

Asturian-leonese: Linguistic, Sociolinguistic and Legal Aspects

Héctor García Gil

University of León

Member of the Asturian Philology Research Group (University of Oviedo)



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Publisher

CIEMEN
C/ Rocafort 242, bis
E-08029 BARCELONA (CATALONIA)
Tel. (+34) 93 444 38 00
Fax (+34) 93 444 38 09
mercator@ciemen.cat
www.ciemen.cat/mercator

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Layout

Ferran Royo i Urgellés

ISSN: 2013-102X

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Translated by Peter David Jenkins

Acknowledgments

Mercator Linguistic Rights and Legislation and the author wish to express their gratitude to Dr. Amadeu Ferreira (ALM Asociación de la Lhéngua Mirandesa), Dr. José Enrique Gargallo Gil (University of Barcelona), and Aconceyamientu de Xuristes pol Asturianu (AXA) for their expert advice and input, and especially to José Pedro Ferreira (ILTEC – University of Lisbon) for his help and source material documentation.

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E o certo é que ela informou e deu vida de relação e conhecimento, a todo um povo desta região e informou a cultura de todo este Nordeste Transmontano de Entre Douro e Sabor, desde o Norte de Moncorvo até Covadonga e o mar Cantábrico. Informou e definiu uma cultura material ...

*António Maria Mourinho
Miranda de I Douro, 10 Julho de 1993*

In: ESTUDOS DE PHILOGIA MIRANDESA, Volume II (J. Leite de Vasconcelos), Apresentação. Edição da Câmara Municipal de Miranda do Douro 1993

[And the truth is that it shaped and brought to life relationships and knowledge to an entire people of this region, and it forged the culture of this whole northeastern part of Trás-os-Montes between the rivers Douro and Sabor, from the North of Moncorvo to Covadonga and the Bay of Biscay. It shaped and defined a material culture ...

António Maria Mourinho
Miranda do Douro, July 10th 1993]

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Asturian-leonese: linguistic, sociolinguistic and legal aspects

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Introduction

The aim of this paper is to describe the main characteristics of the Asturian language or Asturian-Leonese, both from a linguistic and from a sociolinguistic perspective. The study of these aspects shall then be followed by an analysis of the legal treatment of the language and legal framework in the respective regions where it is spoken. Special attention shall be paid to those issues that there is conflict on and to gaps in the system regarding this language, such as the absence of official status as a language in Asturophone regions¹ in Spain; the partially – not full – official status of Mirandese in the Portuguese Republic; the lack of any set procedure to establish the language in the society of any of these areas despite the policies formed in Asturias; and the complete absence of such plans in the Asturophone parts of the Leonese region in the Autonomous Community of Castile&León. The division is into various levels of administration (two countries, two Spanish autonomous communities and three provinces) and has, or may have, negative repercussions for the universal survival of Asturian-Leonese.

¹ The purpose of the term 'Asturophone' is to express the idea of a language community that speaks one of the dialects or varieties that originated in the area where the Asturian or Asturian-Leonese Romance language is spoken within the Asturian, Leonese and Mirandese regions.



Illustration 1: Asturian-Leonese in Europe

1. The linguistic geography of astur² or asturian-leonese

Asturian — also known as *asturiano-leonés*, *asturianoleonés*, *asturleonés* or *leonés* in Spanish [‘Asturian-Leonese’, ‘Asturleonese’ or ‘Leonese’], this latter term especially used in the terminology of various scientific works influenced by Menéndez Pidal’s *El dialecto leonés* (1906) – is the autochthonous Romance language spoken between the Galician-Portuguese and Spanish-speaking territories in the western part of the Iberian Peninsula. Asturian is spoken throughout Asturias — with the exception of the westernmost part between the rivers Navia and Eo, ascribed by the academic community to Galician-Portuguese-speaking territory and recognized by law in the Principality as Asturian Galician or *eonaviego*. At present it is spoken in northern and western parts of the province of León in places such as *Sayambre*, *Valdión*, *Los Argüechos/Los Argüeyos*, *Gordón*, *Babia*, *L.laciana*, *Furniella*, a large part of the *El Bierzu* region, *Cabreira*, *Maragatos*, *Cepeda*, *Oumaña* and *la Ribera del Órbigo*, and throughout the west of the province of Zamora, in *Senabria*, *Aliste* and *La Carbayeda*. In the westernmost part of *El Bierzu* and *Senabria* it is already possible to see dialects that come under the Galician-Portuguese linguistic territory. Lastly, in Portugal, in the district of *Bragança*, Mirandese

2 This is a term proposed by the Asturian Language Academy in Asturias that extends beyond mere reference to administrative divisions. ‘Astur’ in its first sense refers to evolved Latin spoken in those territories inhabited by the Astur people when the Romans arrived (from Asturias to Terra de Miranda). Used in a broader sense it would refer to the closest territories that spoke the same type of Romance language, even though they were not populated by the Asturs. It has already been used, for instance, by X.L. García Arias and X.A. González Riaño in 2002 in ‘*Reflexiones sol dominio llingüísticu ástur*’ in *Anclabes llingüísticos no Ounion Ouropeia* (2002).

— the termed used for the Asturian-Leonese variety in this region — is spoken in the municipality of *Miranda de l Douro* and three villages in that of *Vimioso/Bumioso* — *Angueira, Caçareilhos* and *Bilasseco* — bordering with Spain — i.e., with the province of Zamora — and spanning an area of approximately 450 km², known as *Terra de Miranda*. Also, in Portugal, the dialect spoken in *Rueidenor* and *Guadramil*, towns in the same bordering district with Spain, are considered to be part of the Asturian-Leonese linguistic territory.

However, a larger area tends to be mentioned in several philological works: western Cantabria, and the west of Salamanca and Extremadura (Menéndez Pidal, 1906: 9-13 or Ana Cano, 1992: 652). These areas, which lie south of Asturias, where the language did not originate but had Asturleonese population due to resettlements, must be currently considered as zones in which Spanish established itself quicker and earlier, and although they bear various Asturleonese traits, they survive as part of a Spanish dialect that took the place of Asturian-Leonese earlier, unlike in the regions north of the Duero river, where the language was first established. Therefore, the Extremaduran dialects — including the varieties spoken in the south of the province of Salamanca — would be dialects in transition (Zamora Vicente, 1960: 332-336, J.F. García Santos 1992: 701-708 and X. Viejo 2003: 27) between both territories, the Asturian or Asturian-Leonese one and the Spanish one, where the language substitution process occurred earlier and created a hybrid language that bore features of both, but the strength of this process over the years has caused them to become closer to Spanish and to be considered as dialects of Spanish, unique to these areas, that have been influenced by Asturian-Leonese rather than part of a northern language unit.

Likewise, in the north of the Iberian Peninsula, in Cantabria, we can see in the Cantabrian dialect or *montañés* a set of linguistic features common to Asturian-Leonese, together with an evolution in different directions, as may be the case phonetically; for instance, /j/, /ʃ/ > /h/ ~ /x/: *vieh.u* < *vieyu* < *VET'LU*, or *cah.a* < *caxa* < *CAPSA*, taking the course of modern Spanish (Castilian) language from the 16th century onwards. Cantabrian spoken varieties bear certain traits that could be deemed characteristic of Asturian-Leonese, with writers like X.L. García Arias (2003: 42) having classed them as what he calls *astur-santiyanés*, a category for varieties part of eastern Asturian, since he perceives the presence in this area of defining lexical and toponymous characteristics of pure Asturian-Leonese. But, at the same time, other Cantabrian Spanish/Castilian features have made their way into the easternmost part of Asturias. As Francisco García González (1982: 173-191) outlined, the spoken varieties of the Asturian villages in *Peñamelleras, Ribadeva* and the eastern part of *Llanes* — from the Purón river — would come under those varieties spoken in Cantabria. This way, we consider the Cantabrian dialect to be singular, in terms of our Asturian-Leonese linguistic territory, and although there are traces and evidence of our language in the Cantabrian dialect or *montañés*, we cannot currently consider the Cantabrian dialect as part of Asturian-Leonese, if the Cantabrian spoken varieties were ever part of it and we do not stand before a kind of indigenous Cantabrian Romance dialect prematurely snuffed out by northern Spanish/Castilian, in which its characteristics have been watered down and in which those that, in the main, made it similar to Asturian-Leonese have disappeared. An Extremaduran dialect, and a Cantabrian one too, for which their people must seek the right procedure for it to become accepted and for it to be preserved, a path that they themselves must take and which corresponds to their historical traits and features and attends to the current situation regarding their linguistic reality.

Alongside these, there are areas in the centre and part of the east of the provinces of León and Zamora where, at present, a regional variety of Castilian (Spanish) is spoken — Leonese —, which comes under the seventh definition of the word in the *Diccionario de la Real Academia Española*, defined as a variety of Spanish spoken in León. This is a Spanish that has historical traces of Asturian-Leonese in it, particularly in terms of lexis.

Between 300 000 and 450 000 in these three territories speak Asturian-Leonese, with between 5 000 and 10 000 speaking the Mirandese variety, between 20 000 and 25 000 speakers in the Leonese region (provinces of León and Zamora), and the majority of the Asturophone population in Asturias with some 150 000 speakers having Asturian as their first language and approximately 250 000 who could be considered 'semi-speakers'. These figures are based on data and estimates from several sociolinguistic research studies, as specific questions have not been asked yet in the respective censuses conducted.



Map 2: Asturian-Leonese language territory (shown in green)

1.1. Linguistic Characterization and Diatopical Varieties

Asturian-Leonese, or Asturian, is going to be characterized³ with respect to the neighbouring Spanish/Castilian and Galician-Portuguese by a set of phonic and morphosyntactic features that, at times, place it closer to Galician; at others, closer to Spanish/Castilian; and on other occasions, as one can imagine, allow it to come into a class as a language in its own right due to some of its unique features. Examples of such situations may be F-> /f/: FORMICA > *formiga*, FERMĒNTU > *furmientu*, the maintenance of the Latin -MB-: PALŪMBA > *palomba*; the presence of the voiceless palatal fricative phoneme /j/ that has different origins; the use of the palate for the L- either in palatal lateral /ʎ/ or voiceless apico post-alveolar affricate [tʃ] *llobu* or *l.lobu* < LŪPU; and also the five vowels in the Asturian-Leonese language in tonic position that turn the Latin /Ē/ and /Ō/ into diphthongs *tierra* < TĒRRA and *puerta* < PŌRTA, unlike Galician-Portuguese and with the diphthongization of the /ō/ in front of yod unlike both Spanish/Castilian and Galician-Portuguese: *fueya* < FŌLIA, *nueche~nueite* < NŌCTE, *güeyu* < ŌCULU, *güei* < HŌDIE. Alongside this, there are also morphosyntactic features that move it away from Spanish/Castilian and towards Galician-Portuguese, such as the absence of compound verbal tenses and the enclisis

³ For a more detailed analysis of the internal and evolutionary features of the language, read Ana María Cano González (1992), 'Asturiano / Leonés. Evolución lingüística interna' in *Lexicon der Romanistischen Linguistik*, VI, 1: 652-680 and in *Gramática Histórica de la Lengua Asturiana* (2003) by Xosé Lluís García Arias.

of object pronouns beside other features that make Asturian-Leonese completely singular, such as the neuter for matter in central and eastern Asturian-Leonese varieties, where there is a contrast between countable and non-countable nouns. This contrast affects adjective-noun agreement in the case of adjectives placed after the noun and in other categories of the language whenever gender morphemes are combined. This, therefore, leads to examples like *lleche frío* ['cold milk'], *la xente bono* / *la bona xente* ['good people'], *fueya seco* / (una) *fueya seca* ['dry leaves' vs. '(a) dry leaf'], or the *-lu/-lo* masculine/neuter distinction: *a elli vilu* / *a la xente vilu* ['I saw him/ I saw the people'].

