1. INTRODUCTION

This poster synthesises the results of two different but complementary studies (funded by Xunta de Galicia and European Commission Marie Curie CIG grant) on the early medieval Christian landscapes of Galicia and the social context in which they were rooted:

- First, a macro-scale approach to the territorial organization of the Church in this area by means of the “Suevic Parish List,” a valuable text which offers an interesting picture of the ecclesiastical administration by the end of the 6th century. By means of an interdisciplinary approach, it is possible to identify different strategies for the implementation of the first parishes in the galician countryside.
- Second, a micro-scale study of the parish of Santa María de Augas Santas (Alarcón, Ourense). Combining archaeological, historical and ethnoarchaeological methods, new information on the chronology of primary religious landscapes as they lie behind it, can be achieved. The combination of both perspectives offer some ideas to reflect on how religious landscapes reflect social transformations in Late Antiquity and Early Middle Ages.

2. THE “SUEVIC PARISH LIST” AND THE ECCLESIASTICAL LANDSCAPES

- The Parochialie Sueviae was written between 570 and 590 AD and consists of a list of 133 episcopal sees in the Suevic Kingdom of Galicia, including the names of a total of 132 churches (ecclesiae) (David 1947). These are “episcopal” churches, not private foundations, so they can be then considered as “ancient parishes.”
- Despite its enormous interest, this text has scarcely been studied from a spatial perspective, given the problematic identification of the churches. We have recently proposed a new study and mapping of these churches, based on 3 factors: the archaeological evidence, the spatial logic of the text, and the dedications of the churches (Sánchez Pardo, in press).
- The Suevic Parish List does not offer a complete picture of parishes covering the territory of Galicia, but shows substantial differences in the levels of ecclesiastical organization depending of the see: south-west Galicia (especially the bishopric of Tudev) was in advance with a higher density of parishes. The map (which is a snapshot of a process in development) has been explained with reference to the economical-political relations between bishops and the local elites who supported the creation of ecclesiastical parishes (in a place without bishopric, in press).
- Parish organization in Galicia by the end of 6th century was characterized by a flexible adaptation to different contexts. In the most dynamic areas of the region these “parish” churches are located in small Roman towns (for example, Gueira (A Pobra de Valdivia), Correuelos (Santa María de Curtis), Celons (Caldas de Reis), following general trends in other areas of late antique South Europe (Ripoll and Velázquez 1999; Ringle and Chavarria 2006).
- However, in less central areas, where these Romanised settlements did not exist or had been abandoned in the 5th century, ecclesiastical organization found original solutions, adapted to rural contexts. An interesting example is the parish of Labacengos near Ferrol in northern Galicia. The current church of Santa María de Labacengos is still located in an area of scattered farms and small hamlets, close to an Iron Age hilltop settlement. No evidence of late antique settlement has been detected here and it seems probable that the original parish church was a focal point for dispersed communities.

3. STRATEGIES OF CHRISTIANIZATION AT LOCAL LEVEL: THE CASE OF AUGAS SANTAS

- The archaeological and historical study of the parish of Santa María de Augas Santas (Alarcón, Ourense), funded by Xunta de Galicia (2010 - 2015) has revealed a whole sacred landscape with roots in the Iron Age that was adapted and transformed around the legend of Santa Maria and the construction of the “Basílica de la Asunción” in the 6th century.
- Santa María de Augas Santas is a local version of the legend of Santa María Magdalena (Andrés Pardo, 2014). Her legend is documented from the sixteenth century: “Santo Mariá de Augas Santas” (Allariz, Ourense). Combining archaeological, historical, and ethnoarchaeological data and the study of the “Suevic Parish List” (n realizado por el autor en colaboración con Patricia Rodríguez Costas). The church of Ascension: the oven of the torture - Pioucas: the pond where Sto Mariá was “refreshed” by St Peter - Santa María sacred fountains: the places where the head of Sto Mariá bounced - Santa Maríta oaks: places with miraculous properties - Vaca Santa: stone where the head of St Maria bounced - Armae Iron Age hillfort: the “sweat lodge” of Sto Mariá - Vaca Santa: stone where the head of St Maria bounced - Armae Iron Age hillfort: the “sweat lodge” of St Maria - Armae Iron Age hillfort: the prison of St Maria - Pioucas: the pond where St Maria was refreshed by St Peter - Santa María sacred fountains: the places where the head of St Maria bounced - Santa Maríta oaks: places with miraculous properties - Vaca Santa: stone where the head of St Maria bounced - Armae Iron Age hillfort: the “sweat lodge” of St Maria
- So all the elements of a pre-christian religious landscape, including solar alignments connecting these places, were recontextualised by Christianity. The landscape, the specific places, were seen as “material support of the mysticism of Santa María Magdalena” (Sanchez Pardo 2014).
- The archaeological study of the architecture of the Ascension Church has identified 6 phases. Overall, however, it has revealed that the first Christian building was made over an Iron Age ritual “sweat lodge” linked to the nearby Armae hillfort (Blanco et al. 2009). So the “oven” was the saint was tortured reproduces the function of the sweat lodge: water (Maria means water)+fire=steam (sweat lodge)
- Absolute dating of the mortars by Optically Stimulated Luminiscence (performed by Dr. Jose Sanjurjo Sánchez, UDC) shows that this first church was built in the 6th century (552-590 AD). This also indicates that less part of the basis of the legend already existed in this period, with an intentional symbolic reuse of the site.

4. CONCLUSIONS

- The interdisciplinary study of the “Suevic Parish List” shows how the first Christian organization in Galicia adapted old territorial units but also created new ones. It had to adapt to different realities, not always consistent with other parts of the ancient Roman Empire, and original solutions were promoted in order to establish an apparent uniform pattern. But it was also important for social elites since it was based on negotiations between the supralocal power of bishops and local elites.
- The study case of Augas Santas reveal that Christian narratives did not use previous religious landscape randomly, because the previous sacred landscape was also structured. So rather than focusing on single elements we need to understand how whole religious landscapes were (in some cases) christianized. Strategies of ideologial and symbolical power lie behind this restorations and adaptation of some places and prechristian Galician Church and indicate that social elites responsibles of the evangelization of rural Galicia had a deep understanding of the local conditions in order to change them (“religious engineering”) in Late Antiquity.

5. BIBLIOGRAPHY