, while corner spaces were covered with sail, or domical vaults. The vaulting was of brick, and remnants suggest that at least the corner spaces utilized the pitched-brick technique, rather than the horizontally-laid bricks more common in such sail vaults (Fig. 16c).⁶²

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Figure 16a. Carranque, villa. Fernández-Galiano, Patón, Lorca and Batalla Carchemilla (1990), fig. 1.


The decoration of this hall seems to have been lavish in the extreme. Fragments of red and green porphyry *opus sectile* and marble from Tunisia, Chios and Turkey decorated the walls and floors.⁶³ Some of these fragments were carved with chrismons and crosses, which provide the only clear evidence for the complex’s Christian function. However, as these marbles were found in a destruction layer, they may belong to a later Christian use—as a result, the building’s original function remains elusive. Additionally, some of the

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⁶² The towers of the Theodosian landwalls in Constantinople offer one of the few parallels for the use of pitched brick in sail vaults. See J.B. Ward-Perkins (1958), 79–87.

⁶³ Rodà (2001). For the ivories found in the building, see Baquedano (2001), 148–49.
building's columns were inscribed D[OMINI] N[OSTRI] TH[EO DOSII] and interpreted as an imperial quarry mark. The connection to the Theodosian house seems to strengthen the attribution of the site to Maternus Cynegius, which nonetheless remains controversial.

Whatever its function, the building's plan, materials and construction techniques betray an eastern inspiration and it is in this regard that some light may be shed on its origins and use. The plan particularly calls for some comment, as the cross-in-square design appears for the first time in sixth-century churches, again, largely in eastern environs. If the building does date to the late fourth century, its plan is a unicum, without any clear precedents or contemporaries in the surviving material record. The two-part plan of the complex, with its mausoleum and domed structure, each with separate porticoes, is also unusual, and suggests that the complex may have served two linked functions, funerary and commemorative/ritual.

In the late fourth century, one similarly bifurcated complex, including a mausoleum and accompanying cruciform structure, enjoyed pan-Mediterranean fame: the complex of the Holy Apostles in Constantinople, begun by Constantine himself. Although the textual sources are hopelessly confusing and the site has been totally destroyed, Constantine's original foundation seems to have been a single monument in which was combined a mausoleum AND memoria, designed to hold both his own remains and monuments to the Twelve Apostles. In 357, Constantius, intent on constructing a proper martyrium while balancing an appropriate regard for his father's remains, separated the mausoleum from the apostoleion by constructing a separate martyrial church, probably of cruciform shape, where he placed the newly-translated apostolic relics. Constantine's tomb rested in a separate but attached mausoleum that would serve as the imperial burial space for future centuries. The whole complex was surrounded with meeting halls, porticoes, baths and fountains.

The Constantinopolitan apostoleion was enormously influential and many copies, all of radically different form, have been identified in both East and West. The most interesting copy for our purposes was built by another of Theodosius' administrators, Flavius Rufinus, in his Chalcidian villa outside Constantinople. There, this Gallic aristocrat from Éauze constructed his own apostoleion, fitted out with relics of Peter and Paul obtained from Rome. Although nothing remains of his project, textual sources attest that Rufinus constructed and are built of generally poorer materials. The form does appear in secular buildings, such as the audience hall of al-Mundir in Resafa (Mango [1986], 52) or the Chalke Gate preceding the Great Palace (Mango [1959]), both dating to the sixth century. The absence of a terminal apse at Carranque is problematic for all these comparisons, although a few eastern cruciform martyria, such as the fifth-century martyrium at Hierapolis in Asia Minor (Krautheimer [1986], 161-62), also lack an apse, since the focus of cult was located in the building's center.

The following discussion follows Mango (1990); for another interpretation, see Krautheimer (1964).

Eusebius, V. Cont. 4.54.

Krautheimer (1986), 69-70, especially n. 5.
both a martyrual monument, and a separate mausoleum. Clustered around the *apostoleion* was a monastery, organized around a courtyard and stocked with Egyptian monks imported for the purpose.

We are now confronted by a series of coincidences which, if we could unravel them, would tie together Rufinus, Maternus Cynegius, Carranque, and the Holy Apostles. Maternus Cynegius was the only non-imperial personage ever to be buried in the real Holy Apostles, where he was laid to temporary rest in 388. A year later in 389, Maternus's widow Achantia disinterred her husband and set out with his body for the long journey westward to Spain where she intended to bury him permanently. Since its discovery, Carranque has naturally been identified as the final destination of this journey. Also traveling west in that same year was Maternus’ colleague, Rufinus, who used the opportunity to obtain Roman relics for his own apostolic memorial. If Carranque could be conclusively shown to belong to Maternus Cynegius, if the funerary complex there could be shown to be demonstratively Christian and if it does indeed date to the later fourth century, then it is possible that Carranque may represent yet another Holy Apostles-inspired creation, built, like both the original and Rufinus’ nearly contemporary project, as a combination martyrion and mausoleum.

Given the ambiguous archaeological evidence, these “ifs” can only be a series of prosopographical pipe-dreams. We can only hope that the full publication of the site will provide more definite answers. Stripped of an individual attribution and the historical information derived from it, however, the archaeology of Carranque still tends to point to a massive funerary project, probably Christian, which nonetheless resists categorization as a church. Its materials and plan all point to a highly personal funerary project, probably of eastern inspiration, so important to its patron that a preoccupation with the dead outweighed even the expense lavished on the villa spaces for the living. The problem of Carranque further illustrates that in the private sphere of the rural villa, martyrial memoria and personal mausoleum may not have been functionally separate categories, but could be combined in one monument. Indeed, some of the mausolea we examined earlier also seem to straddle the line between mausoleum and martyrion. Indications of ritual function may be evidenced from the eastern niche at Pueblanueva, or the second story of the La Alberca mausoleum, which, although it produced no altar or other furnishings, could have housed a reliquary or relic-based funerary ritual.

A private cult of relics would not necessarily leave the kind of archaeological footprint found in public martyr cult (multiple clustered burials, epigraphic commemoration, or a *fenestella confessionis*), and thus no archaeological confirmation of this theory can ever be forthcoming. Yet the textual record seems to describe the private veneration of relics as something of a late antique fad. Constantius’ translation of the relics of the apostles in 356/7 launched a rash of relic collecting which rose to fever pitch in the Theodosian period, and relics seem to have found their way into private hands as readily as onto episcopal altars. Relics were hung over beds, kept on one’s person, or placed in special structures constructed to hold them. Like the Falernian wine and Baetican oil of an earlier age, relics were also collected by and exchanged as gifts between elites, and Spanish and Gallic aristocrats were at the center of the relic-collecting rage. Indeed, one of the first documented instances of relic veneration is the early fourth-century Spaniard Lucilla, who was said to have carried with her a martyr’s bone of dubious pedigree and kissed it before taking communion. The above-mentioned Rufinus collected the relics of Peter and Paul for his private apostoleion. Paulinus of Nola acted as a broker between Sulpicius Severus and Rufinus’ sister-in-law, Silvia, during Sulpicius’ attempt to obtain relics from the Holy Land. Paulinus also sent his Gallic friend a piece of the Holy Cross, given to him by the Spanish Melania the Elder, and suggested that Sulpicius might want to hold it back from the collection beneath his church altar, “for daily protection and healing.” Indeed,

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77 Unfortunately, Rufinus met with an untimely death at the hands of Arcadius and was thrown into the sea; he was thus presumably never buried in his tomb.
78 Cons. Const. s.a. 388.1 (Burgess [1995], 242).
79 On the date of Rufinus’ trip to Rome, see Symm., *Ep.* 3,84. See also Matthews (1975), 134.
80 Mango (1990), 60.
81 Optatus, *Contra donatist.* 1,16.
83 Paulinus, *Ep.* 32.8 (ed. Hartel, CSEL 29: 283). Si vero magis placeat multa hanc de cruce beneficiarium ad collatianum tuitatem atrae medicamentum in promptius habere, ne tamen condita in alio loco, non semper ad manum, ut visum erit.
one of Sulpicius' churches at his estate of Primuliacum was specifically constructed in anticipation of holding relics, perhaps the body of Martin which he failed to obtain, or his more successful bids for the corpse of Martin's follower, Clarus, and unspecified materials from the Holy Land. Comments dropped by Paulinus suggest this church may have additionally been a "family" church, that is, a family burial church, although whether the "family" was Sulpicius' blood relatives or his new monastic familia is not clear.

