

## *ALMOFALLA. AN ARAB MILITARY CAMP IN NORTHWEST IBERIA?*

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## ALMOFALLA. AN ARAB MILITARY CAMP IN NORTHWEST IBERIA?

### ABSTRACT

In this paper we examine the distribution, in North-western Iberia, of the Andalusian Arabic term *Almofalla*, meaning ‘military camp’, and analyse its microtoponymic use in medieval documentation, notably on the outskirts of the episcopal centres in Calahorra, Oca, and León. Accepting that all the appearances of the term do not necessarily have the same origin, we will explore three different historical contexts that may explain its use: the 8<sup>th</sup> century Islamic invasion, Arab raids (*aceifas*) during the 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> centuries, or as a loan word used in Iberian Romance dialects during the 12<sup>th</sup> century, particularly with regard to the campaigns of Alfonso I of Aragón.

KEY WORDS: Castile-León region, Early Medieval, military camps, Roman roads, episcopal sees, Islam.

## ALMOFALLA. ¿UN CAMPAMENTO MILITAR ÁRABE EN EL NOROESTE DE IBERIA?

### RESUMEN

Este trabajo se centra en la distribución de la voz árabe andalusí *Almofalla*, con el significado de ‘campamento militar’, en el noroeste de la Península Ibérica. Observamos su uso como microtopónimo en la documentación medieval, concentrada, sobre todo, en las afueras de algunas sedes episcopales como Calahorra, Oca y León. Sin presuponer que todas las apariciones de esta voz tengan necesariamente el mismo origen, contemplamos diferentes dinámicas históricas que podrían explicar su presencia. En concreto, son tres los contextos que exploramos: la invasión islámica de principios del siglo VIII, las aceifas de los siglos IX y X, o su empleo como préstamo en los dialectos romances del siglo XII, sobre todo en relación con las campañas de Alfonso I ‘el Batallador’.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Castilla y León, Altomedievo, campamentos militares, vías romanas, sedes episcopales, Islam.

## ALMOFALLA. UN CAMPAMENTO MILITAR ÁRABE NO NOROESTE DE IBERIA?

### RESUMO

Este traballo céntrase na distribución da voz árabe andalusí *Almofalla*, co significado de ‘campamento militar’, no noroeste da Península Ibérica. Observamos o seu uso como microtopónimo na documentación medieval, concentrada, sobre todo, nos arredores dalgunhas sedes episcopais como Calahorra, Oca e León. Sen supor que todas as aparicións desta voz teñen necesariamente a mesma orixe, contemplamos diferentes dinámicas históricas que poderían explicar a súa presenza. En concreto, hai tres contextos que exploramos: a invasión islámica de principios do século VIII, as aceifas dos séculos IX e X ou o seu uso como préstamo nos dialectos románicos do século XII, especialmente en relación ás campañas de Afonso I ‘o Batallador’.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Castela e León, Alta Idade Media, campamentos militares, camiños romanos, sedes episcopais, Islam.

**A**lmofalla is the form taken in Iberian Romance by the Andalusian Arabic word *almuḥállā*. According to Corriente, the only meaning documented for the word in said dialect is ‘military camp’<sup>1</sup>, although elsewhere it is used in a range of senses such as ‘inn’ or ‘neighbourhood’ derived from its etymological stem referring to human presence in a given place<sup>2</sup>. Furthermore, in the central medieval period it is employed in Iberian Romance to metonymically refer to a military host<sup>3</sup>. Accordingly, when Maurilio Pérez encounters the field-name *Almofala* in a charter from the year 1174 referring to the outskirts of the city of León, he summarizes the semantic possibilities in the following terms,

*it is difficult to establish the precise meaning of almofalla in our lone example since it refers to a rural rather than an urban site making it incompatible with the different meanings unless it was an area in which in earlier times an army had tended to camp*<sup>4</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Federico CORRIENTE, *Dictionary of Arabic and Allied Loanwords, Spanish, Portuguese, Catalan, Galician and kindred dialects*, Leiden; Boston, Brill, 2008, #almāf/hālā. Corriente’s is the definition used in Maurilio PÉREZ (ed.), *Lexicon Latinitatis Medii Aevi Regni Legionis (s. VIII-1230) Imperfectvm*, Turnhout, Brepols, 2010, #almofalla, and is essentially the same as that employed by the *Diccionario de la Real Academia Española* [online], available at <<https://dle.rae.es/almofalla>> [Consulted on: 22/08/2020].

<sup>2</sup> Other possible meanings are *posada*, *albergue*, *barrio*, *burgo*, all registered in Classical Arabic, *judería* in Maghrebi Arabic, and *aldea* or *etapa* (*de un viaje*) in Modern Arabic, PÉREZ, *Lexicon Latinitatis...*, #almofalla.

<sup>3</sup> For example, *facta in illa almohalla iuxta Panguo [=Pangua], intrante Alba*, José Ángel LEMA PUEYO (ed.), *Colección Diplomática de Alfonso I de Aragón y Pamplona (1104-1134)*, San Sebastián, Eusko Ikaskuntza, 1990, doc. 129, 1124; *Los omes de briuega caualleros o peones, quando fueren en almohalla, o en caualgada*, Juan Catalina GARCÍA LÓPEZ (ed.), *El fuero de Brihuela*, Madrid, Tipografía Manuel G. Hernández, 1887, p. 160; *aparejados me sed a cavallos e armas; iremos ver aquella su almofalla*, Alberto MONTANER (ed.), *Cantar de mio Cid*, Madrid, Real Academia Española, 2011, verses 1123-4.

<sup>4</sup> *es difícil establecer el sentido específico de almofalla en nuestro único ej., pues se refiere a una finca rústica y no urbana, por lo que difícilmente le puede cuadrar ninguna de las acepciones vistas, a no ser que fuese una zona donde en tiempos anteriores soliese acampar el ejército*, PÉREZ, *Lexicon Latinitatis...*, #almofalla

This paper is divided into two parts. Firstly, we will document other previously uncommented attestations of the word in north-western Iberia which we believe support Pérez's hypothesis. Subsequently, we will contemplate different historical scenarios which might explain these place-names, prioritising those which seem most plausible, but without discounting other possibilities and without assuming that all such attestations need necessarily have the same origin.

Some of these 'new' examples are taken from modern toponymy, but the majority come from a variety of historical sources, and most significantly we present a hitherto unpublished charter appearance that bears a striking resemblance to the Leonese case: a field-name recorded in a medieval charter on the outskirts of a medieval episcopal seat, in this second case, Oca. Contemplated as a group they allow us to establish certain parallels with regards to chronology and above all location which in turn enable us to explore different hypotheses regarding said origins. In this sense, the new Oca attestation proves a particularly promising analytical tool given the lack of any significant urban development in Oca after its probable eighth-century destruction, and the fact that the apparent survival of the toponym as the modern field-name (*Las Olmayas*) allows us to uniquely identify its precise location.

Although the toponym appears in other regions, our concentration on north-western Iberia, i.e. the lands north of the river Duero, stems from the singular historical trajectory of the region: these are territories which fell out of Andalusí control after approximately 750 and thus were only under direct Islamic rule for little more than a generation at the beginning of the eighth century. While the subsequent use of prestige Arabic terms in northern Iberian Romance dialects was relatively common, their transformation into place names is rare. A significant exception would be the three *Medinas* of Castile (Medina de Pomar, Medina del Campo and Medina de Rioseco, respectively), which would seem to be twelfth-century foundations, and it is possible that our north-western *almofallas* are the result of a similar central-medieval loan-word dynamic. Indeed, as commented, we observe the word being used this way in twelfth and thirteenth-century Latin/Romance texts (note 3). However, its repeated appearance in charters as a field-name suggests an earlier coinage, as M. Pérez observes. In this sense it is possible that said field-names are fossils of the Islamic invasion, although, as we will see, other explanations should and will be contemplated, and, of course, not all such appearances necessarily have the same origin.