In his widely renowned piece of study on Asturian-Leonese, *El Dialecto Leonés* (1906), Ramón Menéndez Pidal outlines three main dialects or areas in this linguistic territorial sphere: western (preservation of the Latin F-, and of the falling diphthongs /ei/, /ou/), central (maintenance of the F-, and the conversion of /ei/ and /ou/ into monophthongs) and eastern (aspiration of F > [x]~[h] and the conversion of falling diphthongs into monophthongs).

1) The western block is characterized not only by the preservation of the Latin F-> *fornu* < FORNU, but also by the usage of falling diphthongs /ei/ and /ou/. Therefore, this usage of falling diphthongs expands across the regions in which, although the Latin /Ē/ and /ō/ are diphthongized *tierra* < TĒRRA and *puerta~puorta* < PŌRTA, unlike the Galician-Portuguese, the falling diphthongs /ei/, /ou/ are preserved — like in Galician-Portuguese. In the central and eastern varieties of Asturian-Leonese, and in the rest of the Romance languages of the peninsula, the falling diphthongs have been reduced to /e/ and /o/ respectively at an earlier stage. Examples of this can be found with the words from Latin, *caldeiru* < CALDARIU, *poucu* < PAUCU. In addition to these features, which have already been noted by Menéndez Pidal (1906: 11-13) there are others such as the treatment of the Latin initial L- and geminate Latin -LL- either in lateral palatal /ʎ/ or voiceless apico post-alveolar affricate [tʰfsʰ]: *llobu* or *l.lobu* unlike the Galician-Portuguese [l] pronunciation: *lobo*, maintenance of the Latin -L- between vowels: *palu*, which loses the -L- in Galician-Portuguese: *pau*. With regard to nasal consonants, Asturian-Leonese keeps the -N-, whereas the Galician-Portuguese drops it: *lluna~l.luna* versus *lua*. Another feature of the western block is the partial treatment, in the regions of *León/Llión* and *Miranda*, of the -NN- group, which is pronounced as a palatal nasal consonant [ɲ]: *cabaña* < CAPANNA, whereas it is pronounced *cabana* in Galician-Portuguese and part of north-western Asturian-Leonese.

These varieties of the language in this western block stretch from the west of the Navia river to roughly around the Nalón river area, into the Asturian zone, and between the rivers Cúa and Órbigo in the Leonese region, in areas such as *Babia*, *L.laciana*, *Palacios del Sil*, *Furniella*, a large part of the *El Bierzu* region, *Cabreira*, *Maragatos*, *Cepeda* and *La Ribera del Órbigo*, together with the spoken varieties of Zamora in *Senabria*, *Aliste*, and in Portugal, the Mirandese variety. It is the block that spans the largest geographical area and in which the language is spoken most nowadays outside of Asturias.

As has been previously discussed, Mirandese, in spite of its diverging evolutionary features from the rest of the Asturian-Leonese varieties in the western block in several aspects, such as the sub-system of sibilants (three pairs with a distinction between voiced and voiceless) or the modifications in the vowel system, is part of the same block. Mirandese was brought to the attention of the field of philology in 1882, when José Leite de Vasconcelos published a series of small articles in the newspaper *O Penafidense* under the title '*O dialecto mirandez (Notas glottológicas)*' which he later compiled later into *O dialecto mirandez (contribuição para o estudo da dialectologia romanica no dominio glottologico hispanho-lusitano)*, published in Oporto. It was then when it came to light that there was a language in Portugal other than Portuguese — and it was not Galician either — and when Leite de Vasconcelos claimed to have established that Mirandese belongs linguistically to the neighbouring Spanish territory, as similar to Leonese. In 1900-01, Leite de Vasconcelos published a two-volume work, *Estudos de Philologia Mirandesa*, in which he gives a practical description of the grammar and the problems of the language's origin and its relationship to other languages.

In 1906, Ramón Menéndez Pidal published *El dialecto leonés*, where, concerning the data on language contributed by José Leite de Vasconcelos's work, and the data that he had on other Asturian-Leonese varieties, he placed Mirandese in the Leonese or Asturleonese territory, illustrating the theory on its relationship to other Asturian-Leonese varieties that Leite de Vasconcelos had proposed. Its peculiarities are the result of a diverging evolution from the other Asturian-Leonese varieties, due to either preservation of features that have disappeared from the other dialects — as may be the case with the system of three pairs of sibilants with voiced and voiceless sounds — or a later modification — like the adaptation of the tonic vowel system in the areas where the diphthongization of the /ō/ was gradually fading and to which there is a need to add a different *Dachsprache*: Portuguese — different to the rest of the Asturian-Leonese territory, on geopolitical grounds.

2) The central block, as has already been mentioned, reduced the /ei, ou/ to /e, o/ as does the eastern block (*calderu, pocu*), but maintains the initial Latin /f-/ , which is aspirated in eastern Asturian-Leonese [h] <h.>. This central block is defined by the isoglosses [ei, ou/e, o], on one hand, and on the other, f-/h.-. In terms of its geography, it stretches between the rivers *Nalón* and *Seya* in Asturias and the high valleys in the central Leonese Mountains *Los Argüechos~Los Argüeyos* and *Gordón* (García Gil, 2007b). One feature of strict Asturian is the change from *-as* > *-es* and *-an* > *-en* which, fundamentally, affects feminine gender plurals and several verb endings: cases (Latin *CASAS*), canten (Latin *CANTANT*), versus *casas* and *cantan* of the other diatopic varieties. However, the isoglosses *-as/-es* and [ei, ou/e, o] on one hand, and *-es/-as* and f-/h.-, on the other, do not coincide. Towards the west, the use of *-es* plurals does not stretch to the whole of the area in which [ei, ou] is reduced, like in the southern part of *L.lena* and *Ayer*, *Gordón* or *Los Argüechos~Los Argüeyos*, for instance, which offer [-e, -o] and *-as*. Towards the east, the *-es* form is also present as far as the *Aguadamía* river in the the area where initial /f-/ is aspirated to the east of the *Seya* river (in the councils of *Ribeseya*, *Parres*, *Cangues d'Onís* — with the exception of the easternmost points of this council — and in *Amieva*).

This central block is the basis for forming regulations and is used as a benchmark for the language for several reasons, including demographic importance, literary tradition, trends that already existed back in medieval times and existence as a modern reference in the context of Asturian identity, as a variation that exists within Asturias, and even if it is not the local spoken variety of the west, or of the east, it is indeed identified as an autochthonous spoken variety of Asturias and, in some cases, accepted as a prestigious benchmark. That is how Xulio Viejo (2003: 53-60) considers it in his book, in which he cites the opinions of intellectuals such as Diego Catalán and Lorenzo Rodríguez-Castellano who express the prestige of the forms and the progress of the *asturiano ovetense* or *asturiano común* [the Asturian from Oviedo or standard Asturian] (Rodríguez-Castellano).

3) The eastern variety has the peculiar trait of the aspiration [h] <h.> of the initial Latin /f-/ , which in the central and western varieties of Asturian-Leonese has been kept: Latin *FURNU* > *h.ornu/fornu*. The isogloss f-/h.- lies roughly around the *Seya* river region and has hardly changed since very early times for substratum-related reasons, the *Seya* as the border between the Astur *Luggones* tribe in the west, and the *Cantabri*, in the east. There are various Asturian councils in this eastern dialect block, such as *Ribeseya*, *Parres*, *Cangues d'Onís*, *Onís*, *Cabrales* and *Llanes*, and Leonese councils like *Sayambre* and *Valdión*.

1.2. A Brief History of the Asturian, or Asturian-Leonese, Language

Now that the main linguistic features and geodialects of the language have been discussed, a brief overview of the history around the language, from the Middle Ages up to the present day, shall now be undertaken.

1.2.1. Asturian-Leonese in the Middle Ages

The geolinguistic territory of Asturian-Leonese when it was originated corresponds to Asturias as it is today — with the exception of the westernmost part, between the rivers Navia and Eo, which belongs to the Galician-Portuguese linguistic territory —, to the regions of León/Llión (provinces of León and Zamora), and to the Terra de Miranda (Portugal) region, as well as to the Extremadura of the Leonese ‘reconquest’. It must be pointed out that, as Xulio Viejo (2003: 25) states in *La formación histórica de la llingua asturiana*, a fundamental work for understanding the formation and evolution of the language, the linguistic influence of Leonese in the areas south of the Duero river and, I add, the eastern area of the province León, but not the northern valleys of *Sayambre* and *Valdión* and surrounding area, has never been significant, having been shaped or totally replaced by the influence of Spanish/Castilian (García Gil, 2007a: 121-122). So we see that this northern Romance language with a territory between the Bay of Biscay and the Duero river is immediately connected to the expansion of *Asturorum Regnum*, or Asturian-Leonese Kingdom in its expansion south from its originating land of the Roman *Conventum Asturum* following the Via de la Plata route.

If we compare its expansion in medieval times with today’s data and situation, this linguistic area can be seen to stretch across the aforementioned Asturian area, the north and west of today’s León and Zamora provinces, where it borders with Galician-Portuguese in the west of *El Bierzu* and *Senabria*, and Terra de Miranda, in Portugal, the far south of our historical territory.

In the east, this language shares borders in Asturias with the Cantabrian dialect (a.k.a. *montañés*) and northern Spanish/Castilian varieties in the León/Llión region. Although there are certain traces that are characteristic of Asturian-Leonese in Cantabria, other Cantabrian-Castilian features have penetrated the eastern most part of Asturias. As Francisco García González (1982: 173-191) outlined, the language varieties of the Asturian areas in the *Peñamelleras*, *Ribadeva* and eastern *Llanes* — from the Purón river to the east — should be considered Cantabrian dialect and not Asturian-Leonese.