Thus, while the majority of rural Hispania's Christian architecture seems to fit most comfortably in the category of mausoleum, many of these structures include a more elaborate architectural setting that would not be out of keeping with a private cult of relics. The widespread popularity of relics among elite Christians and a certain interest in bonding one's personal memoria with that of the saints makes this possibility logical, if not archaeologically demonstrable. The possibility should, however, make us aware that the dearly held art historical division between mausoleum and martyrium may have been permeable in the private sphere.

Just as the functional aspects of these rural Christian buildings show a surprising variety and complexity, so, too, do their designs and construction techniques. Unlike the garden-variety plans and generally modest materials of Spain's urban churches, the peninsula's rural commemorative monuments display a dizzying array of plans and materials, many of them otherwise unknown in Hispania. While standard designs can be found within the corpus, Hispania's countryside also boasted a number of real Christian architectural oddities, displaying plans that were either rare or unique for their date. Centrally-planned structures enveloped by ambulatories like that of Pueblanueva were found only in the imperial capitals and the Holy Land by the late fourth century; their wider dissemination took place only later. The two-story La Alberca mausoleum bristling with external piers is the only example of its kind in the West, a lone pioneer far from its Dalmatian homeland. Similarly the foregoing analysis of the main Carranque structure has demonstrated the difficulty of finding any clear parallels for its plan either East or West.

Similarly far from home are the vaulting techniques used to construct some of these rural memoria. Pitched-brick vaulting was used to construct the crypt vaults at Pueblanueva, La Alberca, and the main vaulting at Carranque. Pitched brick was an eastern innovation, probably from the coasts of Asia Minor, that had spread only as far as Dalmatia and perhaps Milan by the mid to later fourth century. The rest of the West, including Rome, continued to cling to its own western traditions of vault construction, using opus caementicum in combination with amphorae or tubes, while the brick vaults of Ravenna would appear only in the mid-fifth century or later.

The preponderance of "eastern" borrowings in these buildings would thus seem to call for some special comment, as would the general question of what might be called architectural "influence." As Reynolds' study in this volume makes clear, direct trade with the East, as evidenced by the ceramic record, only reaches any notable volume somewhat later, in the fifth century. Before that, Hispania's anima ties continued to be directed towards Gaul and Rome and thus, from the point of view of trade and economy, fourth-century Hispania enjoyed no particularly close ties with the eastern Mediterranean. Furthermore, the eastern plans and techniques found in fourth-century Spain were dead ends, never entering the subsequent mainstream of later Spanish architecture nor even migrating to the cities, but rather remaining frozen in time and space on rural estates. Rather than ascribing the eastern features of these monuments to a broadly-based notion of artistic or cultural influence, it would be better to see them as monuments of individual experience and inspiration. The unusual plans, materials and techniques seem to be relics of interaction with other, probably well-known monuments, expressions of influence exerted on single, cosmopolitan individuals.

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88 See Dygge and Egger (1939).
Prospective mausoleum patrons seem to have taken memories of such monuments back with them to their Spanish estates, along with a certain amount of materials and local labor, to construct their own versions of foreign monuments.

Just as Hispania's rural Christian monuments present structural and material differences from the peninsula's urban churches, they also seem to present a slightly different chronology. With the possible exception of La Alberca, which is dated somewhat earlier, the whole of the rural Christian corpus has been dated to the late fourth or early fifth century. Certain monuments, such as Pueblanueva, Marialba, Villa Fortunatus and La Cocosa, have been more firmly dated than others and re-excavation would undoubtedly alter chronologies based principally on architectural style. However, if the proposed dates are to be trusted, rural Christian buildings in Hispania had their heyday a generation or more before urban basilicas began to appear in any numbers. That is, while most of the rural structures described above were seemingly built between 375 and the 420s, urban basilicas enter the scene in significant numbers only in the second or third decades of the fifth century, if not later.

This chronology of Christian rural buildings thus roughly matches the final and most prodigious boom of villa construction in the peninsula. As nearly all of these Christian structures are associated with villas, the flurry of Christian building may be associated with a general flourishing of rural building culture. Indeed, contemporary with the construction of these great Christian monuments was a more limited number of pagan villa-temples. While these temples were largely limited to southern Lusitania, and may have served orna-

mental as much as cultic purposes, their presence describes a Spanish world where religious building generally had relocated to a new center of material gravity, the rural estate. The great villas with their overabundance of reception and dining rooms, their endless mosaic floors and manic obsession with apses, domes and all manner of unusual shapes, formed an elite sign language, where buildings, like letters, served to bond the island that was the rural estate to the greater web of aristocratic culture and identity. Temples, churches and mausolea were, in one sense, simply an extension of a built culture that flourished in Hispania more fully than in any other western province. That is, the strong rural component in Spain's early Christian architecture is in part an outgrowth of its unusually strong villa system.

Overall, the above conclusions point to a rural Christian building tradition centered on elite Christian burial and martyr cult, and marked by enormous material and architectural sophistication. This phenomenon seems to have preceded the urban church building effort by as much as half a century. The next question then becomes, how unusual is this? Is this picture of an early, rural, private memorial culture, and a generally later, more impoverished urban ecclesiastical architecture, echoed elsewhere in the Roman West? A survey of Christian fourth- and fifth-century buildings in the West finds it to be very unusual indeed. Gaul, including Aquitaine and the Pyrenees region, has produced only a few rural Christian monuments of this period, most of modest rectangular form, although a few examples, such as the large villa basilica with baptistery at Loupian in Hérault, or the small mausoleum/shrine at the villa of Vandoeuvres near Geneva, more closely echo the elaborate Spanish monuments. Thus, the late fourth-century Gallic countryside seems to have witnessed

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55 See Chavarria in this volume.
56 Five definite examples have been unearthed, all but one in Lusitania: Midreu, São Cucufate, Los Castillejos, Olião, and Carranca. Midreu: Schunk and Hauschild (1978), 111–12; Hauschild (1993), 165–76; Deutsches Archäologisches Institut (1994), 647; São Cucufate: Alarcão, Étienne and Mayet (1990), 127–30; Los Castillejos: Aguilar Saenz and Guichard (1993), 40–41; Olião: M. Santos (1972), 263–77; Carranca: Fernández-Gaiano and Ayllón (2001). All five are rectangular, apsed structures and the first four are encircled by a gallery, like the so-called Umgangsstätten of Gaul and Germany. None of these temples, however, has produced any epigraphic or other evidence that would indicate clear cultic use. Given that at least one (Midreu) has been identified as a symphéna, the nymphaeum, and that nymphaeums seem to straddle the line between ornamental pleasure rooms and cultic buildings, it may be that these structures do not represent any real pagan activity, but merely a regional ornamental lid.

57 On elite rural culture, see inter alia Schneider (1983), with Morand (1994) on the careful use of images to describe dominial power; Balmelle (2001) on the great villas and villa owners of Aquitaine; Roberts (1994) and Fontaine (1972), for some ways in which letters and poetry bound the landed elite to each other and to their rural environment.
58 Examples include mausolea at La Celle (Var) and possibly the crypt at Saint-Maximin (Var), On La Celle: Demains d’Archembault et al. (1995); Brus (1999), 1: 333–38; 2: 835–40; on Saint Maximin: Favier (1995). For a survey of the villas of Aquitaine, which have thus far not produced any clear Christian monuments, see Balmelle (2001).
some Christian aristocratic building, but on a far more modest scale. Further afield, a few scattered parallels for the great Spanish rural monuments can be found in the circular church with baptistery accompanying the villa at Palazzo Pignano, dated tentatively to the mid-fifth century, or the similarly-dated memoria at the villa of Muline (Ugjan) on the Dalmatian coast. The best comparisons would seem to appear in the Roman suburbium; however, the great mausolea associated with Roman suburban villas are largely pagan, while the Christian elite opted to build their mausolea adjacent to martyr shrines.

However, while individual or even small groups of villa-based Christian memorials may be found in these regions, no other region counts rural Christian monuments as its most important or most numerous examples of the genre. In Gaul, Italy and the eastern Adriatic, urban and suburban churches provide the earliest and richest examples of Christian architecture. All three areas saw the construction of a few extensive and important urban episcopal centers in the fourth century and the widespread construction of churches in other urban centers in the early fifth century. Church building in the countryside was a later affair, usually of the later fifth or sixth century. A fourth-century, rural Christian memorial culture simply does not play as important a role in these regions' Christian topography as it does in Hispania.

The only region that is similarly marked by a villa-based Christian material culture is Britain. The fourth-century Romano-British elite were, like their Spanish counterparts, invested heavily in the material elaboration of their villas, and the zenith of Romano-British art in the fourth-century was umbilically linked to this villa culture.