Nonetheless, the possibility that their origin lies in the eighth century is particularly intriguing given that our knowledge of the dynamics and geography of the Islamic conquest of the Iberian Península is so limited and inevitably conditioned by the nature of our sources. Most of the narrative accounts, whether Arabic or Latin, were composed long after the event and, while in all prob-

ability incorporating earlier material, undoubtedly reflect the interests of their time of composition; the very historical resonance of the episode compromising the historicity of our sources<sup>5</sup>. Material evidence of this period has until recently proved elusive, however, in the last few years, it has begun to emerge on the northern periphery of al-Andalus with the identification of signal towers in northern Catalunya, pottery shards in León, a Berber cemetery in Pamplona, coins in Huesca, and seals in the Narbonense<sup>6</sup>. Can place-names, then, compensate in part for these deficiencies? It is a question familiar to scholars of the early medieval period, whether of al-Andalus, or of other regions. The Scandinavian presence in the British Isles, for example, has long been studied in this way, although the challenges posed by this register are notorious<sup>7</sup>. How to know, for example, when a given place-name was coined is a fundamental question rarely easy to answer and this in many cases has led to the *de facto* rejection of this methodology<sup>8</sup>.

Nonetheless, Manuel Acién made extensive use of generic toponyms such as *ḥiṣn* or *qilā'* to trace and recreate the early patterns of Islamic occupation of Iberia, with emphasis on anomalous distributions in the South<sup>9</sup>. Of course, with the South having been under Islamic control for various centuries, it is difficult to demonstrate that a given place-name dates from a precise period. By contrast, the appearance of similar toponymic patterns in north-western Iberia, under

<sup>5</sup> Eduardo MANZANO MORENO, "Las fuentes árabes sobre la conquista de Al-Andalus: una nueva interpretación", *Hispania*, 202 (1999), pp. 389-432.

<sup>6</sup> Ramón MARTÍ, "Estrategias de conquista y ocupación islámica del nordeste peninsular: dimensión arqueológica de la toponimia significativa", in *Actas del V Congreso de Arqueología Medieval Española*, vol. 2, Valladolid, Junta de Castilla y León, 2001, pp. 727-732; José Avelino GUTIÉRREZ, *et al.*, "Legio (León) en época visigoda: la ciudad y su territorio", in *Espacios urbanos en el occidente mediterráneo (s. VI-VIII)*, Toledo, Toletum Visogodo, 2010, pp. 131-136; María Paz de MIGUEL-IBÁÑEZ, "Mortui viventes docent. La maqbara de Pamplona", in *De Mahoma a Carlomagno: los primeros tiempos (siglos VII-IX)*, Pamplona, Gobierno de Navarra, 2013, pp. 351-376; Fátima MARTÍN, "Monedas que van, monedas que vienen... circulación monetaria en época de cambios", in *De Mahoma a Carlomagno: los primeros tiempos. Los primeros tiempos (siglos VII-IX). XXXIX Semana de Estudios Medievales. Estella, 17-20 de julio de 2012*, Pamplona, Gobierno de Navarra, 2013, pp. 311-350; Philippe SÉNAC and Tawfiq IBRAHIM, *Los precintos de la conquista omeya y la formación de al-Andalus (711-756)*, Granada, Universidad de Granada, 2017.

<sup>7</sup> *the evidence of place-names is plentiful, but its application to historical questions that it can plausibly hope to illuminate has proved challenging. It seems clear that the PN distribution map is not a straightforward index of Scandinavian settlement*, Dawn HADLEY, *The Vikings in England. Settlement, Society and Culture*, Manchester, Manchester University Press, 2006, p. 103.

<sup>8</sup> Elisabeth ZADORA-Río, "Archéologie et toponymie: le divorce", *Les petits cahiers d'Anatole*, 8 (2001), pp. 1-17.

<sup>9</sup> Manuel ACIÉN, "Poblamiento y fortificación en el sur de Al-Andalus. La fortificación de un país de Husun", in *Actas III Congreso de Arqueología Medieval Española*, Oviedo, Universidad de Oviedo, 1989, pp. 135-150; Manuel ACIÉN, "De nuevo sobre la fortificación del emirato", in Isabel Cristina Ferreira Fernandes (coord.), *Mil Anos de Fortificações na Península Ibérica e no Magreb*, Lisboa, Colibri, 2002, pp. 59-76; see also MARTÍ, "Estrategias de conquista y ocupación islámica...".

direct Islamic control for barely forty years (approximately 711-750), would point strongly towards early coinage. Thus, the question is posed as to whether the North West, often virtually excluded from Andalusí studies because of the brevity of its incorporation into said polity, might counterintuitively prove to be the best scenario for identifying dynamics unique to the very earliest period of Islamic occupation, as indeed was recognized by Acién<sup>10</sup>. In the North East, a region similarly peripheral to and but briefly incorporated into al-Andalus, similar patterns and problems emerge, and Martí has also used generic toponyms to identify an extensive network of Islamic settlements<sup>11</sup>. But, before examining such dynamics in detail, let us first map and document the appearances of *almo-falla* in north-western Iberia.

### ALMOFALLA TOPONYMS IN NORTH WEST IBERIA

Amongst modern place-names, as well as a scattering of appearances in the South, such as *Calle Almohalla* in Archidona (Málaga), we observe a band of *Almofallas* stretching across the centre of the Iberian Peninsula that have survived as minor settlements: La Almohalla, near Piedrahita (Ávila); Almofala, in the municipality of Figueira de Castelo Rodrigo (Guarda), near the Visigothic episcopal see of Calabria; another Almofala, near Castro Daire (Viseu); another near S. João do Monte (Tondela, Viseu)<sup>12</sup>. We might also add the name of one of the historic gates of Toledo today recorded as a street name (*Travesía Almofala*), and the name of a mountain pass (*Collado Almohalla / Almohaya*) recorded north of Madrid near Buitrago-Braojos, in the fourteenth-century *Libro de la Montería*<sup>13</sup>. In such cases, the longevity of Islamic control over these areas means that several contexts (and chronologies) could explain these names.

Somewhat further north, we encounter another example outside Calahorra, an ancient episcopal seat under Muslim control between 711 and 1045, year in which, on the occasion of the Christian conquest of the city, the toponym

<sup>10</sup> ACIÉN, “De nuevo sobre la fortificación del emirato”, p. 66.

<sup>11</sup> MARTÍ, “Estrategias de conquista y ocupación islámica...”, p. 728.

<sup>12</sup> Some authors also add Almohaja (Teruel) to this list (Ricardo MARTÍNEZ ORTEGA, ‘Explicación de la *Cúpula de los monjes* y la *Acampada* en ibn Hayyān (*al-Muqtabis* V, #229 y #242)’, *Fortvnatae*, 25 (2014), pp. 337-342), but Franco-Sánchez understands it as deriving from ar. *maḥaḥyā*, meaning ‘calzada’ (i.e. ‘paved road’), Francisco FRANCO SÁNCHEZ, “La toponimia árabe de los espacios viales y los espacios defensivos en la península Ibérica”, in Cristina Carvalho, Montserrat Planelles Iváñez and Elena Sandakova (coords.), *De la langue à l’expression: le parcours de l’expérience discursive. Hommage à Marina Aragón Cobo*, Alicante, Universidad de Alicante, 2017, pp. 167-190. This same author rather surprisingly states (p. 172) that there are no toponyms derived from *maḥalla* (= ‘camp’) in Spain.

<sup>13</sup> Dennis P. SENIFF (ed.), *Libro de la montería*, Madison, Hispanic Seminary of Medieval Studies, 1983, vol. III, c. 11, fol. 55.

is documented in a series of royal grants to the monastery of San Millán de la Cogolla<sup>14</sup>. The reference is framed exclusively in terms of agrarian holdings, which suggests that any militaristic sense behind the name was by 1045 a thing of the past, and indeed Sáenz de Haro associates it with the camp in which ‘Abd al-Raḥmān III received queen Toda of Pamplona in 934<sup>15</sup>, although such an identification is essentially unproveable. This raises the important question as to whether a single use of a site as a camp is sufficient to explain the creation and survival of a place-name. It seems to us that Maurilio Pérez is correct when, in his choice of the verb *soliese* (i.e. ‘used to’), he indicates habitual usage is a more plausible explanation. Outside Calahorra the place-name has not survived in any recognisable form, but in a second medieval charter it is associated with Resa, six kilometres to the north, which would situate it near the old Roman road<sup>16</sup>. In other words, at a strategic point on the outskirts of an episcopal see.