Let us see, then, how this Romanesque medieval territory, situated between the Galician-Portuguese and the Spanish/Castilian ones, lost ground in a historical and ongoing process in which two trends can be defined (García Gil, 2007a: 121-122):

1. An early and gradual establishment of Spanish/Castilian or, better said, ‘de-Leonization’ of the areas south of the Duero river, together with a similar process in the flat eastern area to the east of León province and a large part of that of Zamora.
2. A language replacement process, ‘Castilianization’, in the northern region of Duero, more pronounced in Leonese territory, and later in Asturias, leading to the disappearance of dialects in a large part of León and Zamora, where the language’s situation is an unstable one nowadays in the northern and eastern parts but is stronger in the Principality of Asturias. In this process, attention must be drawn to the appearance of diatopic differences in Asturian-Leonese because of the absence of a benchmark regulation established by an internal political power, a variation from region to region that is not, however, normally seen in medieval texts.

The first text known to have appeared in the Asturian-Leonese Romance language is the document, *Nodizia de Kesos*, between 974 and 980 BC. This is a list of cheeses written in the margin on the back of a document in Latin and of which there are hardly any features to determine its linguistic ascription other than the fact that it is a Romance language text deemed Leonese on account of its geographical location in the former San Justo y San Pastor de Rozuela monastery (Ardón, León/Llión). Meanwhile, the rest of the documents between the 10th and 13th centuries are in Latin. However, up until the 11th century the presence of Asturian-Leonese conventions within Latin texts

and Latin-looking Romance forms is common, but this soon disappeared due to the emergence of a purist Latin trend which 'corrected' this hybrid-formation process that was taking place in the texts of those eras.

It is not until the 12th century, in the *Fuero de Avilés* a local law of 1145, to see our Romance language in medieval Asturian-Leonese documents, and then, later, in the 13th century in notary documents of sale and purchase agreements, inheritances and private donations, and legal texts such as the local laws of cities like Oviedo or Zamora, or the basic legal code of the Asturian-Leonese or Leonese Kingdom itself the *Fuero Xulgu*. This usage of the language lasted until the middle of the 14th century and soon became replaced by Spanish/Castilian in those formal spheres.

With regard to literary expression in Asturian-Leonese in the Middle Ages⁴ there is, so far, no sample which can be used to confidently declare the linguistic origin. This is due to the prestige of Latin in formal spheres and that of Galician-Portuguese prestige in verse, along with a feature of this territory that would be non-specification of the Romance language: unlike the neighbouring Romance languages, Galician and Castilian (i.e., Spanish), there would be no name for the language based on either of the ethnonyms 'Asturian' or 'Leonese' in this initial period. In the medieval documents of Asturias and León of the 13th and 14th century, the only references found to Asturian-Leonese in texts are to it as *romance* or *romancio* [Romance language]. In comparison to *nuestro romanz de Castiella* [our Romance of Castile], *lengua castellana* [Castilian language] (in 1252, 1254) or *castellano* [Castilian, i.e. Spanish] (1284) or gallego [Galician] (1286-1291), we do not have this glottonym in this Asturian-Leonese territory, a possible explanation for why there was no need to write in the vernacular language or distinguish it from neighbouring languages.

However, Menéndez Pidal considers works such as *Llibru de Alexandre, Poema de Elena y María* or the *Crónica de Alfonso XI* to be samples of medieval literary texts with Asturian-Leonese characteristics, though they should be interpreted more as texts that were originally written in Spanish and then copied in Leonese territories, with the person copying them unaware that he or she was actually carrying across conventions from his or her own first language. According to X.L.García Arias, in his book published in 2002 (on page 23), the legal texts of the Asturian-Leonese Kingdom provide the most successful testimony of medieval usage of the common language on one side of the mountain range and on the other. In them it can be seen that, little by little, they achieved a model for writing, or, as according to Rafael Lapesa, a general *Astur-Leonese*.

1.2.2. The Dark Centuries

The centuries that followed are known as *siegllos oscuros* ['dark centuries']. This was a time when there were no written samples of our language; it had disappeared from all types of texts but was still spoken actively throughout most Asturophone regions and from generation to generation, though it began to be replaced in certain social spheres, such as amongst the country's nobility and amongst those holding administrative positions in Asturias, León/Llión and *Tierra de Miranda* (in Portugal). The increasing centralism and interventionism of the Kingdom of Castile gradually reinforced this language substitution process in the high classes of society and prevented the consolidation of Asturian-Leonese as a literary language, versus Spanish/Castilian and Portuguese which, at this time, had begun to establish themselves and develop a system of rules that led them to take on the character of a language for use by the educated. Meanwhile, Asturian-Leonese continued to

4 For more on this issue, refer to Xulio Viejo (2004): *Llingua y cultura lliteraria na Edá Media asturiano-lleonesa* (Historia de la lliteratura asturiana; 1), Uviéu: Trabe.

be the normal mode of communication for almost all of the population. The exclusively oral use of the language caused it to become dialectized and fragmented. This had an effect on the language community and planted the seed for the notion of linguistic unity to fade in the minds of people in the different Asturophone territories. Although this process went on for a long time, the usage of the language by the people was a shelter for the language, where it remained strong.

This conviction in the continuity and vitality of the language was then strengthened in the 17th century by the appearance of the first well-known author in our language, Antón González Reguera, known as Antón de Mari-Reguera, who won a competition in 1639 with the poem *Pleito entre Uviedo y Mérida* and was awarded a prize in a literature contest in Oviedo, for the Santa Olaya feast of 1639 – in which pieces written in Latin, Greek and Spanish had also been entered. This was the start of a literary tradition that has continued to be fruitful right up to the present day.

In the Leonese region (García Gil, 2007c: 133) there is no literature, or there has not yet been found literature, in Asturian-Leonese like Asturian verse production since the middle of the 17th century. Only in the southernmost part of the old Kingdom of Leon, at the University of Salamanca, was there usage of *sayagués* – an idealized rural dialect that incorporated features of popular spoken varieties in nearby regions – in pieces for theatre by writers such as Juan del Enzina or Lucas Fernández, amongst others. The dialect is one spoken by shepherds and bears Leonese features, mainly phonetic ones and hardly any morphosyntactic ones, almost stereotypical, and some vocabulary, which is used in a special way to provoke laughter.

Unlike what was happening in the Leonese region, literary activity and interest in the language was concentrated in Asturias, at the University of Oviedo, as well as held by a small local nobility, and later, by a bourgeoisie, through literature in the form of poetic creation or research proposals that sought the acceptance of the language but failed to triumph.

1.2.3. *The 17th and 18th Century*

So now a brief look shall be taken at the authors⁵ of the 17th century, like Antón de Mari-Reguera himself or Francisco Bernardo de Quirós y Benavides, and, in the 18th century, authors like Xosefa de Xovellanos, Bruno Fernández Cepeda, Antón de Balvidares Argüelles and Xuan González Villar, authors of dialogue-style pieces (monologues or dialogues) with rural themes or features incorporated into them, and with political and social criticism made from their reformist or conservative perspectives. Melchor Gaspar de Xovellanos and González de Posada are the two big names of the period where the 18th century is concerned; with their Enlightenment-based ideas on the language for the creation of, in the style of the academies of that time, the 'Academia Asturiana de Buenas Letras', which would have had to take responsibility for the production of an Asturian dictionary and Asturian grammar. It was not possible, although we have been introduced to samples of the dictionary that González de Posada had been working on.

1.2.4. *From the 19th Century until 1936*

Nineteenth-century literature in Asturian had already adopted forms which became characteristic of it: the predominance of verse, an ironic tone, criticism on issues, and a didactic objective, as

⁵ For a complete perspective of the history of Asturian literature, refer to *Historia de la Lliteratura Asturiana* (2002), Uviéu: Academia de la Llingua Asturiana.

well as a continuation of the previous rural themes and features incorporated, traditional metre and poems structured in dialogue form. In 1839 the first poetry anthology was published, a work by Xosé Caveda y Nava, *Colección de poesías en dialecto asturiano*, re-printed in 1887 by Fermín Canella, the man who would become the principal of the University of Oviedo and added to the piece. Throughout the second half of the 19th century there emerged writers who managed to forge a certain prestige for themselves, writers such as Xuan María Acebal and Tiadoro Cuesta. In addition, there are contributions such as articles, in prose, on mining, by Xuan Fernández Flórez (*Drechu Constitucional*, 1862), and the work of bishop Manuel Fernández de Castro, who translated *L'Evanxeliu según San Mateo* [The Gospel According to Saint Matthew] (1861) into Asturian, and there is the papal document of the *Inmaculada Concepción de la Virxen* [Immaculate Conception of the Virgin] between 1863 and 1868 that look for prose which are written in an educated manner and new avenues for the language, but do not triumph. It was an era in which people like Gumersindo Laverde Ruiz, later a professor at the University of Santiago de Compostela, continued to consider the need for an academy for the Asturian-Leonese language and a dictionary, grammar and a Chair in *Bable* [an academic synonym for Asturian-Leonese language] at the University. A dictionary and an Asturian Grammar (1869) were produced by Xuan Junquera Huergo but did not become published until 1991.

In the early years of the 20th century, together with the continuation of the previous trends and the costumbrism pieces of what was known as 'Teatro Regional Asturiano' theatre, and with Pachín de Melás [a poet and writer], emerge other authors whose work, on the one hand, bears classicism, and on the other, modernism (musicality, or symbolism, amongst other elements), such as in *Nel y Flor* and *La Fonte del Cai*, by Xosé García Peláez (1864-1928), who was also known as Pepín de Pría. Another important author is Father Galo Fernández, a.k.a. 'Fernán Coronas' (1884-1939), in whose work nostalgia (*señardá* in Asturian-Leonese) and classicism are present. These were authors who steered literature in another direction that turned out not to be successful either.

In the regions of León/Llión and Miranda, where common literature⁶ was transferred orally, literary production was almost non-existent, and it is not until the 19th century that there are any samples in written form. There is news of text from the middle of the century, *La parábola del fíu pródigu* [The Parable of the Prodigal Son], from around 1847, from J.B. Dantín, written in the dialect of La Cepeda, in León/Llión, to order of the Catalan phrenologist Marià Cubí i Soler (who holds a special interest in the languages and the dialects of the Iberian Peninsula). Also in this second half of the 19th century, although the exact date is not known, there is *Cartas a Gallardo en Dialecto Babiano*. It was not until 1907 that there was a book – Cayetano Álvarez Bardón's *De la Ribera del Órbigo. Cuentos en dialecto leonés* – published in Asturian-Leonese, in León/Llión. After this, there was very little such literature until the end of the 20th century.