Christian material culture, although it trailed the heyday of the villa by some two decades, was likewise strongly tied to the rural elite. From the small chapel at Lullingstone and the baptismal font in a Wiltshire villa to the many pieces of chi-rho inscribed jewelry, silver and mosaics from villas, Britain’s rural elite created a Christian material culture richer than that of its small, somewhat primitive urban churches. Thus, the Romano-British elite seem to have shared with its Spanish coevals a desire to use the estate as a locus for Christian material expression, although declining to indulge in the latter’s Christian architectural fantasies. By contrast, the Gallic elite, closer to Hispania both geographically and culturally, and similarly invested in villa culture generally, did not share this particular preoccupation to the same degree.

In conclusion, Hispania’s early Christian archaeology exhibits some unusual features, particularly in its topographic diversity. Hispania’s fourth and early fifth centuries witnessed an explosion of Christian building in the countryside, and moderate growth of urban shrines and basilicas, the result being that, in purely material terms, the rural sphere vied with the urban as a focal point of Christian material culture. Important functional differences separated urban and rural Christian building: rural Christian structures were chiefly mausolea and/or martyr shrines and generally private in function, while urban centers consisted of public episcopal and martyrial basilicas. Rural memorials were very often constructed with materials or designs of eastern or extra-peninsular origin, and certain aspects of their construction may point to ritual use that blurred the boundary between personal memorial and martyrial commemoration. City churches on the other hand were fully in the mainstream of western basilican building, although the development of a monumental urban topography may have lagged a decade or so behind other western provinces.

These divergences among urban and rural, public and private lines may indicate an asymmetrical attraction of Christian resources towards the countryside. Given the generally later, more modest urban shrines, we might also suggest that Spanish elites chose to invest their pious capital in the private, rather than the public sphere. This may further

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90 On Palazzo Pignano, see Pasini Pitcher (1990); on Muline, see Sui (1960); Chevalier (1996), 1: 96–98.
91 On villa-mausolea with late antique phases from the suburbs of Rome see di Gennaro and Griesbach (2003), 145–45; Rea (2003), 251–56; and Volpe (2003), 226–28.
92 For example, the imperial villa of Maxentius with its accompanying mausoleum. Indeed, the tetrarchic emperors seem by preference to have placed their monumental mausolea in proximity to palatial villas in much the same way the Spanish elite did. See Waurick (1973). However, the practice came to an end with the advent of Christianity, when imperial mausolea were built adjacent to churches, rather than residential complexes. See M. Johnson (1986).
indicate that urban episcopal centers, with their martyr shrines and cathedral churches, did not command the energetical attentions of elites, a problem which may have exacerbated the slow architectonic development of episcopal centers. The last decades of the fourth century saw a marked acceleration in Christian conversion among the senatorial aristocracy, including that of Hispania. The wealth of these new converts would prove critical in the expansion, both material and spiritual, of the later church. In Hispania, the archaeological record would seem to find these elites keeping their building capital close to home, while the traces of their energetical activities in the urban, public churches are harder to trace. The impact that this imbalance of resources and attention may have had on the later development of Christianity in the peninsula will concern us next.

2 Christian communities: bishops and the landed aristocracy

Hispania's built Christian topography was thus marked by two centers of gravity, an urban center of bishops, slow-growing and of modest resources, and a rural center of landed elites who directed their Christian building efforts not towards the urban episcopate, but towards their own rural estates. As we have seen, it is this bifurcated topography, especially its strong rural element, which lends Spain's Christian archaeology its peculiar quality. This further suggests that the relationship between episcopal communities and rural elite communities had a formative influence on the course of Christian development in Hispania. Yet maps are not territory, and the topography of Christian material culture can only hint at the many relationships that bound or separated these two communities. This landscape can only be fully re-peopled by texts, texts already well-worn by scholarly study, yet still rich in evidence of episcopal-elite relationships. What follows, then, is an examination of bishops and lay Christians in Hispania with the specific aim of illuminating the nature of Christian communities in city and country. The community centered on the bishop was just one of several Christian com-

munal identities current in fourth-century Hispania. Spanish elite concepts of Christian community did not necessarily revolve around local bishops and their churches, but on networks that drew elites both out of the peninsula to external sources of holiness, and inward to the interconnected world of the landed estate, leaving the local bishop in only a supporting role between them.

While this re-analysis of the well-trodden textual material will apply the new lessons culled from archaeological material, some problems remain. Most significantly, the relative absence of sources from Hispania continues to require the use of some Aquitanian sources, particularly those that document elite-episcopal relationships outside the sphere of heretical controversy. Despite the close cultural ties that bound Aquitaine with its sister across the Pyrenees, particularly the overwhelming importance of elite villa culture to both regions, the Christian material remains of each region are significantly distinct. Thus, the hazards of using Gallic source material to describe what is already a self-confessedly "different" Hispania are probably worse than generally imagined. And yet, there is no help for it, other than to reduce Gallic material to a supporting role as much as possible and to recognize that in certain instances, over-heavy Gallic seasoning may be drowning out local Spanish flavors.

2.1 Bishops and episcopal communities

Bishops in fourth-century Hispania were relatively rare. A glance at the episcopal map of early-fifth-century Spain tells a simple tale: with the exception of Baetica, bishops in Hispania were few and far between (Fig. 17). Clustered around their early forerunners in centurias capitals, the thirty bishops known from the early fifth century generally paralleled the peninsula's demographics, with a greater density of centers in northeast Tarracoensis, eastern Gallaecia, and the highly urbanized Baetica. Exceptions include the great villa bel

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56 Salzman (2001), 90-93, has quantified this trend, placing the majority of conversions in the 360s or later. Barnes (2002b) has sharply criticized her methodology, claiming that it seriously underrepresents pre-Gratianic conversions.

57 The number of bishoprics in Baetica/southeastern Carthaginien is often overestimated, as the many presbyteries present at the early fourth-century council of Elvira are erroneously assumed to have represented episcopal centers. There is no evidence to support this supposition, and indeed, none of these centers ever became bishoprics in subsequent centuries. Thus, the total number of Baetican/south Carthaginien bishops in the fourth century should be 14. See also Sotomayor (2002).
of the upper Duero which had few urban centers and no bishops, and Lusitania where the bishops of Mérida, Lisbon and Faro were left with a number of important cities and huge swaths of villa-rich land to supervise. In any case it was, by western standards, a thinly spread affair. In neighboring Gaul, the ratio of bishops to land area was 1:7,400km². In Italy, one might expect to find a bishop every 3,400km². In Hispania, however, bishoprics were scattered on average every 15,000km². The comparatively low number of historically-attested Spanish bishops might be chalked up to the absence of Spanish conciliar records from the fifth century, as these are the principal evidence for episcopal expansion elsewhere. However, even when the evidence for such councils resumes in the sixth century and the additional documented bishoprics are added to the total, Hispania remains a starkly under-bishoped province by any standard. The Spanish bishop would thus have found his geographic area of responsibility much larger than that of his Gallic or Italian colleagues, and his hold on the furthest regions of his diocese would have depended very much upon his personal interest and energies.

Unfortunately, the interests and energies of Spanish bishops remain shrouded in mystery. Hispania produced no great writer-bishops, no Augustine or Ambrose, and what little we know of the fourth-century episcopate comes largely from non-Spanish sources, particularly through the records of two theological controversies, the Arian controversy of the 350s and 360s, and the Frisillianist debate of the 380s. As Escribano emphasizes in this volume, these two battles may have been part of the same doctrinal squabble. However, the stage on which the debates took place and the relationship between the bishops in question and their lay counterparts changed significantly in the intervening twenty years.

Hispania’s best-known and most influential fourth-century bishop was Ossius of Córdoba, whose sixty-three years on the episcopal throne were spent in the battle against Arianism. However, Ossius’ energies were largely directed outside the peninsula. A portion of his long episcopate was spent in the East espousing the Nicene cause or being railroaded out of it, and evidence for his local Spanish activities is hard to trace. Although he attended the council of Elvira, he did not preside over it and it has proven impossible to ferret from its canons any of Ossius’ at-home episcopal style. Ossius

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99 Criteria: bishoprics attested prior to the mid-fifth century; only those attested through epigraphic, synodal or other textual reference were included; bishops known only from local tradition, dubious episcopal lists, or assumed from the presence of martyr cult, were not included. Data for Gaul from Duchesne [1990-1915]. Total bishop: 74; land mass: 547,030km². The Notitia Galliarum is not a reliable record of late fourth-/early fifth-century episcopates and was not used in this calculation: Harries (1978).

99 Data taken from Lanzoni (1923). Bishoprics: 89; land mass: 301,323km². Included were bishops first attested at the Council of Rome, 465. When these bishops are excluded, the density is 1:4,600km².