Whatever the precise and in all probability varied dynamics behind these names, the fact that the areas mentioned until now were under Islamic control for much longer than the North West means that the moment or period of their functioning as military reference points is hard to determine. What we can say is that at least some of them are early medieval in origin. A charter from Lervão dating from 907<sup>17</sup> mentions an *almafalla* which we can probably associate with the homonymous modern village near Castro Daire, and a second such reference, from 1064, identifies it as a rallying-point in the context of a military expedition<sup>18</sup>. Also undeniably early is the Calahorra case which certainly significantly predates 1045, and is possibly from 934 if not even earlier. Since we will see *almofalla* used as a loan-word in twelfth-century Romance, these early chronologies are important in as much as they establish that the later usage does not explain all of the toponymic appearances of *almofalla*.

Until recently, virtually the only known appearance of the toponym in the North West was on the outskirts of the city of León –once again, note, an episco-

<sup>14</sup> *De solares et hereditate in Calahorra ... una era, ante villa, in via de Acuto de sinistra parte, sub ponte. Alia era in Almohala. Becerro Galicano de San Millán de la Cogolla* [online], doc. 161, available at <www.ehu.eus/galicano/id161> [Consulted on: 20/08/2020].

<sup>15</sup> *An-Nasir le impuso [a Toda] a cambio que viniera a visitarlo en su campamento*, María Jesús VIGUERA and Federico CORRIENTE (trans.), *al-Muqtabis V (Crónica del califa ‘Abdarrahmán III An-Nasir entre los años 912 y 942)*, Zaragoza, Anubar, 1981, c. 226, p. 252; Tomás SÁENZ DE HARO, “Calahorra islámica (siglos VIII-XI). Notas sobre la organización de los espacios urbano y rural”, *Brocar* 31 (2007), p. 144.

<sup>16</sup> *De hereditates de Resa ... alia terra in cima de monte, latus via de Almohala. Becerro Galicano de San Millán de la Cogolla* [online], doc. 608, available at <www.ehu.eus/galicano/id608> [Consulted on: 20/08/2020], undated but probably ca. 1090.

<sup>17</sup> *ille fontano de almafalla*, in *Portugaliae Monumenta Historica, Diplomata et Chartae*, vol. III.1, Lisboa, [s. n.], 1867, doc. 15, p. 10.

<sup>18</sup> *venique cum meo exercitum ... tantum quia ego et milites meos preparauimus nostra sarcina ... dedimus preconem in Almafala*, Bernardo DE BRITO (ed.), *Da Monarchia Lusytana*, vol. II, Lisboa, 1609, fol. 377v.º.



pal seat— the example glossed in the *Lexicon Latinitatis* by Pérez and our starting point. As in Calahorra, our only source for the toponym is a medieval charter and again the context is an agrarian holding, on this occasion registered in 1174<sup>19</sup>. According to Sánchez Badiola, Montefrío (and by extension *Almofalla*) is situated two kilometres north of León on an elevation between the city and the modern Navatejera suburb<sup>20</sup>, an important Late Antique site that included a possible paleo-Christian church<sup>21</sup>. León is also significant as being one of the very few places in the North West where eighth-century exogenous ceramics have been unearthed, which Gutiérrez associates with a probable Arab-Berber military presence<sup>22</sup>. In this latter case, the site is within the city walls, under what is now the Cathedral, an area previously used as baths and then in the ninth century as the royal palace, before becoming the episcopal seat after 916.

As a virtual hapax, i.e. unique attestation, modern lexicographers such as M. Pérez have been cautious when assigning a meaning to the term in such a Leonese context as we have outlined in our Introduction. However, we believe that the recent appearance of a second example substantially clarifies the situation. Our source on this occasion is the as yet unpublished *Cartulario de Froncea*, and more specifically an inventory of the possessions held by the monastery of San Miguel de Froncea near the village of Villalómez (Burgos)<sup>23</sup>. As is often the case with inventories, the text is undated, but it would seem to date from the early thirteenth century. Once again, the term appears as a simple field-name associated with an elevation (*en somo*), as was the case in both Calahorra (*in cima de monte*) and León (*Monte Frigido*). But what distinguishes the Oca case from these others is that the field-name seems to have survived until the modern day, though admittedly somewhat corrupted, appearing in contemporary cartography as *Las Olmayas*. This situates us south of the village of Villalómez, but rather more significantly three kilometres north of what is now the village of Villafranca Montes de Oca, but which once had been another Visigothic episcopal see, bishop Asterius of Oca named at the Third Toledo Council, in 589. The probable site of the episcopal seat would have been north of the modern village at what is now the Ermita de San Félix, a kilometre south of *Almofalla* / *Las Olmayas*.

<sup>19</sup> *4 vineas quas habemus in Monte Frigido. Quarum una iacet in illa almofalla*, María Encarnación MARTÍN LÓPEZ (ed.), *Patrimonio cultural de San Isidoro de León. 1. Documentos de los siglos X-XIII. Colección Diplomática*, León, Universidad de León, 1995, doc. 111.

<sup>20</sup> Juan José SÁNCHEZ BADIOLA, *La configuración de un sistema de poblamiento y organización de espacio: del territorio de León (siglos IX-XI)*, León, Universidad de León, 2002, p. 125.

<sup>21</sup> GUTIÉRREZ, “*Legio* (León) en época visigoda...”, p. 135.

<sup>22</sup> GUTIÉRREZ, “*Legio* (León) en época visigoda...”, p. 132.

<sup>23</sup> *Aquesta es heredit de Villalómez ... I pedaço de Valle Montán. Otro en Almofalla, en somo de Valasueira*, David PETERSON, María Josefa SANZ and Sonia SERNA (eds.), *Cartulario de Froncea*, Burgos, Instituto Castellano y Leonés de la Lengua, forthcoming, doc. 25.



As well as complementing the Leonese case –both being on the outskirts of Visigothic episcopal seats– the Oca *almofalla* offers a series of advantages over the cases hitherto contemplated. For example, the subsequent history of Oca, traditionally regarded as having been sacked by Alfonso I of Asturias in the mid-eighth century and thereafter abandoned without subsequent urban development, rules out some of the possible interpretations of *almofalla*, such as an extramural suburb, which would perhaps be possible for cases such as León or Toledo. Moreover, the survival of the place-name gives us the exact emplacement: an elevation next to a Roman road a kilometre north of the episcopal seat. Furthermore, we see how the place-name evolves in Castilian towards the form *Olmayas*. There are various interesting, and perhaps even surprising, aspects to said phonetical evolution –the change of the initial vowel, the non-etymological pluralisation–, but it is supported by other cases in Peñafiel, Coreses and elsewhere, as we will see in due course.

Before leaving Oca, though, we note that nearby is one of the clearest cases of a genuinely Arabic place-name in the North West, as the form *Alcocero* (from *al-quṣayr*, meaning ‘the small castle’) incorporates an Arabic diminutive which suggests an authentically Arabic coinage rather than the fossilization of a loan-word<sup>24</sup>. That this is an exceptional case in Castile is confirmed by the attention given to it by Acién and other eminent Arabists<sup>25</sup>. Moreover, in the same valley there are a couple of suggestive anthrotoponyms in *Villalmondar* and *Villalbos*, seemingly hybrid Romance-Arabic forms, the former certainly appearing to be so<sup>26</sup>. While such anthrotoponymic hybrids could have been coined at any point during the early medieval period, it has recently been argued that they could well be a fossil of the post-conquest Islamic distribution of conquered lands amongst the troops<sup>27</sup>. Taken alongside *Almofalla*, it is a striking concentration of otherwise anomalous Arabic elements in a rural Castilian context.

<sup>24</sup> ACIÉN, “De nuevo sobre la fortificación del emirato”, p. 66.

<sup>25</sup> Miguel ASÍN PALACIOS, *Contribución a la toponimia árabe de España*, Madrid; Granada, CSIC, 1944, p. 53; Jaime OLIVER ASÍN, *En torno a los orígenes de Castilla. Su toponimia en relación con los árabes y los beréberes*, Madrid, Real Academia de la Historia, 1974, p. 44.