The year 1882 was a fundamental one for Terra de Miranda because it is then when the scientific community was made aware of Mirandese, courtesy of José Leite de Vasconcelos. It was at this time when the first texts in Mirandese materialized, as Amadeu Ferreira (2003: 97-113) points out, in a region that, just like in León/Llión (current provinces of León and Zamora), literature was in spoken form. It was also José Leite de Vasconcelos who started off the trend of writing in Mirandese, in 1884, with the publication of *Flores Mirandesas*, eight poems to promote Mirandese, with more of a

6 For a perspective of this popular oral Leonese literature, see Nicolás Bartolomé Pérez (2007): *Filandón. Lliteratura Popular Ilionesa*. O Limaco Edizioni. For Mirandese, see the work coordinated by António Bárbolo Alves, *Lhiteratura Oral Mirandesa. Recuolha de textos an mirandés* (1999), Porto: Granito Editores e Livreiros, or the list of authors and texts in Amadeu Ferreira's article 'Notas d'antroducion a la Lhiteratura mirandesa', *Ianua, Revista Philologica Romanica* No 4 (<http://www.romaniaminor.net/ianua/04.htm>).

linguistic purpose than a literary one. These poems were of historical importance though, since they were the first known piece of literature to be written in Mirandese. Throughout the rest of the 19th century, the work of the translators is to be highlighted: José Leite de Vasconcelos with Camões' *Camoniana mirandesa*; Manuol Sardina, who translated a couple of poems by Camões; and Bernardo Fernandes Monteiro, who, in the opinion of Amadeu Ferreira, is the main writer in Mirandese of the 19th century, translated the Four Gospels and the Letter of St Paul to the Corinthians amongst others, together with narratives — referred to as *cuntas* — that he wrote himself. Ferreira adds to this group the authors of little known poems such as Francisco Meirinhos and Francisco Garrido Brandon, and the theatre piece *Saias* by Alfredo Cortez in 1938.

The Spanish Civil War (1936-1939) generated a split with everything that had been going on before, in which the literature sought shelter in the shape of texts based on costumbrism and folklore, and the imposition of Spanish/Castilian and replacement of other languages became more heavily felt in the sphere of compulsory education, where all local languages different than Spanish/Castilian were classed as inferior and the usage of them was persecuted. There was an exodus from rural areas. And with the arrival of mass media, radio and television, the pressure to use the official language of the State increased, as did the lesser usage of Asturian-Leonese language, and this would mark the beginning of the language's most important replacement.

Meanwhile in this period, in *Miranda de I Douro* there are two authors from whom it could be said there was a literature emerging with Mirandese roots, from Mirandese writers, and that the two writers' literary production is in poetry, according to Ferreira (2003: 102): the priests Manuel Preto (1914-1983) and Antonio Maria Mourinho (1917-1996). Manuel Preto was responsible for the piece *Bersos Mirandeses*, which, despite the fact he wrote it in the 1970s, was not published until 1996; it is a piece that describes the land and the sentiments for it from the nostalgic perspective of someone who has moved away from it to a faraway place. With regard to the second of the two authors, Antonio Maria Mourinho's main work is *Nuossa Alma Nuossa Tierra* (1961), a book with a strong religious tone and deep anguish for Terra de Miranda and its isolation. In 1979 he published the poem *Scoba Frolida an Agosto*. Later he had some published in several places, such as that of 1990 dedicated to the village of *Sendin* together with translations of the gospels or of various poems by José Viale Moutinho.

1.2.5. The Surdimientu Movement

In 1974, which was a symbolic year, a movement for acceptance and usage of the language surfaced once again in Asturias. Based on the ideas of the Asturian association, Conceyu Bable, regarding Asturian language and culture, an argument was devised for the acceptance and modernization of the language that led to the development of an official institution for establishing Asturian language norms, the *Academia de la Llingua Asturiana* (1981). The role of the institution was, and is, to investigate and formulate the rules of grammar for the different Asturian language dialects, and to provide guidelines and regulations for literary cultivation of them; to promote the usage, learning and distribution of Asturian; to monitor the linguistic rights of the Asturians; and to work together with the relevant competent institutions on the instruction of teachers.

Then, on the other hand, there was the emergence of a social movement for language rights, with the language loyalty groups, as is the case of the *Xunta pola Defensa de la Llingua Asturiana* (XDLA), who defend the equality of *asturfalantes* [speakers of Asturian-Leonese] in society and the legal framework for Asturian-Leonese language. Besides this, there was unprecedented literary activity, a production that breaks away from the system of subordination, of costumbrism and gender limitation: the *Surdimientu*. This is a time when the issues that were creating a barrier in literature ceased to be so, a time in which there was development of, or attempts to develop, the aesthetic

and literary features of Asturian-Leonese using their own means, without the influence of Spanish, so new issues surfaced and a broader variety of genres was employed. Authors such as Xuan Bello, Roberto González-Quevedo from *Palacios del Sil* (León/Llión), Antón García, Berta Piñán, Lourdes Álvarez and Miguel Rojo appeared, amongst others who wrote in the language of these territories in line with contemporary trends and guidelines, breaking away from the Asturian-Leonese tradition of rural themes, moral messages and dialogue-style writing, to put Asturian-language literature on the map. In Terra de Miranda there was a literary production, in the 1990s, which breathed new life into the language with authors such as Amadeu Ferreira, Antonio Bárbolo Alves and Jose Francisco Fernandes, amongst others, who broadened the spheres of writing, introduced new themes and, just like the Asturians and the Leonese neighbours, looked to move away from the costumbrism and rural philosophy of the language and its literary expression.

There are three important works in terms of the establishment of rules and conventions for the language in Spain by the *Academia de la Llingua Asturiana*. The first of these, in 1981, is the *Normes Ortográfiques y Entamos Normativos*, which comprises the writing rules of the model for an educated language usage: it is based on the central Asturian phonetics and morphology, the acceptance of all Asturian-Leonese syntactic constructions as a rule and the acceptance of the employment of all Asturian-Leonese lexis, regardless of its dialect of origin. Likewise, the different dialects are to be cultivated through literature and the local spoken variety must be considered in education provision. The task is followed up with two more works that conclude this rule-setting process: the *Gramática de la Llingua Asturiana* (1998) and the *Diccionariu de la Llingua Asturiana* (2000).

But this advance in terms of literature and of language norms, particularly in Asturias, is not accompanied by the social acceptance of the language. The non-official status of the language in any of the parts where it is traditionally spoken and the non-compliance with the laws on usage by the Asturian Autonomous Government, the absence of measures on the part of the Autonomous Government of Castile&León, and, in the case of Mirandese, limited actual regulation and application of them, place the continuation of the language in a delicate situation and are seeing the language become substituted. This process has reached a particularly advanced stage in the territory within Castile&León (provinces of León and Zamora), and is heading north with the number of native Asturian and Mirandese-speakers falling in Miranda and Asturias, losing out to substitution by Spanish or Portuguese, a process which may only be prevented with the right legal framework, official status, the corresponding laws for establishment of the language and especially the actual and effective development and implementation of these measures. Without these, the laws will lack any real substance and on their own will solve nothing.

Its presence in the media, therefore, is minimal, except for the all-Asturian weekly newspaper *Les Noticias*, founded in 1996 in Asturias, or the minor presence of articles in Mirandese in the digital newspaper *Diário de Trás-os-Montes*⁷, in *Jornal Nordeste* or in the Portuguese national newspaper *Público*. On the Asturian Public Broadcasting Company (RTPA), there are very few programmes broadcasted in Asturian-Leonese and even then they still manage to enjoy the highest audiences, as is the case of the TV programme *Camín de Cantares*, proving that there is a demand for programmes in Asturian-Leonese language on television. One other form of media with a commitment to the language is the radio station *Radio Sele*⁸, which broadcasts in Asturian but, in an illustration of the Asturian political class's attitude towards the language, the radio station had its licence illegally revoked by the Asturian socialist government. In 2005 the courts judged in favour of the radio station;

7 The website link is <http://www.diariodetrastosmontes.com/mirandes/index.php3>.

8 This can be listened to by going to <http://www.radiosele.net>.

however, *Radio Sele* has still not been handed back its licence. One radio initiative in Mirandese is Domingos Raposo's programme, broadcasted since 2001, on Radio Mirandum FM.

Study of the Asturian language in schools as a subject in Asturias is⁹, since the academic year 1984/1985, optional, but is subject to a number of problems with the 'ratio' of pupils, the will of the schools themselves and the negative attitude of the regional Department for Culture of the Asturian Government. In spite of it, it is studied by approximately 17 000 pupils in primary education and 4 500 in secondary education, where it competes with other issues revalued by schools. In the University of Oviedo, in spite of the decisions made by the 'Junta General del Principado' [Regional Executive of the Principality of Asturias], and of the proposals made by the the Faculty of Philology and by the University of Oviedo itself to the 'Consejo de Universidades' [Spanish Board of Universities], no undergraduate academic degree in Asturian language is offered. Instead, there are two post-graduate courses in Asturian Philology, one for University Graduates in Teacher Training (becoming Expert in Asturian Philology) and one for people with an undergraduate degree in Philology (becoming Specialist in Asturian Philology) until the situation is rectified. In León/Llión, i.e., in the provinces of León and Zamora, there is no teaching of the language, nor is there any sign of the language in schools. There are only classes given to adults in the language and in some public schools as an extra-curricular activity in León city because of the initiative of organizations for language equality and the *Ayuntamiento de León's* [León City Council] policy in the sphere of culture. With regard to teaching in Terra de Miranda, Mirandese has been offered in schools since the 1986/1987 academic year, and there are approximately 450 pupils this school year — 54.7% of the total — who have taken this optional subject out of 800 pupils in the schools of *Miranda de I Douro* and *Sendin*¹⁰ — a standard subject at all levels, from primary school up until the age of twelve. Therefore, according to data taken from the *Agrupamento de Escolas de Miranda do Douro/Juntouro de Scuolas de Miranda de I Douro* and the *Concelho Executivo da Escola de Sendim*, there are, at present, at pre-school age, 85 children learning Mirandese, which is 20% of the total number of children; 315 in primary education, making 74% of the total number of pupils studying Mirandese; and 28 at secondary school level, which is 6% of the total number studying Mirandese.

It is in terms of toponymy in Asturias that the processes of restoration of traditional names have advanced the furthest, in the context of the *Ley de Uso* [law on usage of Asturian] and the Principality's 2003-07 plan for establishment of the language, with the work of the *Xunta Asesora de Toponimia*¹¹, which with its validation of, and research into, the names of those villages, towns, municipalities and cities that have requested it, has been able to achieve official status for them — of which there are 25 out of 78 at the moment, with a further 28 towns at varied stages in the process of this —, although, in practice, there is no sign of this and they are minimally used today. In Mirandese-speaking towns the signs display the names of the towns in both languages. In terms of the Leonese areas, which come under the administrative framework of the Autonomous Community of Castile&León, there have been no officially recognized Asturian-Leonese names for the towns, not so much as even a bilingual version of them, and no research has been undertaken into this or any record of possible names has been made.