100 Data from Videy (2002), plus the sees of Egara (450), Calagurris (457), Roes (fifth-c.?) and Illipa (466). For the latter two, see Aguillo (1953), no. 82 and González (2001), respectively. Total bishop: 94; land mass: 504,782km². From the Council of Elvira, only those sees represented by a bishop are included.

101 That such new unattested councils did take place is suggested by testimony of Fronto, in Aug. Ep. 115, on which see below.

102 Some twelve new episcopates appear for the first time in the first quarter of the sixth century.

103 De Clercq (1954), 115–17.
did, however, preside over the council of Serdica in 343 and the unusually detailed transmission of that council's record provides a more intimate glimpse of the bishop at work. Although it is impossible to gauge the degree to which legislation proposed in far-away Illyricum was prompted by any Spanish experience, a number of the canons personally sponsored by Ossius are particularly interesting for this investigation, as they find further resonance with later Spanish activities.\footnote{On Spain, Ossius and Serdica, see Fernández Ubiña (2001), 173–76; Chadwick (1978), 5; De Clercq (1954), 397–401.} Canon 2 censored covetous bishops who tried to obtain promotion to more prestigious sees by garnering lay support. The ability of local laymen to push through their favorite candidates was a generic problem, yet Ossius' concerns would prove especially prophetic in Hispania, where thirty years later the lay-promoted and supported Priscillian would jump into the episcopal scene. Given Ossius' worries in 343, one wonders if Priscillian was only the tip of the iceberg.

Another canon with important Spanish resonance addressed landowning bishops, particularly those from poor sees (canon 15, Latin text). Such bishops were permitted to leave their see to attend to their private estates for three weeks per year, providing they did not attend church in the local city and thus offend its bishop. The dispensation was made with the hope that the bishops' estates would contribute to the local poor, and the time limit was imposed to rein in overly entrepreneurial bishops. The landowning bishop is presented here as a familiar creature, and a particular problem in nascent, poor dioceses. Could Ossius have Hispania in mind? In only twelve years time, one of Ossius' rivals, Potamius of Lisbon, was said to have traded his pro-Nicene orthodoxy for a fundus fiscalis offered him by the emperor, a nefarious deal that only highlights the other side of Ossius' charitable bishop/farmers: land in the Roman world equaled both wealth and power, commodities that the embryonic Spanish episcopate probably could not yet offer its prelates, who were thus forced to moonlight, even speculating on their creed in order to maintain status.\footnote{On Potamius' fundus, see Libellus Precum 32 = Coll. Aevi 2 (ed. Guenther, CSEL 35: 14). Conti (1998), 21, suggests the story may be fabricated.} Nonetheless, it would be perilous to assume that episcopal poverty plagued only the Spanish church; the many similar canons handed down by councils throughout the fourth and fifth centuries point to an endemic problem which Spanish bishops undoubtedly shared with many of their brethren in other provinces.

Like Ossius, other Spanish bishops known from the first half of the fourth century are presented as actors on the great Arian-versus-Nicene stage, with no indication of the character of their local diocese or their relationships with their flocks. With the advent of the Priscillianist controversy, however, local communities and particularly elite-lay relationships come to the fore. The laymen who were completely absent from the earlier controversies suddenly spring to life in starring roles.\footnote{García Moreno (1991), 225–26.} The countryside, which had been largely absent from earlier urban-based narratives, becomes the stage upon which the drama of heresy is set. The evidence for a certain fictional, if not doctrinal, continuity between the Arian/Nicene problems of the 360s and 370s and Priscillianism is quite convincing.\footnote{See Escribano in this volume.} And yet the nature of the protagonists and the topography they occupied seems to have changed dramatically. This may simply be an evidentiary bias, as the sources for the Arian troubles of the 360s are scarce and of second-hand nature, while those for Priscillianism are comparatively rich and multi-faceted. However, the change may also reflect a significant new reality, namely, the accelerated conversion of the landed elite that took place during the 380s. Suddenly, the lay Christian aristocrat was a force to be reckoned with, and in Hispania gave the peninsula's "national heresy" its defining shape.

Much of Priscillian's controversial career as confessor, acetic leader and preacher was spent in layman's garb, and his sudden and irregular elevation to the episcopate of Ávila bore all the hallmarks of political maneuvering and none of episcopal administration or ministry.\footnote{On the man, Chadwick's masterly discussion (Chadwick [1978], ch 1), has been amended by Burrus (1995), ch. 1, particularly in the latter's emphasis on Priscillian's lay status as the real challenge to the episcopate.} This layman from a familia nobilitatis was almost certainly a local landowner, possibly in Lusitania.\footnote{While Gallacia is often given as Priscillian's home base, the origins of the conflict were in Boetica and Lusitania and it is here that his support network was probably most powerful. See Chadwick (1978), 11 and Escribano (1988), 184.} Well-educated and persuasive, he counted among his devoted followers two bishops of unknown sees, male and female members of the landed elite, as well as common...
folk. The heterogeneity of his constituency was the heterogeneity of the rural Lusitanian world, a world of wealthy, probably newly converted domini and dominas, and of coloni whose faith was tied to that of their masters. Added to this volatile mixture was the heady power of a new asceticism, all the rage among Christian aristocrats from Cappadocia to Rome. Priscillian's particular brand of asceticism was anchored in a rural world. Because of his rural retreats and prayer meetings, his accusers could allege fertility rituals and agrarian magic, and from his inclusion of powerful female dominas, the bookkeepers and eagle-eyed managers of the rural estate, would emerge allegations of sexual deviancy and abortion.

Priscillian's particular rural world of Lusitania also had a particular episcopal flavor. It was desperately short on bishops, bishops who, as we have already noted, found great swathes of countryside under their theoretical control, but almost certainly beyond their direct management. Priscillian's see, Ávila, sat in an especially deep rural heartland, far from the hostile bishoprics to the south. Thus, Priscillian's movement embraced a countryside largely untouched by episcopal presence, making his message all the more authoritative and thus all the more threatening to an overtaxed episcopal system. Whatever their doctrinal motivations, it is also important to remember that the majority of the Priscillianist battles were waged not in church council, but in the secular courtroom. The first salvo was fired on church ground at the council of Zaragoza (379), a council which Priscillian and his followers refused to attend. Frustrated by the council's inability to judge the heretics in absentia, Hydatius of Mérida and Ithacius of Faro took their complaints to a secular court. Although the two bishops may have initiated the change from episcopal to secular venue, it was a move they would later regret. Their appeal to the iudices seculares was blocked. A later rescript issued by Gratian was overturned. And then they became the hunted: Priscillian and his followers accused Ithacius of being a "disturber of the church" before a handpicked and friendly governor of Lusitania, and when that move was blocked, he arranged to have Ithacius tried before the vicarius of Hispania himself. As manipulators of the local secular arm, the bishops of Mérida and Faro simply could not compete with Priscillian, whose connections in the Spanish capital far exceeded even that of its own bishop. Only with the chance death of Gratian and the rise to power of the insecure Maximus did the Priscillianists find the secular arm they had so deftly twisted turn definitively against them. Important, too, is the fact that the Priscillianists' temporary setbacks—Gratian's rescript and a hostile praetorian prefect—also took place in judicial courts outside the peninsula, where presumably their local power networks were weaker. As a local powerbroker, Priscillian the lay aristocrat seems to have wielded a far bigger stick than did his episcopal peers.

The soap-opera related in Consentius' letter to Augustine, dated to 420/421, describes a strikingly similar situation. The drama is billed as another Priscillianist plot, but by this time the Priscillianist label had attached itself to a whole range of disciplinary and factional disputes, and it seems clear that this Tarracennian-based conflict had nothing to do with the earlier movement. Nonetheless, the relationships between pious laymen and local bishops preserve much of the earlier controversy's flavor. First, the entire drama was staged through the efforts of Consentius, a layman from the Balearic islands whose self-confessed idleness did not prevent him from sending his monk-spy, Fronto, to spread discord amongst the Tarracennian episcopate. Fronto narrates an incredible story, the center of which was one Severus, a powerful and wealthy landowner, a presbyter of Huesca and the head of the alleged "Priscillianists." In a tale more comic than believable, Severus loses his "sacred
books" to barbarian raiders when riding out to his Huescan estate. Severus' neighboring bishops, Sagittius of Lérida and Syagrius of Huesca, the latter of the locally powerful Syagrii, are both in his pocket and both work to help him hide the damning books. The ensuing trial is a farce, Fronto is unmasked as a spy and narrowly escapes mob violence, and Severus and his episcopal friends are all forgiven.

