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ABSTRACT

Signs and social status: semiotic study exploring the signatures on medieval charters (10th-12th centuries)

One of the most characteristic diplomatic elements of the medieval charters preserved for the Iberian Peninsula is the incorporation of a large list of individuals within the signature box confirming the legal act reported in each document. On these lists, the grantors and witnesses of the documentary action, and sometimes even the amanuenses, are referred to by name, by title or profession. Also a representative and distinctive sign, written by each individual or, more commonly, by the scribe or copyist of the charter was in some cases incorporated. But, what types of signs can be found? What determines the use of one design or another?

Reviewing the Visigothic script corpus from the northwestern Iberian Peninsula, in this paper the classification by types –calligraphic or monogrammatic– of these personal signs and their use given the chronological stage of the document –from the early 10th century to the late 12th century– will be revised. On this basis, the specific designs of some of these personal signs and the correspondence between the designs each individual chose and a specific social status will be discussed.