



The emergence of a language

Emergence of an awareness on a differentiating Romance

Medieval scribes become well aware of the contrast differentiating the language they use in writing (Latin) and what is spoken in their social environment (the *Romançio* or Romance), as they sometimes state in their documents. Nevertheless, **generalizing a territorial awareness of the language is going to take quite some time. In the Hispanic kingdoms that is not going to be secured until late in the Middle Ages** or in modern times. Thus, in the medieval period there is no explicit mention to an Asturian or Leonese language, and extremely few and arguable to Galician and Castilian.

Image 1. Reproduction of a document from 1141 (Archive in the Monastery of San Pelayo, San Vicente collection, No. 164).

Nevertheless, in Asturias there is a very early evidence of a fledgling geo-linguistic conscience. In 1141 in a list of properties a scribe in the monastery of San Vicente d'Uviéu mentions some *caseriis ut utar vulgi sermone more patrie*; that is, some “*caserías, as commoners say in the language being used in our motherland,*” where the Asturian Romance is mentioned as a language being spoken (*sermone*), although not written, by the commoners (*uulgi*) and not the clergymen, which is passed down from tradition (*more*) and not out of learning as Latin, and which is particular to a territory (*patrie*).

This testimony of a territorial conscience in connection to a Romance language is probably the oldest one in the Peninsula, although it is not possible to determine which language from which *motherland* it means: whether specifically a popular language in Asturias or a generic Romance in the Leonese kingdoms (i.e. the Hispanic northeast) as opposed to the Arab in the south or to other Romance languages from the Gallo-Roman area which were starting to be felt due to the arrival of French monastic orders, pilgrims to Santiago and San Salvador d'Uviéu or Frankish

immigrants who are then starting to settle in Uviéu or Avilés.

Image 2. Church of Santa María la Real de la Corte, originally belonging to the monastery of San Vicente, the origin of the city of Uviéu according to tradition and an important scriptural centre during the Middle Ages.