While the tale is absurd, and many of its details may be fabrication, the social dynamic is probably true to form. The rural estate is again a center of action, this time as the retreat and spiritual center of the wealthy Severus. Here, the landed elite are already enmeshed in the episcopal system as either bishops or clerics. However, episcopal obligation takes a second seat to ties of aristocratic amicitia and patronage that bind the bishops Sagittius and Syagrius to Severus, particularly in the face of charges by an outsider, Fronto. Severus even involves the secular arm, his brother-in-law the comes Hispaniarum, Asterius, although unlike the original Priscillianists, Severus' allies within the episcopal court are so disposed toward him that the comital presence is ultimately unnecessary.

The maneuverings of Priscillian and the debacle orchestrated by Consentius find laymen, particularly the landowning elite, at the center of ecclesiastical relationships. Their role, however, cannot be understood simply as part of the increasing elite participation in the episcopate. Priscillian, Syagrius and Sagittius show no interest in wielding the bishop's scepter to carve out church communities centered on episcopal power, binding a body of faithful together through church discipline and church law. That is, unlike an Ambrose or a Martin, their power was wielded not primarily through the episcopate and its grounding in apostolic and scriptural authority, but through networks of powerful friends, bonded to them by ties of patronage and amicitia. These traditional networks were in and of themselves communities, communities much older than the still-nascent episcopate, and in Hispania they were the glue that knit together a powerful landowning class. These communities might readily overlap with that centered on the episcopate and share membership and values, but the governing rules of each were essentially distinct and, in the early fifth century, power was still far more effectively wielded through communities bonded by land, wealth and patronage than those guaranteed by the apostolic succession. The same lack of interest in a purely church-centered community may also lie behind Hispania's repeated problems with rapid episcopal promotions based on status and patronage, rather than on promotion through the church-defined cursus. Priscillian, it will be remembered, jumped from layman to bishop solely through popular support, blatantly ignoring the council of Nicaea's requirement that the wealthy and powerful should proceed through the regular clerical grades. In 384, perhaps in response to Priscillian's rule-breaking, bishop Himerius of Tarragona wrote to Pope Siricius complaining, among other things, of a patent disregard for the clerical cursus. In 385, Paulinus (not yet of Nola) emerged from lay oecumen on his wife's estates in Tarracoensis to be ordained as a presbyter in Barcelona. Not only did he manage to skip the intervening clerical grades, but he also wriggled out of the service responsibilities which should have required him to stay in the church that ordained him. Indeed, the new cleric of Barcelona left for Italy soon after, never to return, and his cold reception by Pope Siricius as he passed through Rome may have been a tacit condemnation of yet further Spanish indifference to episcopal protocol. While even the ultimate upstart, Ambrose of Milan, had nodded to ecclesiastical protocol by squeezing his clerical cursus into the week preceding his hasty ordination, Spanish bishops seemed to have dodged even the pretense of conformity.

Thus, the fourth-century Spanish episcopate was a community that had not wholly come into its own. The mid-fourth-century prelates, embroiled in the Arian controversy, seem to have spent little time

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121 While one reading claims the letter is simply a patchwork borrowed from romance and hagiography (Moreau [1983]), most scholars have accepted that the basics of the tale are probably true, but perhaps heavily ornamented.

122 See Garcia Moreno (1991), 237.


124 This was Burrus' conclusion from the results of the earlier Priscillianist struggles. While the events related by Consentius have little to do with "Priscillianism," Burrus' description of a struggle between public and private value systems similarly describes this later controversy.

125 See Chadwick (1978), 33-34.

126 The complaint is reconstructed from Siricius' reply, Siricius, Ep. 1.10 (PL 13: 1143).

127 Paulinus, Ep. 1.10; 3.4.

nurturing and disciplining their own flocks. The poverty of their sees or their own self-interest may have kept them focused on personal estate management alongside their episcopal duties. The increased pace of elite conversion in the 380s brought with it an interest in ascetic, particularly rural, villa-based asceticism, whose compatibility with aristocratic ideals of otium made it at least as attractive a Christian option as the still-feebler episcopate. The phenomenon that was Priscillian presented a considerable challenge to this city-bound, thinly spread episcopal system. For Priscillian stood for a different kind of Christian community, one whose rigorist elitism and rural asceticism stood sharply at odds with the all-embracing, integrated communities bishops strove to construct. Yet even outside ascetic societies, Spanish elites found the transition from secular to episcopal hierarchies difficult, as the network of patronage and friendship consistently trumped purely church-based power structures. One wonders if the continued strength of the curiales in Spanish cities denied bishops the broader organizational powers they enjoyed in other provinces, such as Italy, suffering from heavy urban blight. In any case, it was only in the later fifth century that the power and numbers of the Spanish episcopate began to truly grow.

We should note again that these problems facing the Spanish episcopate were not unique to Spain. Irregular ordination, the challenges presented by asceticism, even episcopal poverty and the slow growth of episcopal sees, were dilemmas faced by bishops from Dalmatia to Carthage. Spanish bishops seem to have simply confronted a larger hydra with more heads. The combination of the sparsest episcopal network in the West, and one perhaps composed of poorly-endowed sees, with a Christian aristocracy unusually invested in its estates and its own elite power networks, made an already difficult episcopal adolescence significantly worse, and made its growth to adulthood significantly slower than in other provinces.

This image of a slow-growing episcopate, surrounded by a wealthy elite whose contribution to episcopal affairs was fractured at best, dovetails neatly with the archaeological picture. The relatively late construction of episcopal churches and martyr shrines in the cities, the paucity of evidence for urban eunergetism by a Christian elite, and the richness of rural Christian architecture, reflect the divergent impulses between rural and urban, public and private, which shine through the textual material. The second decade of the fifth century saw both the appearance of the earliest urban basilicas in Tarraconensis and the participation of elites like Syagrius and Severus in the clergy. Yet this same period also witnessed the construction of the villa-church at Villa Fortunatus, set, like Severus' villa, between the episcopal sees at Huesca and Lérida, its private, pseudo-crypt a reminder of the continued power of the rural private holy. And just to the north at Coscojuela a presbyter-domus, probably much like Severus himself, was buried beneath a fine sepulchral mosaic, his choice of villa graveyard over urban martyr shrine emblematic of the divisive effects the rural, private holy might have on the growing Church community.\textsuperscript{129}

\section*{2.2 Non-episcopal elites and communities}

If the episcopate and episcopally-centered communities exerted only a mild attraction on Spanish elite Christians, what other options existed for organizing Christian life? To answer this, we must turn now from the episcopate to the non-episcopal elite and examine their various Christian experiences. The "non-episcopal elite" is a purposefully shapeless category, embracing laymen, ascetics and lower-level clergy, whose specific place in the church hierarchy differed, but who shared an elite culture shaped by patronage, friendship, education and common literary/artistic traditions. This was the "coterie espagnole pieuse" of Constantinopolitan circles, such as Maternus Cynegius or Nummius Aemilianus Dexter; it was writers and poets like Orosius and Prudentius, ascetics such as Melania the Elder, and pilgrims, the famous Egeria or the more enigmatic Poëmæ.\textsuperscript{131} Most of these elites were members of the senatorial aristocracy, many seemingly related by blood or marriage to the Theodosian gens. The non-episcopal elites also included the nameless Christians who built the great villa memorials of the Spanish countryside. As Chavarría

\textsuperscript{129} See Kulikowski's piece in this volume. For Italy, see Brugioni and Gelichi (1996).

\textsuperscript{131} On Coscojuela, see Fernández-Galiano (1987), 65–66.

\textsuperscript{131} Useful summaries of this Christian elite's activities can now be found in Vilella (2002); Bravo (1997); Teja (1997).
suggests in this volume, many of these villa owners may also have been members of the senatorial class. However, we should beware of overly-narrow categorizations, as the status of many textually-attested figures is unknown, while lower-status elites, as we can see them through humbler villas, seem to share many of the values and behaviors of their senatorial brethren. While bishops assume brief, walk-on roles in the historical record, Hispania’s non-episcopal elite were major protagonists in many of the fourth- and fifth-century’s greatest dramas.  