By way of summary, we see that the language situation is different in each one of the historical Asturian-Leonese-speaking territories, where in Asturias the number of speakers is higher and greater advances have been made in the restoration of the language, and where the part to be doing least well in this respect, Castile&León (provinces of León and Zamora), has lost speakers

9 More specific information on schooling in Asturias and its evolution can be found on the website <http://www.asturies.com/asturianu/escolarizacion.htm>.

10 Published on the website <http://ciberduvidas.sapo.pt/noticias.php?rid=1400>.

11 Refer to <http://www.politicallinguistica.org/toponimia.php>.

and there is no language restoration process taking place other than that by the language loyalty groups. Terra de Miranda (in Portugal) is in an intermediate position in terms of people speaking the language and advances in restoration of the language because, despite the legal framework, the small Mirandese variety-speaking community plus the lack of adoption of measures for the establishment of Mirandese and actual implementation of them, could prove a blow to the language and a threat to its future existence. Ultimately, it is a minority language which in many parts of the Leonese region (i.e., provinces of León and Zamora) is becoming completely replaced by Spanish, and requires a legal framework plus the application of actual, specific and effective measures for the language to become accepted as such, for it to be promoted and for it to become a commonly used language if it is to survive the 21st century.

2. Sociolinguistic aspects

Now that we have studied the basic features of Asturian or Asturian-Leonese from a linguistic and geolinguistic perspective, we shall now analyse some of the most important sociolinguistic aspects, as is the question of the name — the contrast in approach to the name of the language in the territory — and the attitudes and beliefs of the speakers, amongst other aspects.

2.1. The name issue: the language from a scientific and a popular perspective, and possible problems regarding the name

The aim of this section is to broach the subject of the language's 'label', its name, from two perspectives: on the one hand, the research into identity with a geolinguistic approach; on the other, how the speakers call their own language system.

This is an issue on which questions and objections are considered, from the initiatives for restoration of the language in the southern territories of the domain, León/Llión and Terra de Miranda, and which may be a reflection of the diverging evolution in the different territories of our linguistic sphere: little sense of linguistic unity due to the fragmentation of dialects, the lack of communication between communities of speakers and the substitution of the language, something which materializes as shall be seen next in the existence of the local terms for the language.

2.1.1. The Name as a Label given by the Linguist

As part of study on language, besides the description of language and their varieties — taxonomical — there is often that of the linguistic name of the system set out. Often the popular or traditional name that the speakers identify with is chosen, although this may be a little different in our case.

It was Ramón Menéndez Pidal, in 1906, with his work *El dialecto leonés*, who grouped together the spoken varieties that stretch from the Bay of Biscay to *Miranda de l Douro* under a single term: Leonese dialect. His concept of classification and denomination is based on a previous historicist idea: they are the varieties that were spoken throughout the former Kingdom of Leon (which included the current Asturian, Leonese and Mirandese regions), and he considers this unifying term suitable for these dialects which he classes together in his work to explain his idea of the Spanish/Castilian language better. Therefore, nothing is more logical than to describe these dialects that he studies as 'Leonese', since they are spoken in the land of this old European kingdom. It is, however, questionable in light of other data that we have:

In spite of being a language that is spoken throughout this medieval kingdom, it is not the only language to be so: next to the Asturophone regions, there are Galician-Portuguese and Spanish-speaking ones in this medieval Leonese kingdom, a continuation and evolution of the *Asturorum Regnum*. This means it is not possible to primarily identify the Kingdom of Leon with Leonese dialect. Admittedly, the Asturian-Leonese Romance language originated in the largest part of the territory of the Kingdom of Leon, but the historicist term that equates the kingdom with the language does not work in this case. So, based on an *a priori* definition of the dialect, and although the intuition was on the right track, with a geohistorical framework he gives rise to the inclusion in this continuum of dialects, to spoken varieties that can be said on the back of later information to no longer be part of our linguistic territory since the start of last century — i.e., Cantabria and Extremadura —, or even an expansion of the linguistic territory that back then was already smaller by just taking into consideration toponymous factors when marking out the divisory lines of the Asturian-Leonese-speaking territory.

Another striking thing is that by not using the data and terms that have existed in Asturias since the 16th century — *asturiano*, *idioma asturiano*, *lengua asturiana* [‘Asturian’ and ‘Asturian language’ synonyms] — like in Hernán Nuñez’s work¹² of 1555 on sayings and proverbs in Romance language, *Refranes o Proverbios en romance*, he appears to forget the terms of that time in Asturias, in the Asturian literature of then and the references to Asturian in previous centuries. However, then, he can do no more (Pidal, 1906: 139) than make explicit the term ‘Asturian’, since it is considered ‘el resto mejor conservado del antiguo leonés’ [the best preserved remnant of old Leonese], compared with the rest of the classifications, where he refers to geography: provinces of León, Zamora, Salamanca etc. Likewise he classifies Asturian in terms of dialect and this classification is the same as his general one ‘Leonese’. Here he appears, to a certain extent, to be blending his *a priori* historicist perspective with the real situation of language in Asturias.

However, the term ‘Leonese’ is used by other writers before him, such as Gessner (1867) and Hanssen (1896), although one has to realise that they do this when referring to medieval texts and that they hold it to be, from their neo-grammarians perspective as part of the study of Spanish/Castilian language evolution, a fine source for interpretation of how the Spanish language has evolved. These are philologists from the 19th century who apply the term ‘Leonese’ to the medieval written documents of the Kingdom of Leon, in its strictest sense, of the territory south of the mountain range (i.e., the Leonese region).

In Terra de Miranda it is with Leite de Vasconcelos in 1882, with the term ‘dialecto mirandés’ [Mirandese dialect] when our language is given a name in Portugal, an old name for the language which Pidal uses in his work in 1906. Alongside this term, there are others like *mirandés* [Mirandese] or *lhéngua mirandesa* [Mirandese language], especially in the final decade of the last century when the process for acceptance and establishment of the language began to take place.

This is how we understand the term ‘Leonese’ to be merely a classificatory label of the reality of the language situation, a more or less accurate one, invented by researchers into the history of the language, as subsidiary of the research into the Spanish/Castilian language, and which does not take into account any features other than historicist ones, forgetting about other aspects such as the terms used by the speakers of the language themselves or the focus solely on Asturian-Leonese.

12 NÚÑEZ, HERNÁN: *Refranes o proverbios en romance (1555)*. Review Edition by Louis Combet, Julia Sevilla, Germán Conde & Josep Guà. Madrid: Ediciones Guillermo Blázquez, 2001; 2 Vols.

Later this term is accommodated by the Pidal school of linguistic thought, together with other later terms that seek to tailor the linguistic reality to the geographical area that is home to it and both the historical and the contemporary linguistic realities with terms such as *asturleonés*, *asturiano-leonés* or *asturianoleonés* [synonyms for Asturian-Leonese or Asturleonese]. However, the use of the term 'Asturian-Leonese' materializes earlier, back in 1882, in the work of Jose Leite de Vasconcelos in *El dialecto mirandez* (1882: 38).

Finally, mention can be made, under this Leonese label, of definition number six in the *Diccionario de la Real Academia Española* (DRAE), as another possibility: a regional variety of Spanish in León/Llión. Taking the sixth definition as a basis, it could, therefore, be understood as Leonese, the Spanish/Castilian of a large part of the provinces of León and Zamora that currently no longer speaks Asturian-Leonese because the language has disappeared from these territories in the last few centuries.

2.1.2. The Popular or Traditional Name

When we encounter the name that the speakers refer to their own language by, this is, the popular or traditional name that the people give to it, we see how, besides be a tool of communication, be a language system, language expresses identity. Therefore, it is of no surprise at all to us that in Asturias that name is *asturianu~asturiano* [Asturian], as it appears, for instance, in the *Atlas Lingüístico de la Península Ibérica* (ALPI) [Linguistic Atlas of the Iberian Peninsula] made in the early decades of the last century.

However, something that may appear the same to us in the Leonese and Mirandese regions turns out not to be so. We do not have this name that reflects identity for the language, but with the data from the *Atlas Lingüístico de la Península Ibérica* (ALPI) in the survey points in Leonese territory (the current provinces of León and Zamora) we see another reality: a fragmentary classification that takes into account the local and socio-economic situation: *babianu*, *alistanu*, *senabrés*, *carbayés* (ALPI) and *furniellu* (García Gil, 2001). These terms refer to the most local level territory that the speaker is familiar with and identifies the language with. In addition to these district-based names for the language, we see forms like *pachuecu-pachuocu* (*San Ciprián de Senabria*) *chapurriáu* (*Oumaña*), *charru* (*Aliste*, *Senabria*), or *caçurro*, *chaco* o *charro* in *Miranda de I Douro* (Portugal), that characterize a somewhat non-appreciative attitude to the language in comparison to the one towards Portuguese, which is viewed as a *lengua fidalga* or *lengua grave* [the honourable language]. They are terms, however, used very little in Terra de Miranda and that coexisted back in the past with more broadly uttered terms such as 'la nuossa lhéngua' ['our language'] (Leite de Vasconcelos, 1900: 17) or 'Mirandese'. The pejorative use of this latter term in the Terra de Miranda has gradually disappeared, and the term now connects the name of the language with the name of the relevant region when used.

In this manner, for the Leonese region, terms such as 'Leonese' are not primary references to their language, even if this term is understood as a term relating to the people. The reasons for this, in these circumstances, may well be the following:

- Adscription of language to territory: Asturian-Leonese has been forced into and contained within specific areas in a historical process that has continued up until the present day. It is not seen, therefore, as a benchmark of identity in the provinces of León and Zamora.
- Alongside this process, a non-Asturophone urban nucleus, the cities of León and Zamora, where Spanish began to be spoken several centuries ago, though not in the Middle Ages like we are made to believe, but in later centuries.

- The socio-economic significance of the internal regions or districts in this sphere. These would be fundamental 'micro-areas' for social and economic exchange, with a secondary exchange between neighbouring internal regions.
- The increasing understanding of specific linguistic features as being characteristic of a person's immediate own area and distinguishing them from nearby ones, hence the local terms.
- The lack of esteem in language and, consequently, the derogatory names for one's own mother tongue.
- A gradual loss of Leonese identity, which has increased quicker due to the unification of part of Castile and the Leonese historical region to form a single autonomous community within Spain, the Autonomous Community of Castile&León, in 1983, without the relevant measures to protect the autochthonous identity of León/Llión — felt as a barrier to the normal development of the artificial Castilian and Leonese autonomous community. It is a loss of identity linked to loss of linguistic identity, but even so, in recent years, the territorial adscription situation has encouraged elements of Leonese identity to be restored and revived pro-Leonese sentiment and the rejection of this autonomous community by Leonese people.

As seen above, *llionés~l.lionés* [Leonese] does not appear as the name for the language. But, what happens then to the term 'Asturian' in the Leonese region? — the same thing: it does not appear; they have no such name for the language, as it is immediately identified with Asturias and not with one's own mother tongue, to the point of rejecting possible autochthonous variations on the understanding that they are from the Asturian region, as was seen, for instance, in the ALPI survey conducted in Cofiñal (León/Llión).