<sup>26</sup> Elías TERÉS, “Antroponimia hispanoárabe (reflejada por las fuentes latino-romances)”, *Anaquel de estudios árabes*, 1-3 (1990-1992), #398 < *al-Mundir*; first documented in 1117 as *Villa Almondar*; Ildefonso RODRÍGUEZ DE LAMA (ed.), *Colección diplomática medieval de la Rioja*, 4 vols., Logroño, Instituto de Estudios Riojanos, 1979-89, here vol. II, doc. 54. On Arabic names in Leonese and Castilian charters see Victoria AGUILAR SEBASTIÁN, and Fernando RODRÍGUEZ MEDIANO, “Antroponimia de origen árabe en la documentación leonesa (siglos VIII-XIII)”, in *El reino de León en la Alta Edad Media*, vol. 6, León, Centro de Estudios e Investigación San Isidoro, 1994 (Fuentes y estudios de historia leonesa, 57), pp. 499-633; and Pascual MARTÍNEZ SOPENA, “La antroponimia leonesa. Un estudio del Archivo Catedral de León (876-1200)”, in *Antroponimia y Sociedad. Sistemas de identificación hispano-cristianos del siglo IX al XIII*, Valladolid, Universidad de Valladolid; Universidade de Santiago de Compostela, 1995, pp. 155-180.

<sup>27</sup> David PETERSON, “Hybrid place-names as evidence of military settlement in the Danelaw and in Castile”, in *Conflict and Collaboration in Medieval Iberia*, Newcastle, Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2020, pp. 13-36.

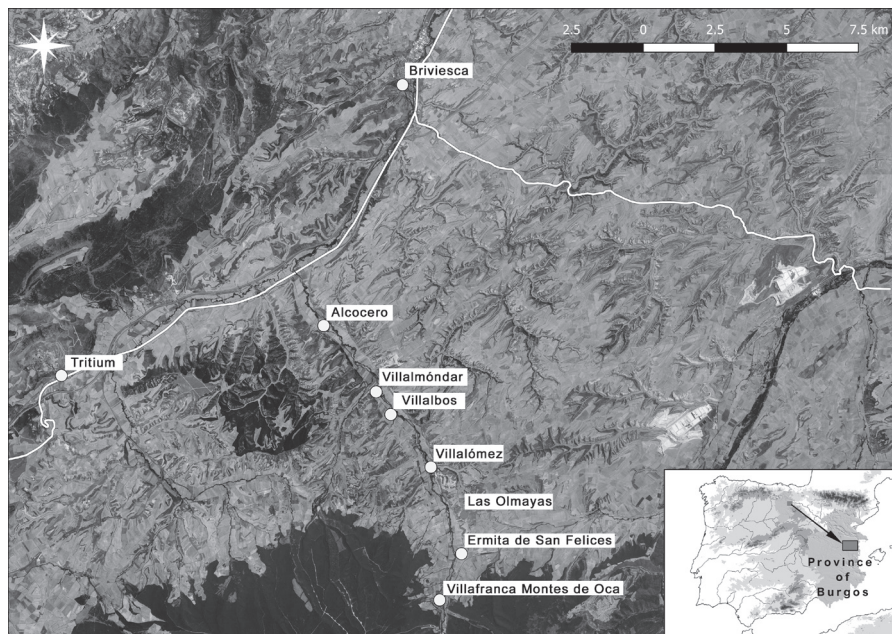


Fig.1. Valle del río Oca.

Moving now to the other side of the Castilla-León region, amidst the vineyards to the south of the village of Coreses (Zamora), in the eighteenth-century documentation we encounter a reference to the *Camino de las Almofallas*. It is documented again, in 1931, as *Camino de las Amofayas*, and on contemporary *Catastro* maps as *Camino de las Almafallas* on the border with the neighbouring village of Fresno de la Ribera<sup>28</sup>. According to all three attestations, here the original form has been preserved remarkably well, although again, as at Oca, we observe this surprising and non-etymological pluralisation. As an odonym, i.e. the name of a path rather than of a fixed point, we cannot pin-point the exact location of the *almofalla* the path was heading towards, however, this area of vineyards on the northern banks of the Duero constituted an important node in the Roman road system where the route north from the Roman camp of Alba-Villalazán crosses the Duero, and then forks out to respectively Montalegre (and

<sup>28</sup> Cecilio VIDALES PÉREZ, *Historia de Coreses. Edad Media y Edad Moderna*, Coreses, Ayuntamiento de Coreses, 2001, p. 93, cited by Pascual RIESCO (*Toponimia de la provincia de Zamora. Panorámica documental, comparativa y descriptiva*, Zamora, Diputación Provincial de Zamora, 2018, p. 902) who we thank for further orientation with regards to this Zamoran example. Worryingly, in the latest on-line version of the *Catastro* [online], available at <<https://www1.sedecatastro.gob.es>> [Consulted on: 20/08/2020], the name has been replaced by *Camino Viejo de Toro*, demonstrating just how fragile some of this toponymic evidence is.

thence towards Zaragoza) and Astorga<sup>29</sup>. In this case the nearest episcopal see lies a dozen kilometres to the west, in Zamora, so we seem to be contemplating a slightly different dynamic: the siting of a camp no longer exclusively on the outskirts of episcopal seats, but at other strategic points on the old Roman road system, a network regarded as having been extensively used by the Muslim occupiers of northern Iberia<sup>30</sup>.

The complex phonetic evolution observed in Oca (*Almofalla* > *Olmayas*) is partially supported by the pluralisation we encounter in Coreses, but even more so by the forms documented in Peñafiel (Valladolid), at the confluence of the rivers Duratón and Duero near the site of the Vacceo-Roman city of Pintia. Here, working from early modern documentation, principally the Catastro del Marqués de Ensenada, Sanz Alonso documented the following toponymical forms among field-names: *Almoalla*, *Olmualia*, *Ormualia*, *Olmalla*<sup>31</sup>. This eighteenth-century sequence seems to confirm the transformation postulated from the Oca example. Unfortunately, we have been unable to identify the modern name of the Peñafiel field<sup>32</sup>.

The form *Olmalla*, documented in Peñafiel as deriving from *Almoalla*, reappears once more in Castile. The context now is Melgar de Arriba (Valladolid) where, in 1803, we find a reference to a ‘pradera la Olmalla’, a communal meadow which the indebted council of Melgar was contemplating selling<sup>33</sup>. It seems probable that this equates with the modern field-name *La Hormalla*, situated by the river Cea, two kilometres south-west of Melgar (Lat. 42.262 N, Long. -5.119 W). This is an area regarded as having been of strategic significance in the early medieval period, Melgar controlling an area of some 500 km<sup>2</sup> south of Sahagún at the confluence of the two elements which, according to Sánchez Badiola, articulated the south-eastern defences of the kingdom of León: the river

<sup>29</sup> Denominations employed by Isaac MORENO in his recent reconstruction of the Roman road network in Castilla-León (*Vías romanas en Castilla y León* [online], available at <<http://www.viasromanas.net/>>) and on which we will rely henceforth. Villalazán – Montalegre coincides with a section of the northerly route between Mérida and Zaragoza, *Iter XXIV* as described in the Antonine Itinerary; Villalazán – Astorga is part of *Iter XXVI, ab Asturica Caesaraugusta*.

<sup>30</sup> Philippe SÉNAC, et al., “Note sur quelques fulús de narbonnaise (première moitié du VIII<sup>e</sup> siècle)”, *al-Qanṭara: Revista de estudios árabes*, 31 (2010), p. 230.

<sup>31</sup> Beatriz SANZ, “Los mozárabes en el Valle Esgueva (Valladolid)”, in Hermógenes Perdigüero and Antonio Álvarez (eds.), *Toponimia de Castilla y León*, Burgos, Universidad de Burgos, 1995, pp. 207-216.

<sup>32</sup> There is no trace of it in the local cartography, nor any knowledge of its whereabouts among local experts. In this latter respect, we would like to thank Jesús de la Villa from the local history association *Torre del Agua*, even though, ultimately, we have been unable to satisfactorily trace the name.