And yet, this has always been part of the problem. Spain’s Christian elite become historically visible only when they leave Hispania; and as many of these Spaniards spent the majority of their lives outside the peninsula, the Hispanitas of persons such as Melania the Elder, Aelia Flaccilla or Maternus Cynegius would seem, as McLynn has demonstrated for Theodosius, only skin-deep. And yet, these pietistic habits may be meaningful in their own right. Many Spaniards who departed the peninsula for foreign shores seem possessed of a particular Christian curiositas, a desire to seek out special sources of holiness. Egeria’s Holy Land odyssey is the most famous, a journey undertaken for both edification and inner spiritual vision, but the later years of the fourth century saw many of her countrymen set sail with similar aims. Orosius left Braga, abandoning his presbyterian post there in search of knowledge, a heresiologist’s education he felt only Augustine could offer, and continued his schooling at Jerome’s knee in Jerusalem. Bragans were on the move in those years, for Orosius reports that two members of the Avitus family departed from that city, one heading to Rome, the other to Jerusalem. Both were looking for doctrinal direction and found it, returning home with books by Victorinus and Origen, respectively. Also sent book-hunting were six Spanish scribes, dispatched to Jerome by the Baetican couple Lucinius and Theodora for the purpose of copying the famous scholar’s works.

While some left the peninsula seeking holy knowledge, others went in search of holy presence. Paulinus of Nola, although tied to the peninsula only by property and marriage, nonetheless spent his formative ascetic years in Tarracentensis, and buried his infant son with the martyrs at Complutum. Yet oddly, neither his son’s spirit nor the offer of a priesthood in the church of Barcelona were sufficient inducement to stay in Hispania, for the voice of Saint Felix at Nola called to him more insistently than did any of Prudentius’ much-praised Tarracentensis martyrs. Rufinus’ sister-in-law, Silvia, of either Gallic or Spanish roots, seems to have traveled in the East on a relic-hunting mission, charged with procuring relics for Sulpicius Severus’ new church at Primumacum near Toulouse.

Holy travel was, like asceticism, very much in vogue in these years: pious Christians of means seem to have flocked to holy sites and holy men, and the Spanish were no exception. And yet, what effect did the allure of the foreign have on local, Spanish sources of holiness whose impresarios, the local bishops, were unusually few and weak? Examples of local Spanish eremitism are meager in comparison with the floods of money and devotion flowing eastward. Prudentius spread the news of Spanish martyrs to the world and yet in his time their public, urban shrines remained relatively undistinguished while prospective patrons, such as Paulinus or Poenina, built martyr shrines abroad. Lucinius and Theodora did spare part of their fortune for the churches of Baetica, although the lion’s share seems to have been dispatched, along with their scribes, to the Holy Land. The Jerusalem expatriate Avitus remembered his Bragan church and posted home a part of the newly-found relics of Saint Stephen. As he seemed loath to leave the East himself, he placed them in the unreliable hands of Orosius, who never returned to Spain but

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120 As noted by Fontaine (1997), 69.
122 On Egeria’s purpose, see Hunt (1982), 86–89; 120–23. On Spaniards seeking spiritual direction outside the peninsula, see Torres Rodríguez (1988), 82. The evidence in favor of her Gallican origins is summarized by Wilkinson (1999), 1–4. I am unconvinced by attempts to relocate her to Gaul, e.g. Sivan (1988).
123 Oros., Comm. 2. See also Arce in this volume.
124 Oros., Comm. 3. Altaner (1988) suggests that the two Aviti described by Orosius need not have been from Braga itself, but rather from Hispania more generally.
125 Jerome, Epp. 71 and 75.
127 Paulinus, Ep. 31.1.
128 Jerome, Ep. 75.4. See also Ep. 71.
129 PL 41: 805–818. On the identity of the various Aviti see Torres Rodríguez (1983), 21–24 and Altaner (1985). The latter also provides a detailed reconstruction of Avitus of Braga’s travels, which included as much as fifteen years in Constantinople and Jerusalem.
scattered the relics between Minorca and North Africa. And Prudentius, while he claimed to be too poor to give the local church any monetary support, could at least offer his advertising services and advice.\footnote{Prud. Epilogue 5.7–10. On his advice to the local bishop Valerian, see Peristeph. 9.} The further extent of such acts are obscured by the lack of any local episcopal chronicles, yet on the face of it, the hearts and the pockets of Hispania’s pious elite were frequently drawn elsewhere, to extra-peninsular sources of holiness.\footnote{The poverty of the Spanish episcopate has been commented upon by Arce (1982a), 145–46, although his corollary, that the poor episcopate reflects a largely impoverished Hispania (ch. 5), is harder to accept.}

The problem did not go unnoticed. The presbyter Vigilantius, originally a friend of Paulinus and Sulpicius Severus, returned from the Holy Land full of disgust, making his way back to his native see of Saint-Bertrand-de-Comminges in southern Aquitaine.\footnote{See Massé (1980), particularly for the identification of his see as Saint-Bertrand.} There, he penned an angry circular decrying not only the cult of relics, which he described as “a bit of powder wrapped in cloth,” but also the lamentable economic effects foreign relic-mania had had on local communities. He forbade local Christians from sending monies to the East, insisting that it be spent on the local “sitting poor.”\footnote{Jerome gives it as Calagurris, where he says Vigilantius was born, but Calagurris is only a munis, while the capital of the region, and its bishopric, is at Saint-Bertrand. The main sources for Vigilantius are Jerome, Ep. 58.11; 61; 109; and Contra Vigilantium. See also Hunter (1992); Stancilff (1988), ch. 21; Trout (1999), ch. 5.}

Jerome, whose own Bethlehem community depended heavily on such donations, immediately countered with an excoriating treatise. One wonders if Jerome’s attack, plus the weight of other pro-martyr locals such as Victricius of Rouen and Exuperius of Toulouse, might have resulted in Vigilantius’ transfer from Comminges to Barcelona, where a later source reports him as presbyter.\footnote{The content of this pamphlet is reconstructed from Jerome, Ep. 61 and Contra Vigilantium.} While Vigilantius’ anti-martyr stance may have been hard to swallow, his calls for local unergetism would have resonated with Lapius, the bishop of Barcelona. Lapius had conferred the priesthood on Paulinus only

to watch as he, his Spanish wife, and their fortune set sail for Nola where they proceeded to build the churches Barcelona still lacked.

The allure of the external, foreign holy was, however, only one of twin dangers Vigilantius found threatening the local church. The flipside of the search for holy places and persons was the search for the holy in oneself. Eastern ascetic practice found its most enthusiastic proponents in the West among the aristocracy, where the ideals of physical withdrawal and spiritual meditation mated easily with traditional rural *sitium*. Throughout southern Gaul and Hispania aristocrats were tuning in and dropping out and their spiritual epicenter was the villa, whose fields and vineyards had become ripe with Christian significance, the *domini* themselves transformed into *agricoli Christiani*.\footnote{Here I follow Stancilff (1983), 30–31 n. 3, rather than Fontaine (1967–1969), 1: 32–40.} Hispania’s reputation as a hotbed of rural asceticism was fostered most obviously by Priscillian, whose followers seem to have engaged in rural retreat. His followers were chastised for absenting themselves from the urban churches on important feast days, remaining, “at home, in villas or in the mountains.”\footnote{Paulinus, Ep. 24.1–4, indicates that Sulpicius gave up most, but not all, of his property, retaining some either wholly or in usufruct.} Fasting, prayer, and rurally-inspired ritual formed the base of an episodic monasticism, where holy days were celebrated, much to the chagrin of the episcopate, through rural asceticism rather than urban liturgy.\footnote{Council of Zaragoza, c. 4.}

However, it is difficult to see beyond the heavily polemicized Priscillianist evidence to the less controversial, villa-based piety practiced by Lucinius and Theodora and other Spanish elites inasmuch as no descriptions of their communities have survived. Thus, it is necessary to look to nearby Aquitaine, where Paulinus of Nola’s correspondence with Sulpicius Severus permits us a glimpse of how villa-asceticism and villa piety might have been articulated, and how these Christian communal ideals conflicted with those of the local episcopate. Sulpicius’ community was probably located somewhere west of Toulouse, in the villa heartland of the Garonne valley.\footnote{Chadwick (1978), 10, insists on the periodicity of Priscillianist retreat.} Having divested himself of much of his property, Sulpicius converted his remaining family estate, Primiulicum, into a Christian community composed of like-minded friends and the estate’s slaves and workers.\footnote{See Prudentius, Contra Symm. 2.1005–1054; Fontaine (1972), 591.}
Primuliacum is typically heralded as one of the West's first monasteries.\textsuperscript{152} However, while its members embraced ascetic practices, such as tonsures, humble dress and a life of prayer, the community was equally defined by a web of patronage and amicitia.\textsuperscript{153} Primuliacum was the fruit of an inspired friendship, that between Sulpicius and Martin of Tours. Sulpicius had spent the two years prior to his retreat with Martin, and Primuliacum was not only inspired by Martin's community at Marmoutier, but, upon Martin's death, Sulpicius' estate community adopted Martin as its saintly patron. Paulinus of Nola, another role model and amicus, was revered there as well, and his image stood side by side with Martin's in the community baptistery.\textsuperscript{154} Indeed, the famous epistolary correspondence between Sulpicius and Paulinus, in which theological interpretations were aired, relics exchanged and Christian life described, was not simply an exchange of "Christian letters," or the expression of a Christian friendship. The letters and friendship shaped the very nature of Christian experience at Primuliacum, and Paulinus, as a Christian pen-friend, was a member of the community as surely as were Martin and Sulpicius himself.\textsuperscript{155} That is to say, the ties that bound and shaped the Primuliacum community were the same as those that bound and shaped the rural aristocracy.