In any case, unlike these random answers on the traditional name for these regions' language in the first third of last century, sociolinguistics has produced a much more recent source of replies, with the *Estudiu Sociollingüísticu de Lleón* (X.A. González Riaño & X.L. García Arias, 2006) study in which questions were indeed asked in a questionnaire with a set number of possible replies, undertaken in just northern León/Llión, and one later this year (2008), in the whole province of León, on the name for the traditional language. The following answers were obtained:

On the one hand, the local and regional term is still very much alive, particularly in areas where there is a strong inclination towards the dialect: *babianu*, *l.lacianiegu*, *pal.luezu* are uttered in the majority in NW León/Llión (26.7% of the total in the surveys and a majority in this area) or others: *forniellu*, *valdeonés*, etc. in the survey of 2006 in the north of León/Llión. The data from the 2008 survey show, after the whole province had been questioned — with no distinction of adscription to any linguistic domain — this to have fallen to 1.2% of the total and, together with other names, to 10.1% of the total of those who took part in the survey.

On the other hand, the term 'Leonese' does indeed come up in the responses provided, with 8.5% in the north of León/Llión, which increases its percentage as a benchmark in a survey conducted throughout the whole of the province of León, since it is not considered so much as a local language but as a broader reference of identity, at 27.8% out of all those surveyed in the province. Beside this, the terms *asturiano* and *bable* ['Asturian' and 'Bable'] are mentioned in the survey of just north León/Llión (2006) with 20.% of the two answers — 5.0% and 15.5% respectively — falling in the overall survey of the province — which includes large non-Asturian-speaking areas — to 5% of those who took part in it. Of note also is the unifying term *astur-leonés* [Astur-Leonese], the majority term, in the north of León/Llión (18.5%) and this makes up 9.9% of all the people in the whole province of León who participated in the survey. From this it may be deduced that both the operations to establish the language over the last thirty years in Asturias and the low profile ones for this in the Leonese region have had an effect on the results of the research. Additionally, there is the fact, and possible reason, that a choice of answers is provided, unlike in the ALPI survey, in which the answers are given directly. And we should not forget either, in terms of the questionnaire carried

out in León province (2008), the implications and the notions of ‘first language’ and ‘identity’ in the answer, with the option to answer ‘*leonés*’ [‘Leonese’] in non-Asturophone areas. This answer was proposed in a way that as a reply it could be rather a basic indication of identity than a name for the language — of the historical region of León/Llión — *leonés* —, when the people were asked, ‘How would you call the traditional way of speaking of this part of León?’ ‘Traditional way of speaking’ was a sufficiently ambiguous expression for it to be taken into consideration as an identification with the local language, if there is one, or, in other cases, as an identification with the name offered under the main administrative and identity framework.

Lastly, the term *castellano* [Spanish/Castilian] is given in 15.7% of the answers. The trend, already highlighted in the *Atlas lingüístico de la Península Ibérica-ALPI* in the central mountains of León province (in *Foyyeo* and *Ponteo*), continues nowadays. It is easy to see why Spanish/Castilian is a more common answer in this central part of León province, which it is so because of a firmer establishment of Spanish and the virtual uprooting of the traditional language. In the most recent survey in León province (2008) ‘Spanish’ becomes an even more frequent answer, the percentage of people giving it increasing to 32.9%— plus 2.9% calling it Leonese Castilian (sic) and to which can be added the responses calling it Galician at 4.2%, Leonese Galician at 1.8% and *chapurriáu* at 2.6% (a majority in the areas of Ancares and El Bierzo).

From this, answers can be seen to be taking a certain course, given the possibility to choose them, and the course of perspective on language. This is something that the authors draw attention to upon declaring there is a significant difference according to age. García Arias and González Riaño (2006: 58) note that *castellano* is the option most frequently chosen by the oldest section of the population, whereas middle-aged people tended to opt for terms like *asturiano*, *leonés* or *otros* [‘Asturian’, ‘Leonese’ or ‘Others’] and the statistics showed young people to pick out more *bable* [‘Bable’] or *asturleonés* [‘Asturleonese’].

This is something that, in view of these statistics, steers our preference for all of the linguistic territory unit-like or overall forms such as ‘Asturian-Leonese’, ‘Asturian-Leonese-Mirandese’ or the more recent *ástur* [Astur]. We would resort to usage of more local names when referring to each of the Asturophone territories to speak of the language on a more local level. This usage is not to be deemed a pretext to argue for language unity, but to approach the language community in its own immediate geographical territory by acting on a local level, and project an image of unity on a broader scale.

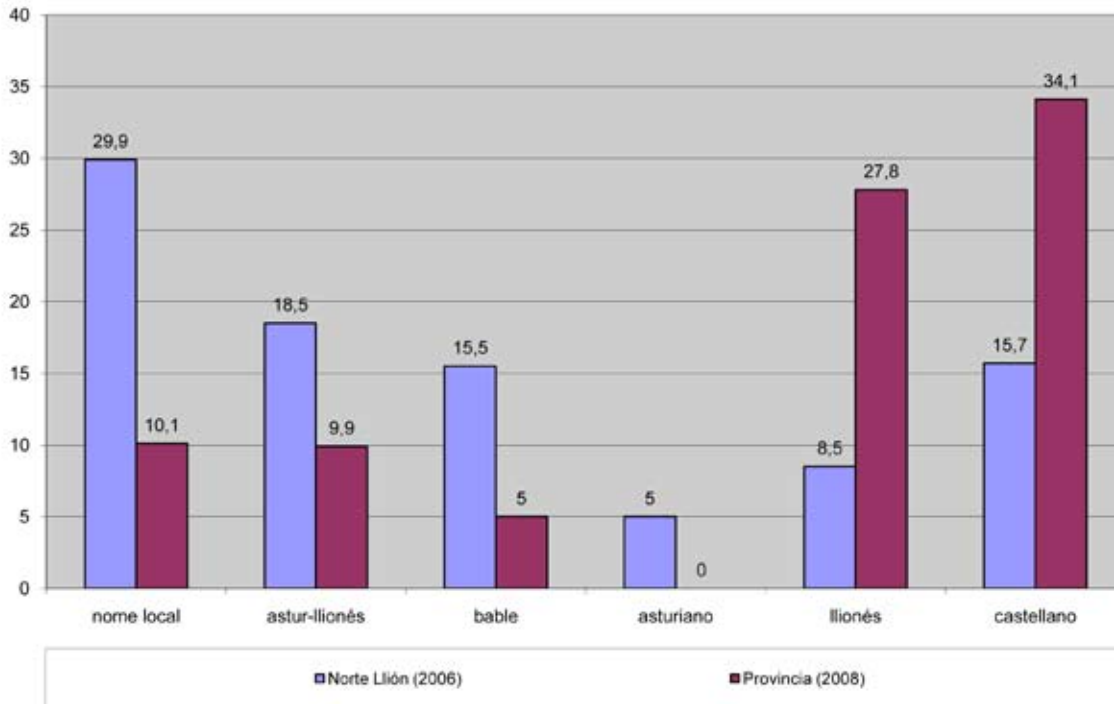


Illustration 3: Names for the local language from X.A.González Riaño & X.L. García Arias, 2006 (in blue) and 2008 (in purple)

Unlike this situation in the Leonese region, in Asturias the situation is an inverse one in which the majority of the people recognize their language as 'Asturian', 'Bable' or 'Asturian language' and 82% of Asturians deem 'Asturian', 'Bable' or 'Asturian language' the name of their language. Two out of every three Asturians see 'Bable' and 'Asturian' as synonyms for the language, and a third of them feel there is a difference between them, identifying 'Asturian' with the name of the language spoken (25%) and 'Bable' as the artificial name, an opaque name or the old name (21%) and, to a much lesser extent, as a term for the central Asturian dialect of the language (5%).

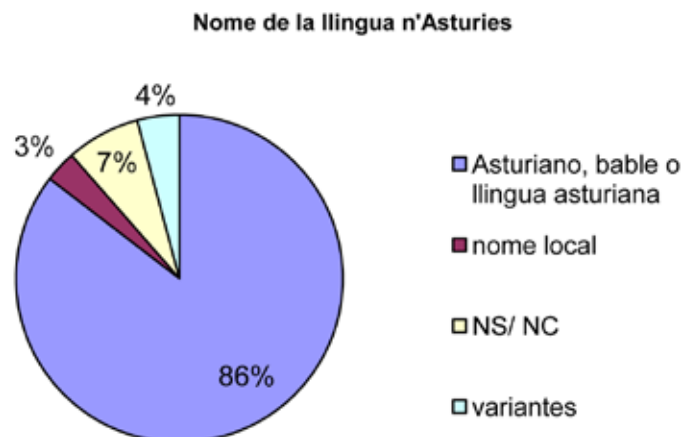


Illustration 4: Name of the language in Asturias from Llera Ramo & Pablo San Martín, 2003

2.2. Asturian or Asturian-Leonese as a language to the speakers.

A further important aspect in terms of broaching the sociolinguistic situation of Asturian-Leonese is the perception people may have of the language. In this respect, there is not the same consideration that it is a language by the speakers in the different regions where data have been collected from with surveys, and from these the difference between Asturias and Terra de Miranda, on the one hand, and the Leonese region on the other, can be seen. There is a greater consciousness and acceptance of the language in Asturias and Terra de Miranda, although the nature of this has been more personal and passive. Many of the Asturian and Mirandese population do not perceive their civil rights to have been lost in the conflict between languages, which is a secondary acceptance of their identity through language without renouncing it, a difficult balance between the two pressures.

When asked if Asturian or Bable is a language, 71% of Asturians say yes (Llera Ramo, 2003) and consider it to be of equal value to the other languages in the Iberian Peninsula. These data are accompanied by a yes from 37.4% in the north of León/Llión (González Riaño & García Arias, 2006).