<sup>33</sup> José Luis RODRÍGUEZ FERNÁNDEZ, *Población, economía y sociedad en el mundo rural castellano (1500-1850)*. *Melgar de Arriba en su historia moderna*, Ph.D. thesis, Valladolid, Universidad de Valladolid, 2015, p. 189.

Cea and the historic route known as the *Carrera Zamorana*<sup>34</sup>. In this period Melgar de Arriba is identified with the *castro* of Foracasas, well documented in the Sahagún archives from 932 onwards, while neighbouring Melgar de Abajo was known as Castro Abduzi. The strategic importance of the area is underlined in one such charter from the year 988 which we will quote at length:

*And another decania on the river called Ceia between the castle known as Foracasas' and the other [known as] Castrum Abduzi ... and as the Saracens headed towards Sahagún in order to sack it, they destroyed said dependency carrying off all its contents, but without staying either there or in the church of Santovenia which is just above it*<sup>35</sup>

It is rather unusual to find such a narrative inserted into a charter, but here we are informed that, during one of Al-Manṣūr's many expeditions, heading towards Sahagún (*Domnos Sanctos*) a dependency (*decania*) between the two Melgars was ransacked and its contents (*substantia*) carried off. It seems strange to place such emphasis on the destruction of a relatively minor and unnamed objective, and given that in the passage a clear distinction is made between the *decania* and nearby Santa Eugenia, today Santovenia, two kilometres south-west of *Hormalla*, it is a distinct possibility that the *decania* is in fact our site which perhaps had retained some residual militaristic function. If nothing else, the passage reinforces the feeling that *Hormalla/Olmalla*, and thus perhaps another *almofalla*, was situated in an area of no little strategic significance but, as with Peñafiel or Coreses, with no known connection to an episcopal seat.

There are only two other occurrences of the otherwise opaque place-name *Hormalla* in the Peninsula, both in the Castilla-León region and both situated on elevations that dominate key arteries. On the western outskirts of Arcos de Jalón (Soria), *La Hormalla* dominates the route between Medinaceli and Calatayud as reconstructed by Moreno, the modern highway (N-II) between Madrid and Zaragoza (Lat. 41.213 N, Long. -2.293 W)<sup>36</sup>. The other appearance of an

<sup>34</sup> SÁNCHEZ BADIOLA, *La configuración de un sistema...*, pp. 110, 400 and 402; José Avelino GUTIÉRREZ, *Fortificaciones y feudalismo en el origen y formación del Reino Leonés (siglos IX-XIII)*, Valladolid, Universidad de Valladolid, 1995, p. 344.

<sup>35</sup> ... *alia decania in ripam amne vocitato Ceia inter castello quod dicunt de Foracasas et alium Castrum Abduzi ... Et dum sarrazeni pergunt ad Domnos Sanctos ut destruerent eum sicut et destruxerunt tunc ipsam decaniam destruxerunt (sic) et omnia substantia eius abstulerunt et non remansit in eodem loco nisi ipsa hereditate et illa ecclesia de Sancta Eugenia que est super ipsa decania*, José María MINGUEZ (ed.), *Colección Diplomática del Monasterio de Sahagún*, vol. I, León, Centro de Estudios e Investigación San Isidoro, 1976, doc. 340.

<sup>36</sup> MORENO, *Vías romanas en Castilla y León*, <<http://www.viasromanas.net/>>.

*Hormalla* is in Villazopeque (Burgos), and while this is not on any of the Roman roads identified by Moreno, said reconstruction is far from exhaustive<sup>37</sup>. It is, however, on a natural corridor beside the Arlanzón river, the route of the modern A-62 motorway (Burgos-Valladolid), and again on an elevation dominating the valley (Lat. 42.201 N, Long. -4.035 W).

As well as these six purely toponymic apparitions (Oca, Calahorra, León, Coreses, Peñafiel and Melgar – Table 1), in the introduction we referred to the use of *almofalla* as a loan-word in the medieval Romance of northern Iberia, and our next two references seemingly correspond with such usage. The best known Romance usage, recorded in the Fuero de Brihuega or in the *Cantar de mio Cid* (see note 3), is a metonymical one whereby the army is so designated in reference presumably to its camp, but we also encounter two early twelfth-century references to the camp itself, in both cases that of Alfonso I of Aragón. Known as the *Batallador* for his military prowess, as the estranged husband of queen Urraca of Castile, after 1110 Alfonso fought a series of campaigns against the queen's supporters across Castile and León. In this sense, while both references are recorded in Castile, they could equally be regarded as an Aragonese usage. It is indeed an interesting conundrum: the only two appearances of the term in the charters of the Aragonese monarch are when he is campaigning in Castile, but conversely the only two Castilian appearances are related to the presence of an Aragonese monarch. In both cases, charters issued by the *Batallador* are dated as having been composed in his *almofalla*, firstly in 1124 near Pangua, and then three years later at Isar, both today villages in modern Burgos province.

- *facta in illa almohalla iuxta Panguo, intrante Alba*<sup>38</sup>
- *facta in illa almohalla super Gissar*<sup>39</sup>

Both villages are near the Iter XXXIV, extensively used by the *Batallador* as he moved freely between León and Castile<sup>40</sup>. Pangua lies some two kilometres south-east of the historic route, and similarly Isar sits two kilometres south of it. In this later case, we note that Alfonso's *almohalla* was above (*super*) the village, perhaps on one of several spurs towards the north that dominate both the village and the Roman highway.

Taken separately, it might be possible to argue that these are also toponymical usages, since in texts of this period the use of capital letters to distinguish

<sup>37</sup> MORENO, *Vías romanas en Castilla y León*, p. 3.

<sup>38</sup> LEMA PUEYO, *Colección Diplomática de Alfonso I*, doc. 129, 1124.

<sup>39</sup> LEMA PUEYO, *Colección Diplomática de Alfonso I*, doc. 176, 1127.

<sup>40</sup> JOSÉ ÁNGEL LEMA PUEYO, "El itinerario de Alfonso I 'El batallador' (1104-1134)", *Historia. Instituciones. Documentos*, 24 (1997), pp. 333-354.



proper names from other parts of parts of speech was uncommon. The use of the article inclines us to think otherwise, although toponyms incorporating the definite article are far from uncommon, but the fact that we have two such references is surely decisive: they are not gratuitously identifying two tiny homonymous localities outside what are in themselves fairly obscure villages, but are referencing the king's camp. But what is particularly interesting here is that we encounter a second reference to the Pangua *almofalla*, fossilised by 1240 into what is unmistakably a toponym, *Amifollas*, now referring to a depopulated dependency of the monastery of Pangua<sup>41</sup>. Once again, moreover, we observe the false pluralisation encountered at Oca and Coreses.

The Pangua example is important because, when contrasted with the Calahorra case, it offers a second chronology for the consolidation of the name as a toponym bereft of any military sense, a process seemingly concluded in León and Oca by the late twelfth-century when we encounter the names. In Calahorra, the transformation seemingly took place between 934 and 1045; in Pangua, between 1124 and 1240. This reinforces the idea that we should not seek one explanation for all observed cases: the Pangua *almofalla* could be an exclusively twelfth-century phenomenon, while Calahorra is clearly earlier. Equally, though, the Pangua camp (and name) could of course be much older, with the Alfonso I reusing a pre-existing camp site whose strategic idoneity would not necessarily diminish over the centuries: in this sense it would be a case of Alfonso's *almo-falla* camped in the place known as *Almofolla* and celebrated for its strategic value. The point is that for any one of these iterations multiple chronologies are possible, which is what makes it so important to establish parallels between cases which might enrich our understanding.

As already mentioned, the form adopted today by the Oca *almofalla* is (*Las Olmayas*). If our reading is correct, such a transformation entails a number of interesting phenomena: the tendency to pluralize; the loss of any internal aspiration represented graphically as /F/ or /H/; the reduction of the resulting diphthong /O-A/ as /A/; the depalatalization of /LL/ in modern Castilian which leaves it virtually indistinguishable from /Y/; and, most obviously of all, the change in the initial vowel. There are then many modifications here, however, other Castilian examples seemingly support this evolution. The pluralisation is echoed in Coreses (*Almofallas*) and Pangua (*Amifollas*), while the Peñafiel evolution (*Almoalla*, *Olmualia*, *Ormualia*, *Olmalla*) details most of the other steps intuited at Oca. In the transformation of the etymologically unrelated toponym

<sup>41</sup> ... las decimas en la iglesia de Pangua e de Sant Esteban, de Annaastro e de Faydo e de Morgas e de Lizereuilla e de Stauillo e de Burueta e de Amifollas si se poblare, RODRÍGUEZ DE LAMA, *Colección diplomática medieval de la Rioja*, vol. IV, doc. 135.