This communal identity was nowhere more apparent than in the estate's buildings, the traditional site of aristocratic self- and communal-representation. In the case of Primuliacum, the most prominent buildings were two churches, joined by a baptistery.\textsuperscript{156} One of these churches is described as the church of Sulpicius' family, and one wonders if Sulpicius had incorporated a family mausoleum, presumably of his recently deceased wife, into the complex.\textsuperscript{157} Indeed, Paulinus may have enriched his own family's memoria near Bordeaux with a church only a year before the impressionable Sulpicius completed his own project.\textsuperscript{158} The primary purpose of Sulpicius' churches, however, was the memorialization of the community's role model, Martin of Tours. While Sulpicius was not able to procure Martin's body for his new foundation, he did obtain that of his follower, Clarus, as well as a variety of Holy Land relics.\textsuperscript{159} These relics were sent by friends, including Silvia, the sister-in-law of Rufinus, who came from nearby Eauze.\textsuperscript{160} It will be remembered that at the same time as Sulpicius retreated to Primuliacum, Rufinus may have consecrated his own martyrdom cum mausoleum cum monasteri outside Chalcedon.\textsuperscript{161} Finally, the whole complex bore the literal traces of Paulinus and Sulpicius' correspondence. Epigrams and ekphrastic verses from Paulinus' letters appeared everywhere in the churches and baptistery, explaining, chiding, and embracing Paulinus and his wife Therasia into the community's prayers.\textsuperscript{162}

Thus, the churches of Primuliacum were reified expressions of a community whose ascetic practices may have been "monastic," but whose Christian experience was ultimately bound, even created, by that which bound all elite landed aristocrats, namely patronage and friendship. The family mausoleum, if there was one, would have commemorated Sulpicius' senatorial gens. The church dedicated to Martin was the spiritual home of the community's divine patron, while the baptistery bore the images of both Martin and the community's other holy amicus, Paulinus. The churches' relics were themselves relics of epistolary friendships, while the whole complex was described and explained by Paulinus' accompanying verses. Holiness at Primuliacum was defined, literally, by family and friends. The formative role of amicitia at Primuliacum breaks down many of the boundaries we tend to see between "ascetic communities" such as Primuliacum, which were probably quite rare, and more worldly villa-oriented Christianity. Even "respectable Christians," who in the last decades of the century became ever more numerous, shaped their Christian lives around the same communities that bounded their secular existence, communities defined by family, patronage and friendship and conceptually centered in the rural estate.\textsuperscript{163}

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\textsuperscript{152} Liethard (1977), 97–98, was more skeptical.
\textsuperscript{153} On the practices at Primuliacum, see Stancliffe (1983), 30–47.
\textsuperscript{154} Ep. 32.1.
\textsuperscript{155} On the critical importance of friendship in the definition of the Nolan and Primuliacum communities, see Conybeare (2000), ch. 2, where letter exchange is compared to sacramental exchange. See also Trout (1993); (1999), 239–43.
\textsuperscript{156} Paulinus, Ep. 32.1.
\textsuperscript{158} Ep. 32.6–7. On the failure of Sulpicius to gain possession of Martin's body, see L. Pietri (1983), 102–12.
\textsuperscript{159} Ep. 31.1.
\textsuperscript{160} Sulpicius' retreat is dated to 394/95. Matthews suggests that Rufinus' association was consecrated and its owner baptized on the occasion of the council of Constantinople in 394, a council which otherwise seems to have conducted little real business. Matthews (1975), 135–36.
\textsuperscript{161} Ep. 32.
\textsuperscript{162} On "respectable Christians" versus ascetics, see Brown (1972), 178.
The correspondence between two Spanish and/or Gallic women of the late fourth or early fifth century provides another glimpse of this world. One letter, posted to the author's married female friend, recommends that the friend celebrate the Christmas season by retreating from public life and her husband for the three weeks preceding Epiphany. The letter describes more than the widespread acceptance of practices damned by the episcopate as "Priscillianist": it describes an elite Christian "community," here of only two women, whose support and advice shapes their Christian lives. It is an intensely personal vision and one which side-stepped contemporary patristic teaching in the interest of immediate, personal concerns. The author declares that her friend's timed ascetic withdrawal will permit her to claim equal status with true virgins: "I am not willing for you to enclose the grace of God within the boundaries of one person." Her image of this retreat is crafted around a metaphor of the Virgin Mary in pained childbirth, her labor recreaded in the married friend's ascetic labor, both of which give birth to salvation. Both notions rub uncomfortably against contemporary episcopal ideas on the holy supremacy of virgins and the effortless birth of Christ and so to craft a message tailored to its addressee, the married woman, for whom the image of childbirth would have had special resonance. The insistent equation of "privacy" and salvation, again matched by Mary, who banished even Joseph from the Nativity birthing room, and further equated with the Egyptian desert, describes a Christianity in which the climaxes of the holy year were best consummated in an "especially private and solitary place." Periodic withdrawal from the city and one's family removes one to another Christian com-

166 These are the two letters bound in Codex Saragossensis 190, published by Morin (1928) and reprinted in PLS 1: 1038–1044. Given the discussion of a three-week Epiphany retreat in the second letter and its close parallels in the fourth canon of the council of Zaragoza (380), Morin assigned them to a late fourth- or early fifth-century Spanish context and attributed them to the hand of the fourth-century ascetic Bacharius. Given the fairly clear female authorial hand, Morin's attribution to Bacharius has been contested and the letters more correctly ascribed to an anonymous woman or women of the same time. See Burrell (1994) and (2000). It should be noted, however, that the problem of Epiphanic absences from church is also addressed in the twenty-first canon of the Council of Agde (506) (Mantzer 1963), 202–203. It might therefore be best to broaden the letters' specific attribution from a late fourth-century Spanish provenance to a wider, fourth- through sixth-century Hispano-Gallic context.

167 PLS 1: 1040: Nolò inter gratam dei intra unius personas angustias claudas.

168 PLS 1: 1040.
Prudentius as a monk who created on his Calagurritan estate a Primuliacum-like ascetic community. The poems themselves, however, provide no support for this thesis, and the occasional reference to overindulgence in wine, a meal of fresh fish or mothers mourning a deceased family member point to a more worldly setting. The Cathemerinon was not written as a description of a day, but an imagined vision of individual, internal piety and a life of Christian days and Christian seasons. Like the same author’s Peristephanon, it is likely that these poems were crafted for Spanish aristocratic peers, either as a unit or in pieces, dispatched, like those of Ausonius, to edify, delight and present something of Prudentius himself. The Cathemerinon presented an old man’s longing to re-craft his life in perfect Christian form. For Prudentius and his peers, it was this interiorly-oriented, domestic piety that was emblematic of the ideal Christian life.

The imaginative geography of both Ausonius’ and Prudentius’ Christian lives is consistently a rural one; prayers take place to the twitting of birds and the lowing of cattle, and birds, cattle, forests and vines are set afloat with Christian meaning. Just like the dome of Centelles, where rural pursuits, the seasons and seigniorial representation are joined through a binding web of Christian signification, the ideal Christian life is intimately bound to the estate. This tendency to view Christian life through the lens of domestic villa life shared by an intimate group of contemporaries is emblematic of the so-called poets of “landowning spirituality.” It should not escape our notice that these Christian “bards of the villa” were not found throughout the empire; they were almost wholly a product of Spain and Aquitaine. Yet theirs was not simply a spirituality defined by literary style. From Prudentius and Ausonius’ poems of Christian daily life to Paulinus’ spiritualization of the villa landscape, theirs is also a vision of Christian community. This communal ideal grew from the dualistic concept of classical otium, which praised a reflective, solitary contemplation that was itself nurtured by constant outreach to a community of epistolary contacts and periodic visitors. In its Christian manifestation, the imagined heart of Christian life continued to lie in the rural home, surrounded and nurtured by a community of elite Christian peers. Furthermore, by tying his hopes for salvation to the publication of his poetry, Prudentius describes the translation of the elite poetic impulses that served as the glue of this community into hard, salvific currency. If Christian poetry and Christian letters could save one’s soul, both Christian life and afterlife might be lived out within these same rural aristocratic circles.