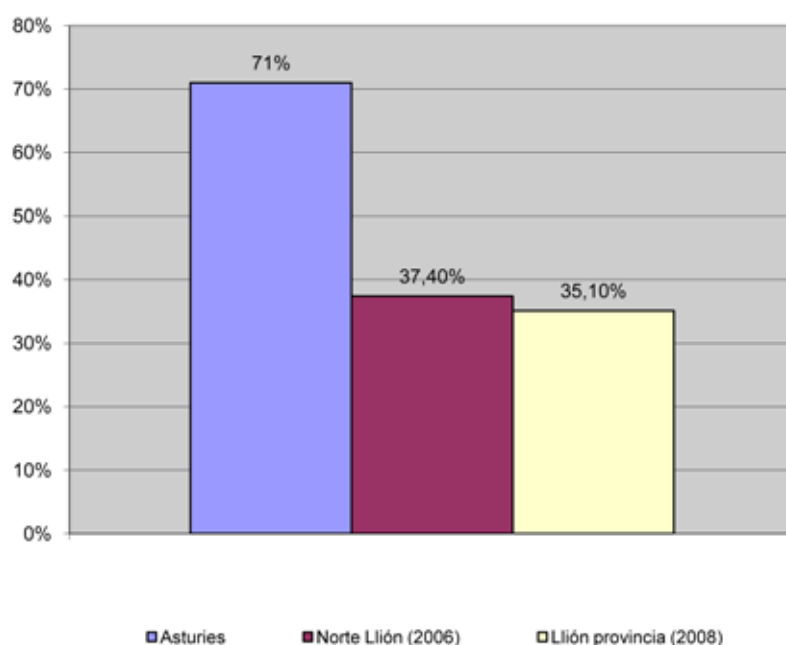


Illustration 5: Acceptance of Asturian as a Language by Speakers

In this same northern part of León/Llión, 50% said no when asked if their traditional language and Asturian was a single language unit, compared to 30.3% in the same part that believed it was and to 15% who only mildly agreed that it was. But approximately 75% of the people who cooperated in the survey declared that there were, indeed, similarities between the local language and the Asturian language. Here it is possible to see how territorial elements operate in local language, and, in many cases, the perception of 'Asturian' as only the central variety of the language.

Regarding Mirandese, the only survey that is available so far is one from April 2001, conducted by Dr Maria do Céu Carvalho de Sousa¹³, a geography teacher at the Secondary School of Miranda de I

¹³ The survey data can be viewed at the website <http://mirandes.no.sapo.pt/LMRuso.html>.

Douro. One of the few pieces of data in this survey is that of the positive attitude towards Mirandese shown by 75.3% of the people asked, compared to the 24.7% who held a negative one towards the language. As the author of the survey states, the positive evaluation of the language varies according to age (0-14 years – 48%; 15-44 – 77%; 45-64 – 82%; 65 or more – 84%) and the level of instruction in the language (not able to read it – 87.5%; basic level – 66.3%; intermediate level – 75%; advanced – 100%; other - 75.3%). From these figures the conclusion may be drawn, therefore, that Mirandese is positively deemed a language by speakers; that the negative attitude towards it is gradually fading away; and that it is slowly become viewed as a mother tongue, above all, following legal recognition of it as an official language in 1998.

In northern León/Llión, there seems to be no attachment of any stigma to language (García Arias & González Riaño, 206: 66-67), or the people do not state there to be, even if everyday life conveys a different attitude. More than 80% of the people in this area felt there was nothing wrong with speaking the traditional language, whereas 15% claimed there was. Young people have more positive feelings about the traditional language than older people. There does, however, also appear to be a greater perception that speaking it is wrong in the west of León province – the area where the language is most spoken and preserved – in comparison to the central and eastern parts, the less conservative ones.

2.3. Language use

In the data from the second *Encuesta Sociolingüística d'Asturias* [a sociolinguistic survey conducted in Asturias]¹⁴ by Llera Ramo and Pablo San Martín (2002), 68% of Asturians have an excellent or reasonably good understanding of the language, a mere 5% said their understanding of it was not so good, and 22% stated their understanding of it was average. This first percentage falls to 27% on the subject of reading in Asturian, and 13% said they could write it well:

	Very well	Reasonably well	Average	Quite bad	Extremely bad
Can understand	27	41	22	5	-
Can speak	14	30	28	13	15
Can read	6	21	31	18	24
Can write	3	10	25	23	39

For the north of León/Llión, in terms of communicative skills in the language, García Arias's and González Riaño's (2006: 68-69) sociolinguistic survey found that more than a third of the population there only understand the traditional language (36% who do vs. 9% who do not). Of the people who took part in the survey, 24.3% were able to speak and understand the language, 9.1% of the people could speak, understand and write in it, and, surprisingly, 21.3% possessed all the relevant skills in the language: comprehension, writing, speaking and reading – a surprising statistic in a region where there is no sign of this language in the school and very little literature in the language. Similar percentages are recorded in 2008 in the survey of the province of León, where the number of people who do not understand the traditional language rises to 18.9%, 13.9% are competent in all areas of the language, 36.7% only understand the language and 24.3% are active users of it.

In *Miranda de l Douro*, according to the 2001 survey (María do Céu Carvalho de Sousa, 2001) 87.6% of all the participants in the survey understood Mirandese, a figure which would be close to 100% in

¹⁴ Several tables and pieces of data can be found on <http://www.Asturies.com/asturiano/sociolingüística.htm>.

rural parishes. Of the Mirandese people answering questions in the survey, 64.6% said they spoke Mirandese and that they did this on a daily basis or when they were asked to express themselves in Mirandese (63% in total). In the more urban parishes Mirandese is spoken more on request than anything, whereas in the more rural ones the usage is a day-to-day one. In this aspect, the data collected in a recent survey on Mirandese by the professor Aurelia Merlan¹⁵, put to approximately 600 Mirandese people, would appear to contradict these statistics with 20% of the people speaking in Mirandese off of their own free will, especially people over the age of 60 years — Mirandese is the mother tongue of 60% of this section of the Mirandese population — and just 3% of Mirandese young people speaking in this language off of their own accord. This is one example of the rupture in the transfer of the Mirandese variety from generation to generation in this region, and of a symbolic presence of the language, a bit stronger than in the Leonese region, and a possible sign of what may happen in Asturias if the right measures are not taken.

2.4. Attitudes and beliefs in the different Asturophone regions

If we take a look at the data from the surveys we have been using it can be seen that there is a demand from society for the establishment of the Asturian-Leonese language in Asturias, Terra de Miranda and in those regions of León/Llión that have been studied. In the province of León 53.1% prefer to use it, and 27.9% wish to use it as they do Spanish; that is, they wish for the language to have official status. This figure increases to 70.7% in Asturias, where the people feel they are bilingual and that Asturian language should be spoken in the schools and used in the media. In *Miranda de l Douro*, 76.3% of the people questioned in the survey believed it was important for children to learn the Mirandese variety. These are statistics that neither the authorities, nor the main political parties, appear to be taking notice of.

In northern León/Llión, 70.9% of the people, and 60.7% in the 2008 survey of León province, believed that Asturias and León/Llión must work together on issues concerning linguistic policy. And 67.2% of the participants in the survey in León province wished for this to be the case with regard to schools (2008). In the same survey, 83.1% of the people expressed a wish for the institutions to promote the language. In other words, the attitude towards the language is a favourable one, and the only thing the region requires is a legal framework that will allow the language to develop, and real measures that will enable the language to prosper within the Leonese region.

2.5. Language Loyalty Movements

As a result of this call for the language, pro-Asturian language and Asturian-Leonese initiatives, language loyalty groups and activities have surfaced. Asturias is the region to have the highest level of awareness and activism regarding the language, and where there is most demand for Asturian to be recognized as an official language, with the work of groups like **Xunta pola Defensa de la Llingua Asturiana** who, for 25 years, has campaigned for official status for the language and social establishment of it and has done so in the form of protests, meetings, complaints lodged, restoration of names and all kinds of other action. Attention must also be drawn to large-scale platforms to demand official status for Asturian and Asturian Galician, such as the **Conceyu Abiertu pola Oficialidá** where political parties, unions, associations and citizen groups come together for this purpose in protests which thousands of people take part in every time they are held. This call for the

¹⁵ Visit <http://www.mdb.pt/Jornal/DetailheNoticia.aspx?EdicaoId=41&SeccaoId=1&NoticiaId=442> and http://jn.sapo.pt/2007/10/12/sociedade_e_vida/apenas_3_jovens_miranda_falam_a_lhen.html.

establishment of the language has spread to music and the arts, and to the whole society, but the politicians in the main political parties in Asturias block it out.

In the Leonese territory, the first demands for official status for the language took place in the 1980s, in the *pal.luezu* dialect speaking area, Palacios del Sil and *L.laciana*. Led by the writer Roberto González-Quevedo and his mother, Eva González, also a writer in Asturian-Leonese, and other people, and with the 'Asociación para la defensa del dialecto leonés Ordoño II' [Ordoño II Association for the Defence of Leonese Dialect], founded and headed by Antonio García Álvarez, the proposition was made for the study of, and research into, the language and for production of teaching materials for the language, for teaching of the language, and of the creation of a dictionary and grammar of the language, and for cooperation with Asturias on language issues; the initiative was undertaken with the best of intentions and had been well thought out, but it died out due to the disinterest for the Leonese cause there was at the time and because of the attitude of certain academics and figures amongst the provincial elite, people who bore extreme prejudices against minority languages and wished to see them buried.

At the beginning of the 1990s, the association **Facendera pola Llingua** in the Leonese region was created, and later, groups such as **Furmientu** in the province of Zamora, or **La Caleyá** in Astorga, León province. All of these groups work for acceptance of the language in the Leonese region with the same perspective, and without forgetting their work for the three Asturophone regions as a single language territory, and taking into account the current real linguistic situation. Their style of operation seeks to connect with the work being undertaken in Asturias, without losing sight of the purpose behind their work in their own local areas, a demand that reaches the whole Asturophone language community from a local level to sustain links and rebuild the bridges for communication between the speakers and the people aware of the language situation in the three Asturian-Leonese-speaking regions.

2.6. The construction of a benchmark language: Asturias and Terra de Miranda

As part of the process for the construction of a model language, of a standard language, the *Academia de la Llingua Asturiana* has already published three corpus pieces in the name of this establishment. The first of these, in 1981, *Normes Ortográfiques y Entamos Normativos* draws together the foundations for it as a model for educated use of the language: it is based on the phonetics and morphology of central Asturian, the acceptance of all the syntactic constructions as a rule, and on the acceptance of the employment of all Asturian-Leonese lexis, no matter where it comes from. The different dialects will be present in the cultivation of the literature and consideration must be made to the local spoken varieties in schooling. The continuation of this establishment operation comes in the form of the *Gramática de la Llingua Asturiana* (1998) [an official grammar of the Asturian language] and the *Diccionariu de la Lengua Asturiana* (2000) [an official Asturian language dictionary].

Meanwhile, in Terra de Miranda (Portugal), for the Mirandese variety, rules are independently being established, with attention being paid to the particular linguistic¹⁶, sociolinguistic and political aspects of Terra de Miranda and in those which the views of the *Academia de la Llingua Asturiana* on classification will barely be respected: that if the Mirandese dialect is closer to standard Asturian, the Asturian conventions shall be respected; that if it is closer to Portuguese, the Portuguese conventions

16 To see the linguistic level, refer to the article by Aurelia Merlan (2007): «Las variedades lingüísticas del noroeste peninsular: convergencias y divergencias», *Lletres Asturianas* 96: 7-56.

will be the ones to be observed; and that, in other cases, it should seek its own conventions. In spite of being recognized as part of the Asturian-Leonese continuum, the main contrasts with other spoken varieties of the language did not encourage the adoption of border-transcending norms — something that being part of the Portuguese Republic has had an influence on. Lastly, in 1999 the *Convenção Ortográfica da Língua Mirandesa* was published, which provided a set of independent norms for spelling the language and where Portuguese bore a significant influence as *Dachsprache*. In 2001 the *Comissão Anstadora del Anstituto de la Lhéngua Mirandesa* (the commission to become the future Institute for the Mirandese Language in Portugal) was created, the institution promised by the Portuguese government that would be responsible for the representation, promotion, expansion of Mirandese in Terra de Miranda, for the formation of rules for the language, and for research into it. However, it is yet to be established.