*Almozara*, documented in the village of Villahernando (Burgos) in 1213, into the modern field-name *La Olmazada*<sup>42</sup>, we further observe a parallel evolution of the initial syllables *Almozara* > *Olmazada* supporting our perceived *Almofalla* > *Olmaya(s)*.

Toponym	Location	Strategic Value (Roman road / episcopal see)
<i>Almohala, Almohalla</i>	Calahorra (Rioja)	Calahorra (bishopric)
<i>Amifollas</i>	Pangua (Burgos)	Briviesca - Vitoria
<i>Almofalla, Olmayas</i>	Villafranca de Oca (Burgos)	Oca (bishopric)
<i>Almoalla, Olmualla, Ormualla, Olmalla</i>	Peñafiel (Valladolid)	Clunia-Simancas
<i>Olmalla, Hormalla</i>	Melgar de Arriba (Valladolid)	Sahagún - Villabrázaro
<i>Almofala</i>	<i>Montefrío</i> (León)	León (bishopric)
<i>Almofallas, Amofayas, Almafallas</i>	Coreses (Zamora)	Sasamón-Villalazán
<b>Table 1. Toponymic forms derived from <i>Almofalla</i> in North West Iberia</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• forms from historical (i.e. pre 1900) documentation in italics</li> <li>• all others from 20<sup>th</sup> C cartography</li> </ul>		

When talking in terms of strategic sites, our first examples drew attention towards the outskirts of ancient episcopal seats, but we suspect that in part this is because such areas are better documented in the medieval period than others under lay control. Nonetheless, Coreses (*Almofallas, Amofayas, Almafallas*), Pangua (*Almohalla, Amifollas*), Peñafiel (*Almoalla, Olmualla, Ormualla, Olmalla*), and possibly Melgar (*Olmalla, Hormalla*), show us that plausible phonetic derivatives of *Almofalla* also appear away from ecclesiastical sites. The common factor is that both dynamics are related to the Roman road network and strategic control of the region.

<sup>42</sup> RIESCO, *Toponimia de Zamora*, p. 733, citing different possibilities countenanced by Oliver, Asín, Corominas and Corriente.



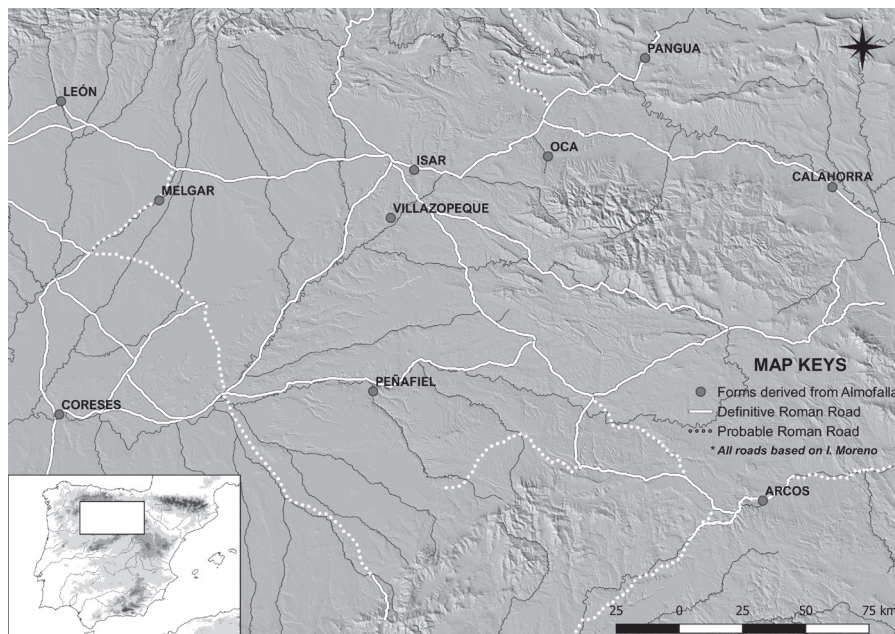


Fig. 2. Almofallas in NW Iberia.

## HISTORICAL CONTEXT

There remains the question of what chronology or chronologies we can attribute to these names. In theory, any moment between the Islamic invasion of 711 and first attestation of each place-name, which obviously varies from case to case, would be possible, however we will concentrate on three hypotheses.

The summoning of queen Toda to al-Nāṣir's camp at Calahorra in 934 situates us in the midst of one of the most notorious of a series of periodic Andalusí raids known as *aceifas* that racked the northern Meseta from the late eighth century until the death of al-Manṣūr on his return through Soria from one such incursion in 1002<sup>43</sup>. In works such as the *Muqtabis* some of these raids, such as the 934 one, are described in great detail, although the interest of the Andalusí chroniclers was often centred more on the triumphal dynamics of the raid than

<sup>43</sup> With reference only to the 'long' ninth century and the Merindades of northern Burgos, García González identifies raids in 791, 792, 794, 796, 801, 803, 806, 816, 823, 825, 826, 837, 838, 839, 846, 850, 854, 855, 863, 865, 866, 882, 883, 886 and 904, a litany in itself sufficiently expressive, Juan José GARCÍA GONZÁLEZ, "La cuenca de Miranda de Ebro en la transición de la Antigüedad a la Edad Media", in Javier Peña (ed.), *Miranda de Ebro en la Edad Media*, Miranda de Ebro, Ayuntamiento de Miranda de Ebro, 2002, p. 107.

on the lands being ravaged, and accordingly on occasions the place-names cited are opaque and the precise routes are obscure<sup>44</sup>, although in general terms we can distinguish between regions affected and general routes since the geography of the launching points and exit routes is much clearer. Accordingly, even if such raids were on occasions repeated with a degree of regularity, they clearly had varied objectives and thus routes, but most significantly the *aceifas* were by nature punishment raids, designed to intimidate, extract booty and destroy infrastructures, not to leave behind garrisons or subjugate territory<sup>45</sup>.

The Pangua case, by contrast, provides us with a powerful argument for a later coinage, and Alfonso the *Batallador*'s campaigns, both against Urraca's supporters and different Andalusi objectives, were exceptionally wide-ranging and dynamic. For example, at different moments of the year 1111, and referencing only the points where we observe *almofallas* or related forms, Alfonso is known to have ranged as far west as León, as he advanced and retreated along what was by then the Camino de Santiago, and as far south as Peñafiel<sup>46</sup>. We also know he was in Oca when he clashed with the troops of bishop Diego Gelmírez in the Summer of 1113<sup>47</sup>, and more generally that he waged war in the area between 1113-16<sup>48</sup>. He was obviously encamped at both Pangua and Isar during his later campaigns, between 1124 and 1127, thence our references.

The correlation between Alfonso's campaigns and the *almofallas* is certainly striking, although it obviously cannot explain all of the cases contemplated, the Calahorra example, already fossilised as a field-name before 1045, significantly predating him. Nor is there any record of any Aragonese presence in Coreses, and much less so of any sustained occupation of such a site. For, indeed, what most disinclines us from believing that the majority of these names have their origin in the twelfth century are the dynamics of Alfonso's Castilian campaigns, characterised by their rapid movement, as the number of widely separated sites visited in 1111 indicates. It is difficult to see how such necessarily fleeting visits would lead to the consolidation of a toponym, and much less of one in an alien tongue, when for such a usage to fossilize into a place-name it makes more sense if it were a recurrent usage over several years, as indeed M. Pérez indicates. Moreover, any references during these campaigns to sustained territorial

<sup>44</sup> *las dificultades que plantean las propias fuentes árabes respecto al estudio de la toponimia, debido a la lógica ausencia de la deseada explicitud en su manejo, lo cual deja un campo abierto a las interpretaciones*, Alejandro GARCÍA SANJUÁN, "El significado geográfico del topónimo Al-Andalus en las fuentes árabes", *Anuario de estudios medievales*, 33 (2003), p. 4.