These kinds of communal identity, both the ascetic and the more worldly, stood in ambiguous relation to a community defined by the bishop. In some cases, as in that of Paulinus at Nola, amicable and episcopal communities eventually merged. Even here, however, the ease of Paulinus’ transition from ascetic to bishop disguises the audacity of his original Nolans foundation, which had sidelined Nola’s existing bishop, Paul, and wrested from his control southern Italy’s most important martyr shrine. While Paul seems to have murmured nary a word of protest, in other cases, Christian estate communities scraped more uncomfortably against the episcopate. The anonymous female writer advocating Christmas retreat repeatedly defends her advice against anticipated detractors, even comparing those who partake of public rituals with the Simeon of Macabeos, who “would not have been vulnerable at all to the plots of his enemies if... he had kept to the solitude of his own property.” Sulpicius’ writings

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173 See Cath. 2.29–32; 3.31–30; 10.118, respectively.

174 On the Cathemerinon as private piety, see Rand (1920), 78: “It is not so much a hymn as a poem of reflection—in which description, narrative and allegorical exposition are all germane—written for a moment of the day when a hymn would have been appropriate.”

175 On the private function and Spanish circulation of the Peristephanon, see Palmer (1969), ch. 3, esp. 90–97.

176 As suggested in Proef. 32–38.

177 See Fontaine (1972), 579.

178 See especially Cath. 1.31; 3. Also, Fontaine (1972), 589–90.

179 Jacques Fontaine’s numerous works have brought this group to life, insisting on their connectedness across the Pyrenees and their shared literary and spiritual project. Fontaine (1972); (1974); (1981).

180 On Christian otium, see Fontaine (1972). Trout (1988) has emphasized the incompatibility of classical otium with Christian asceticism for devotees such as Augustine. For that majority of elites who lived to lead more worldly Christian lives, those aspects of otium, such as continued wealth and periodic participation in public life, would not have proved problematic.

181 On the imagined link between poetry and salvation, see also Evenepoel (1993), 46.

182 Trout (1999), 162, although even here the “presumptuousness” of Paulinus’ move is not explored fully.

183 PLS 1: 1043: Et intelligat quisquis Symeon cassum mortis vagans per civitatem cura generalis, qui neposquam imicicorum potuisse insidias, si in hoc mente possessionis suas secretas servaret.
likewise reflect an uneasy tension between Primuliacum and local bishops.\textsuperscript{184} His raillery against low-born clerics come to new-found power carries the unmistakable whiff of elite snobbery.\textsuperscript{185} He asks only to be left to "live as a Christian," seemingly without any sense that his estate community with its churches and baptistery and aristocratic membership might present a challenge to episcopal authority.\textsuperscript{186} Vigilantius’ diatribe, however, perhaps aimed specifically at Primuliacum, makes plain the danger: "If all men were to seclude themselves and live in solitude, who would frequent the churches? Who would remain to win those engaged in secular pursuits?"\textsuperscript{187} In the eyes of the episcopate, estate-based communities siphoned off not only potential monetary resources, but an elite presence that lent the church legitimacy and earned it new converts.

This is not to suggest that these elites, particularly those who had opted not to take ascetic vows, necessarily abandoned their local episcopate and its church altogether. Ausonius himself complains of having to travel to town to attend Easter services and the urban cult of the saints, either in local Calagurris or far-away Rome, drew Prudentius from his rural base. Rather, it is that these elites’ emotional and spiritual center of gravity lay in their own villa-centered communities; it was here that ideals were shaped, ideas traded and the notion of spiritual peace and even salvation were imaginatively placed. It is also important to recognize that estate-based piety, whether ascetic or otherwise, and the pursuit of foreign sources of holiness were not contrary urges but part of the same phenomenon. Integral to both was a tendency on the part of the elite to shape Christian life through their own, preexisting aristocratic networks, networks that spread over the whole Mediterranean, encouraging travel, relic exchange, doctrinal debate and even the flow of capital.\textsuperscript{188}

\textsuperscript{184} Standiffe (1983), 289–96.

\textsuperscript{185} Dialogue 1.21.

\textsuperscript{186} Dialogue 1.2.2. See Standiffe (1983), 290–96.

\textsuperscript{187} Jerome, \textit{Contra Vigilantium} 15 (PL 23: 351A): Si omnes se clausurant, et fuerint in solitudine, quis celebrabit Ecclesiam? quis sanctiores homines benefaciens? Given Vigilantius’ previously close relationship with Sulpicius, its abrupt end, and the proximity of Sésim-Bertrand-de-Comminges and Primuliacum, Vigilantius may very well have had Primuliacum in mind. On the relationship between Vigilantius and Sulpicius, see now Trout (1999), 221.

\textsuperscript{188} Such networks and their impact on Christian life and doctrine have been most evocatively discussed by Clark in the context of the Origenist controversy: Clark (1992).

Vigilantius’ attempts to stem Holy Land donations and rural asceticism were attacks against a single monster, and Jerome’s furious reply fought to save not simply ascetic withdrawal, but his own financial lifeline which flowed from the same, elite source.

\textit{Conclusions}

Matthews’ original question demands an answer: is there anything in the Christian culture described in the preceding pages which displays a particular Spanish character? Aristocratic asceticism, holy travel and the articulation of Christian communities through aristocratic power structures were general features of the fourth- and fifth-century Christian West, and there is insufficient evidence to claim them particularly for Hispania. The fact that so much of the above textual history relies on Aquitanian sources makes it difficult to pick out regional differences in what is necessarily a regionally muddled picture.

While it may not be possible to describe Hispania’s local Christian culture with the precision one might like, the foregoing history describes a Christian culture quite different from that which has dominated the scholarly discourse. The archaeological evidence from hundreds of villas points to a particularly strong Spanish landed aristocracy, or at any rate, one bent on projecting its power through the construction of great villas. By the latter half of the century, more and more of these elites began to convert to Christianity, although a strong pagan lobby may have existed alongside them. And yet Hispania’s episcopate remained weak: its network was among the most diffuse in the West and it lacked any strong administrative figures until late in the fifth century. The result seems to have been a landed elite that, lacking any compelling episcopal presence, simply carried on without bishops, living their Christian lives and concentrating their energetic impulses largely within their own communities, communities that spread from the rural villa to the imperial court and the Holy Land, but which often sidestepped the local episcopate.

The most revealing evidence for these communities, however, is the Christian monuments with which we began this discussion. This rural Christian architecture, seemingly unique to Hispania, was the physical expression of elite communal identity. As rural villa monuments, they betray an elite tendency to use the estate as a center of
Christian gravity, the locus of a combined familial and saintly commemorative impulse. At the same time, these monuments bear the unmistakable imprint of the foreign. The unusual plans and imported building styles reflect an extra-peninsular Christian experience, a relic of a foreign holy brought home to the estate. Like Sulpicius' Holy Land relics and his pictures of Paulinus, these Spanish villa monuments reflect a Christian ideal shaped overwhelmingly by individual experience.

And yet monuments like Pueblanueva or Carranque are more than statements of self-centered, individualistic "private" piety. They are also conversations in stone. For villa architecture of all kinds, whether a triclinium or a martyrium, was a statement of individual identity made to a community. That intended community was not, as we like to imagine, the dusty coloni who arrived periodically to pay their rent, although the later fifth- and sixth-century villa-churches would indeed be built with them in mind. Fourth-century rural building, sacred and secular, was aimed at fellow members of the elite, a community of friends and colleagues both local and international. Buildings communicated identity as readily as did letters, and when the two media combined, as in epistolary ekphrases, their shared, communicative function is readily apparent. Ausonius' estate and his panegyric on it are both expressions of Ausonius himself, constructed so that others "might better know him, and know themselves," while Paulinus and Sulpicius exchanged plans and descriptions of their respective church complexes not simply as examples of ekphrastic virtuosity, but as symbols of shared faith.\(^9\)

If Christianity was experienced "differently" in Hispania than elsewhere it was in the power of these elite Christian communities, a power that trumped or simply ignored episcopal influence. Rather than a "pious," or "fervent" Christian elite, archaeology describes a group living within its own, age-old community structures, according to its own internal logic of power and hierarchy. Only in the later fifth and sixth centuries would these communities be fully integrated into a new church dynamic. It was only then that the real Christianization of Hispania began.

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\(^9\) Ausonius, De Hered. 17-19; Paulinus, Ep. 32.10. On the latter, see Conybeare (2000), ch. 4.