<sup>45</sup> Felipe MAÍLLO SALGADO, *Vocabulario de Historia árabe e islámica*, Madrid, Akal, 1999, p. 17; Josep SUÑÉ, *Guerra, ejército y fiscalidad en al-Andalus (ss. VIII-XII)*, Madrid, La Ergástula, 2020, pp. 78-83.

<sup>46</sup> LEMA PUEYO, "El itinerario de Alfonso I...", p. 341.

<sup>47</sup> LEMA PUEYO, "El itinerario de Alfonso I...", p. 342.

<sup>48</sup> LEMA PUEYO, "El itinerario de Alfonso I...", pp. 342-343.

control refers to castles<sup>49</sup>. This distinction provides us with another example of just how valuable the identification in Oca of the medieval field-name with a specific site proves to be, since it enables us to distinguish between the site of the twelfth-century castle, next to the equally twelfth-century burgh of Villafranca and presumably the object of the Batallador's attentions, and *Las Olmayas* some three kilometres to the north. Nonetheless, even if the Oca *almofalla* would have made an improbable camp site for Alfonso's host, elsewhere –for example in Pangua– it is possible that the Aragonese king, already familiar with the term from his Andalusí campaigns and encountering the rural *almofallas* which, as we see from the documentation of the time, retained that denomination well into the twelfth-century and which in many cases would also have retained their military potential, pitched his camp in strategic settings already so-named.

The third hypothesis takes us back to the early eighth century, the period immediately after the Islamic conquest, and to our starting point with three *almofallas* documented outside the episcopal seats of Calahorra, Oca and León. The probable role of such centres in the immediate post-conquest settlement was determined by the way some bishops collaborated with the invaders, converting themselves into intermediaries between the local population and the new occupiers, the latter interested above all in extracting rents from the former<sup>50</sup>. According to this model, as long as taxes were being collected, the status quo could be respected, and Islamic presence at such centres could well have been limited to smallish detachments controlling the access routes on the outskirts of the episcopal seats, a dynamic compatible with the location of all three of our episcopal *almofallas*.

In northern Catalonia, Martí has used generic toponyms to identify an extensive network of Islamic settlements, often predicated around episcopal centres, with certain toponymic generics such as *al-Balāt* / *Palatium* being concentrated around collaborating sees and by contrast absent from the hinterland or resisting bishoprics, a distribution that suggests that their creation was related to the dynamics of the conquest period and its immediate aftermath<sup>51</sup>.

With reference to the Narbonense, similar to the North West in the sense of being another peripheral area incorporated into al-Andalus during little more than a generation, Acién observed how Carlos Martel's campaigns focussed on attacking collaborationist episcopal centres at Béziers, Agde, Maguelone and Ni-

<sup>49</sup> For example, the castles at Burgos and at Muñó, LEMA PUEYO, "El itinerario de Alfonso I...", pp. 339 and 342.

<sup>50</sup> Manuel ACIÉN, "La herencia del protofeudalismo visigodo frente a la imposición del estado islámico", in Luis Caballero (ed.), *Visigodos y omeyas*, Madrid, CSIC, 2001, p. 430; Eduardo MANZANO MORENO, *Conquistadores, Emires y Califas*, Madrid, Crítica, 2006, pp. 48-49 and 53.

<sup>51</sup> MARTÍ, "Estrategias de conquista y ocupación islámica...", p. 728.

mes<sup>52</sup>. We see a similar dynamic at work in the Duero basin and the Upper Ebro when, according to the *Chronicle of Alfonso III*, around the year 750 the Asturian monarchy, led by Alfonso I of Asturias, sacked a number of cities, among them León and Oca, previously ‘oppressed’ by the Saracens<sup>53</sup>. Recently, authors such as Escalona and Isla have urged caution with the geography of this famous passage, suggesting it has more to do with late ninth-century politics of expansion than the reality of any eighth-century campaigns<sup>54</sup>. Nonetheless, such a caveat is more pertinent to distant cities in the Rioja or south of the Duero than those along the Iter XXXIV which, as Escalona notes, are similarly referred to in this way in the *Chronica Albeldensis* while the Arab chronicles too recount a limited range of conquests. In this sense, one possibility is that a reduced list of more northerly centres, such as Oca and León, were indeed attacked as described, and that subsequently the narrative account expanded the geography south and east in accordance with Alfonso III’s territorial pretensions. According to this third hypothesis, then, the *almofallas* of Oca and León would indeed be a fossil record of the Muslim occupation that provoked the Asturian counter-offensives.

Oca is today rather a backwater and indeed has been so since around 750. Sporadic medieval attempts to recover the episcopal seat naturally blamed its decline on the Muslims, often referred to as *Ishmaelites* in medieval prose<sup>55</sup>, even though, ironically, it was probably the Asturian raids that applied the *coup de grâce*. Nonetheless, it is precisely this truncated historical trajectory which potentially makes Oca such a useful tool for our understanding of the Islamic occupation of the North West. Other episcopal centres on whose outskirts the word *almofalla* appears have longer and more complex urban histories that allow for different explanations: a host of possibilities in Toledo over its almost 400 years of Islamic domination; a launching point for ‘Abd al-Rahman’s raids in Calahorra; a hypothetical extramural *barrio* in eleventh-century León. In Oca, none of these alternative solutions work. Alfonso the *Batallador*’s campaigns complicate matters, admittedly, but even so it is difficult to see how such a necessarily brief presence could explain the generation and consolidation of such a name.

<sup>52</sup> ACIÉN, “La herencia del protofeudalismo...”, p. 430.

<sup>53</sup> *multa aduersus Sarracenos prelia gessit atque plurimas ciuitates ab eis olim oppressas cepit, id est, Lucum, Tudem, Portucalem, Bracaram metropolitanam, Uiseo, Flauias, Agata, Letesma, Salamantica, Zamora, Abela, Secobia, Astorica, Legione, Saldania, Mabe, Amaia, Septemanca, Auca ...* Juan Gil, José Luis Moralejo and J. Ignacio Ruiz de la Peña (eds.), *Crónicas asturianas*, Oviedo, Universidad de Oviedo, 1985, here *Crónica de Alfonso III (ad Sebastianum)*, c. 13, p. 133.

<sup>54</sup> Julio ESCALONA, “Family memories. Inventing Alfonso I of Asturias”, in Isabel Alfonso, Hugh Kennedy and Julio Escalona (eds.), *Building legitimacy. Political discourses and forms of legitimization in medieval societies*, Leiden; Boston, Brill, 2004, pp. 223-62, especially pp. 238 and 247; Amancio ISLA, *La Crónica de Alfonso III y el reino Astur*, Gijón, Trea, 2019, pp. 194-198.

<sup>55</sup> For example, *impia ismaelitarum gente destructam*, José Manuel GARRIDO (ed.), *Documentación de la Catedral de Burgos*, Burgos, Ediciones Garrido, 1983, doc. 26, 1075.

Moreover, among the episcopal examples, uniquely in Oca we have both a medieval mention and a contemporary field-name, and so we know exactly where the *almofalla* was: some three kilometres north of the medieval castle. Between the two sites lies the Roman city of Auka, partially excavated in 1989 in the *Vega Bajera*, with *terra sigilata* found across some twenty hectares<sup>56</sup>. Right on the north-eastern limit of this urbanised area is the Ermita de San Félix, traditionally regarded as the seat of the Visigothic bishopric. Such an extramural setting coincides with contemporary ecclesiastical precincts observed in Córdoba, Toledo, Mérida and Braga, and perhaps in León too at the Navatejera site<sup>57</sup>. While Oca was clearly a more modest centre than these others, its bishops don't seem to have been free of architectural pretensions, as the recent discovery of a Merovingian inspired capitel indicates<sup>58</sup>. The combination of the topography of the valley, late-Visigothic urban dynamics and thence the siting of the episcopal seat to the north of the Roman city, and the main access route heading further north towards the Iter XXXIV all explain why *Almofalla* / *Olmayas* is situated some three kilometres north of the twelfth-century castle and re-founded town (*Villafranca*) that would have attracted Alfonso the *Batallador's* attention. That Islamic control of the area lasted some thirty or forty years, in contrast to the *Batallador's* much briefer presence, is the decisive point in favour of an eighth-century chronology to explain the origin of at least the Oca *almofalla*. By extension it then becomes the most economical solution for analogous cases such as León.

Finally, looking now beyond the topography of the Oca valley, it is worth briefly considering the logistical implications of such an eighth-century dynamic of territorial control. With reference to the Narbonense, Sénac postulates a strategy of occupation with control points along the ancient Roman roads every fifteen to twenty kilometres<sup>59</sup>. This scale, predicated on a typical day's march, coincides well with al-Bakri's statement that there were some thirty camps between Algeciras and *Balāṭ Ḥumayd*, traditionally associated with the Puerto de

<sup>56</sup> Carlos MANERO, *La Vega Bajera* [Villafranca Montes de Oca], unpublished excavation report deposited with the Servicio Territorial de Cultura de Burgos, 1989.

<sup>57</sup> Lauro OLMO ENCISO, "Nuevas perspectivas para el estudio de la ciudad en la época visigoda", *Los Visigodos y su mundo*, Madrid, Ateneo de Madrid, 1990, p. 264. In Mérida, for example, an episcopal precinct was created near the shrine of Santa Eulalia by bishop, Mausona around 575, Lauro OLMO ENCISO, "Consideraciones sobre la ciudad en época visigoda", *Arqueología y Territorio Medieval*, 5 (1998), p. 112; for Navatejera, see GUTIÉRREZ, "Legio (León) en época visigoda...", p. 135.

<sup>58</sup> José Ángel APARICIO, "Recuperación de un capitel Altomedieval en Villafranca Montes de Oca (Burgos)", *Boletín de arqueología medieval*, 13 (2007), pp. 257-266.

<sup>59</sup> *dans un premier temps pour le moins, les contingents musulmans limiterent leur presence a quelques points de controle situes le long des anciennes voies romaines ... distants les uns des autres de quinze a vingt kilometres environ*, SÉNAC, "Note sur quelques fulús...", p. 230.



Guadarrama, some 540 kilometres to the north as the crow flies<sup>60</sup>. Given the limited size of an invading force generally accepted as consisting of approximately ten thousand troops and the scale of the Iberian Peninsula (a thousand kilometres separate the Narbonense from Galician Finisterre) a mere hundred such posts stretched across northern Iberia and manned by fifty men at each would have accounted for a sizeable proportion of the invaders' manpower. We should then think in terms of barely fortified<sup>61</sup> staging posts manned by a skeleton force as opposed to fully garrisoned camps, and moreover of a reduced network limited to only the most important axes. In Castile-León region this could well have amounted to little more than two east-west lines of control, one along the Iter XXXIV, another along the Duero, with a few intermediate points connecting these two routes. In these terms, all of the toponymical attestations of *almofalla* in the North West –in Pangua, in Oca, in León, in Peñafiel and in Coreses– coincide with these two axes.

## CONCLUSIONS

Of the three scenarios contemplated, the only one that really fulfils the criterion of sustained use identified by M. Perez is the dynamic of control of the territory to ensure subjugation and enable the extraction of rents in the period after the 711 conquest. Accordingly, we believe it should be prioritised when it comes to explaining what we can now recognise as a series of names which are not scattered arbitrarily across the Northern Meseta but seem rather to concentrate at strategic points outside episcopal sees (Oca, León) or at crossing points over the Duero (Peñafiel, Coreses).

Of course, all three military dynamics coincide in the use of the old Roman Road system which is generally agreed to have been used by both eighth-century invaders<sup>62</sup> and ninth- and tenth-century raiders<sup>63</sup>, and which we know to have still been readily recognisable in the central medieval period<sup>64</sup>. Thus Alfonso el

<sup>60</sup> *no haría alto en maḥalla alguna de Al-Andalus, de las treinta comprendidas entre la de su desembarco en Algeciras (al-Īzārat al-Jaḍrā') y la maḥalla Balāt Ḥumayd, de su arribo a lo más extremo de la frontera*, as quoted by FRANCO SÁNCHEZ, "La toponimia árabe de los espacios viales...", p. 172.

<sup>61</sup> FRANCO SÁNCHEZ, "La toponimia árabe de los espacios viales...", p. 172.

<sup>62</sup> SÉNAC, "Note sur quelques fulūs...", p. 230, as quoted in note 60.

<sup>63</sup> FRANCISCO FRANCO SÁNCHEZ, "Aportaciones al estudio de las vías de época islámica en la Meseta Norte", in Eufemio Lorenzo Sanz (ed.), *Proyección histórica de España en sus tres culturas, Castilla y León, América y el Mediterráneo*, vol. 1, León, Junta de Castilla y León, 1993, p. 78.

<sup>64</sup> Juan José GARCÍA GONZÁLEZ, David PETERSON, Iván GARCÍA IZQUIERDO and Lucía GARCÍA ARAGÓN, "Introducción al conocimiento de la viaria romana a través de la documentación altomedieval", in *Actas del V Congreso Ingeniería Romana. Las técnicas y las construcciones de la Ingeniería Romana*, Córdoba, Fundación de la Ingeniería Técnica de Obras Públicas, 2010, pp. 135-163.

Batallador was using essentially the same infrastructure as the Muslim invaders almost exactly four hundred years before, with the Iter XXXIV transformed into the Camino de Santiago and thus, if anything, gaining in strategic importance as it became the main vector of urban development in the North West. But rather than thinking in terms of these camps having their origin in the Batallador's campaigns, we think it more likely that Alfonso led his army along the old roads dotted with names recording previous Islamic occupation and indeed on occasions used some such sites which still retained both their names and their strategic relevance.

If this is the case, and their origin is indeed in the eighth century, as Acién foresaw, it might indeed prove to be the North which provides the best new evidence for dynamics of the Islamic conquest and subsequent military control of the territory and extraction of rents. If our hypothesis proves well-founded, we hope that this new line of research, although here in its infancy, can develop through further analysis of linguistics, landscape, communications systems and perhaps even material remains and thus add to our burgeoning understanding of this period. Much work has recently been done on the material remains of Roman camps in the north-west<sup>65</sup> and it would be of great interest to compare and contrast two processes of conquest and territorial domination of the same region.

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<sup>65</sup> François DIDIERJEAN, "Camps militaires romains et archéologie aérienne méthodologie et données nouvelles", *Saldvie: Estudios de prehistoria y arqueología*, 8 (2008), pp. 95-116; Julio VIDAL ENCINAS et alii, "La presencia del ejército romano en las montañas de El Bierzo (León): novedades arqueológicas", *Anales de arqueología cordobesa*, 29 (2018), pp. 85-110; Jesús GARCÍA SÁNCHEZ and José Manuel COSTA GARCÍA, "Del *Oppidum* indígena a la ciudad romana. Evolución del paisaje de Segisamo (Sasamón, Burgos, España) a través de la fotografía aérea. Datos de la prospección aérea de 2019", *Lucentum*, 39 (2020), pp. 131-149; Esperanza MARTÍN HERNÁNDEZ, et alii, "Castrametación romana en la Meseta Norte hispana: nuevas evidencias de recintos militares en la vertiente meridional de la cordillera Cantábrica (provincias de Burgos y Palencia)", *Zephyrus: Revista de prehistoria y arqueología*, 86 (2020), pp. 143-164; Ángel MORILLO, et alii, "Constructing the archaeology of the Roman conquest of Hispania: new evidence, perspectives and challenges Constructing the archaeology of the Roman conquest of 'Hispania': new evidence, perspectives and challenges", *Journal of Roman archaeology*, 33 (2020), pp. 36-5; José Manuel COSTA GARCÍA, Andrés MENÉNDEZ BLANCO, João FONTE and Francisco ALONSO TOUCIDO, "A Penaparda (A Fonsagrada, Lugo - Santalla, Asturias): intervención arqueológica en un recinto campamental romano en el Occidente de la Cordillera Cantábrica", *Cuadernos de estudios gallegos*, 67, 133 (2020), pp. 45-74.



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