In the region of León/Llión since the early days of the *Surdimientu* movement, the western varieties of the language have been written with the spelling recognized by the *Academia de la Llingua Asturiana* in Asturias: independent variations with a common spelling, displaying both union and richness of language at the same time. However, young political pro-Leonese or Leonese groups — namely, **Conceyu Xoven** and organizations campaigning for the same cause — have, for years now, been devising a randomly reformed spelling that is full of mistakes and plagued by morphological and syntactical interference from Spanish. The line of argument is one that has been re-worked in the opposite direction to the existing one, in which there would be a Leonese language that shares no links with Asturian because the Asturian language is a separatist construct belonging only to the Asturians with their Academy, who invented a name for the language and then dropped the popular term for the language, which was according to *Conceyu Xoven* ‘Leonese’ (sic) and shattered linguistic unity by adopting a benchmark model based on the central Asturian dialect. These ideas suggest there is a new enemy, Asturian, in this case, one that can be used to reinforce the argument that the Leonese culture is losing features of its historical identity and because of this it is a victim — the Asturians are portrayed as pillagers of the Leonese historical linguistic essence. Therefore, the development of profitability out of this ‘portrayal as victims’ must be viewed within this global context where the function of language goes beyond the communicative, even beyond that as a symbol of identity, and becomes a specific political symbol. They build their political project on many people’s not feeling a strong sense of belonging to the same language community as Asturias. However, they have no problem with including Terra de Miranda, and thus the Mirandese variety, in their project, with its greater differences in linguistic and sociolinguistic aspects, by having their own particular interpretation of the concepts of diasystem, of norms, of spelling rules and standard language to build their political project.

3. Legislation on linguistic rights in asturophone territories

In this final section of the paper, we shall look at the current laws on the question of Asturian-Leonese, or Asturian-Leonese-Mirandese (names that shall appear as separate entities in their respective administrative units) in the territories where it is presently spoken, at its place in Portuguese and Spanish legislation, and see some of the loopholes there are in the system as it is today plus the path that may well be taken to achieve the acceptance and establishment of the language in Spain (Autonomous Communities of Asturias and Castile&León) and in Portugal (Terra de Miranda).

3.1. Current Legislation

An analysis shall now be undertaken of the legal framework for Asturian-Leonese — quoted in legal texts as Bable/Asturian, Leonese and Mirandese in their respective territories — for the Asturophone regions today. The legal situation is different in each of the regions and until a solution is found, the

situation in society is one in which the balance is tipped in favour of State languages — Spanish and Portuguese —, which enjoy all kinds of opportunities and safeguards, compared to Asturian-Leonese-Mirandese, which are confined to one's most immediate usage of spoken form and in the home.

3.1.1. Asturias¹⁷

In the context of the protection provided for Bable ('Asturian' or 'Asturian language' in other texts) the first reference must be Article 4 of the Statute of Autonomy of the Principality of Asturias, under Organic Law 7/1981 and modified under organic laws 3/1991, 1/1994 and 1/1999:

1. Bable shall enjoy legal protection. Usage of Bable shall be promoted and Bable shall be used in the media and taught in schools, respecting, in all cases, the local variations of Bable and the option to learn Bable.
2. The protection, usage and promotion of Bable shall be regulated by a Principality of Asturias law.

In this same Statute, the Article 10 (1) (21):

1. The Principality of Asturias shall have exclusive competence in the following areas: [...] 21. Promotion and protection of Bable in its diverse variations which, as linguistic modalities, are used in the Principality of Asturias¹⁸.

If analysed along these lines, we would concur with Pérez Fernández (2006: 257) that any classification of Asturian ('Bable' in the text of the statute) is ambiguous and is avoided but yet with the recognition of the existence of Asturian (or *Bable*) and that it has spoken varieties. This is something that in the eyes of Tolivar Alas (1988) and Xosé Lluís del Río (1998) makes it, then, a language that comes under Article 3 (2), not Article 3 (3), of the Spanish Constitution:

1. Castilian is the official Spanish language of the State. All Spaniards have the duty to know it and the right to use it.
2. The other Spanish languages shall also be official in the respective Autonomous Communities in accordance with their Statutes.
3. The wealth of the different language modalities of Spain is a cultural heritage which shall be the object of special respect and protection.

Pérez Fernández speaks of a language with a status that would be similar to partially official status (official recognition and a certain use of the language, but, at the same time, not official in the full sense of the term). This is something that he expands upon in the particular problems of the language in Asturias, which, alongside those suffered by minority languages with full official status there are the repeated breaches of the governing legislation to add as well, as is the case with teaching and with the absence of a guarantee in the legal system due to legal provisions being rendered obsolete by a lack of regulation for development (Pérez Fernández, 2006: 258). Uniquely, this is achieved with the definition of the legal status of the Asturian language by placing it on the same level as the rest

¹⁷ For an in-depth analysis of the legal situation of Asturian in Asturias, refer to: PÉREZ FERNÁNDEZ, JOSÉ MANUEL (2006): «Estatuto jurídico de la Lengua Asturiana», *Estudios sobre el estatuto jurídico de las lenguas en España*: 249-280, Barcelona: Atelier.

¹⁸ There is no official translation of this statute into English.

of the regional languages in Spain, in accordance with the real sociolinguistic situation in Asturias, and without there being room for, under any circumstance, a reduction in the level of protection¹⁹.

For Del Río (1998), Article 3 (2) of the Spanish Constitution, after proclaiming the entitlement and the obligation of all Spaniards to know Spanish, states that 'the other Spanish languages shall also be official in their respective autonomous communities in accordance with their Statutes'. According to Del Río:

[...] We understand, with regard to the [main language, and against the erroneous and contradictory reasoning of the Spanish Constitutional Court in the Ruling of 15/02/96, that the phrase 'shall also be official' leaves those drafting the Autonomous Statutes no margin for manoeuvring: there is a command for their own language, in any place where there is one, to be declared co-official with Spanish. [...]²⁰

Antoni Milian i Massana (1984) has addressed this question interpreting the 'shall also be' in the Spanish Constitution as an establishment of mandatory official status for the other Spanish languages, not of whether for a language to be so is merely a question of competencies.

[...] This idea, as well as by the implicit meaning of the term 'shall be', is supported by the fact that the amendments put forward, precisely that of changing the term 'shall be', which is not deemed open to interpretation, and replacing it with 'may be', which is clearly competency-based, were rejected. Although it is true that the argument proposed may become a 'boomerang' if the rejection was due to the strict consideration of Mr Peces-Barba's views expressed in his response to the defence of one of these amendments – number 35 – defended by Mr de la Fuente (something we do not know), it is not less true that the views of the aforementioned MP do not have ratio legislatoris value and, therefore, we suspect that that opinion does not devalue our line of reasoning, since, in the plenary session of the Senate, Mr de la Cierva maintains an opposite opinion on behalf of the Commission; that is, he insists on the mandatory nature [...]

With regard to the phrase 'the other languages', Milian i Massana understands by this that:

[...] It is appropriate now to examine whether the Spanish Constitution tells us which other languages shall also be official. Despite the fact that they are not named or determined in the text of the Spanish Constitution – the other languages – common sense clears up the intention of the Constitution for all of the languages to have official status in their respective Autonomous Communities. In any case, this contrasts with the legislative practice that is usually followed [...]²¹

Miguel del Río (1998) in his article quoting Milian i Massana regarding the non-recognition, on the part of the legislator, of the co-official status of the language of the respective Autonomous Community (in the case of Asturias) thinks that:

[...] This practice is not based, as we know, on a presupposed facultative character of the paragraph being examined (...) assuming that the binding effects of Article 3 (2) apply to (all) those languages that, because of their distribution and importance, may be

19 Non-official translation of the original quotation from the source text.

20 Non-official translation of the original quotation from the source text.

21 Non-official translation of the original quotation from the source text.

considered as autochthonous of the respective Autonomous Communities. Besides, the aforementioned practice leads to restrictions that clash with the text of the Constitution [...] ²²

Therefore, we see how a group of jurists interpret Article 3 (2) of the Spanish Constitution as an obligation, not an option, to declare the different Spanish languages as official. The Asturian statute (and in its case, that of Castile&León), then, is non-constitutional in nature until it recognises Asturian or Asturian-Leonese as having official character within these autonomous administrative frameworks of Spain. In the Spanish Constitution, a language is 'official regardless of its real situation and influence as a social phenomenon' (in Spanish Constitutional Court Ruling 82/86, *Fundamentos Jurídicos 2*).

In the spring of 1988, the Asturian government under Pedro de Silva wanted to develop Article 4 of the Statute of Autonomy, the law referred to as the *Ley del Bable* [The Bable Law]. This was a draft law that was disliked by pro-Asturian language sectors and also by a small group of citizens, who formed the association *Amigos de los bables*, or the 'sensible and clear thinkers' as they consider themselves, and who displayed their rejection of any measure to establish the language in Asturias, even going against something that some of them had defended just a few years ago. It was a controversy that was quickly subdued because of the lack of support from the people and, although they were not able to stem the demand for the establishment of the language, their influence is, or has been, reflected in the parochial discourse of the main political parties' leaders or in the sphere of university education, where the study of Asturian Philology has been blocked.

When *Ley 1/1998, de uso y promoción del bable/asturiano* [Law No 1 of 1998 governing Bable/Asturian usage and promotion] was passed, the development of statutory provisions and a clearer legal framework were sought that would establish Asturian language protection measures: the guarantee that Asturian could be taught to those who wish to learn and, and respect for the real sociolinguistic situation in Asturias, the right of citizens to know and to use Asturian, reinforcement of its development and the assurance of the freedom to use Asturian and of non-discrimination against the language.

Those are statements of the contents of the law for usage. But the law itself is repeatedly breached by the non-existence, initially, of the appropriate regulation, together with the negative attitude of the authorities in these cases. There are clear examples of discrimination on the grounds of usage of the language in universities and in administrative spheres. And a network of barriers is beginning to form against the standard development of the teaching of Asturian-Leonese, against Asturian toponymy and against any measure that further consolidates the establishment of Asturian language in society.

The summarising observation is made that Asturian-Leonese's circumstances in the Autonomous Statute of the Principality of Asturias are, to the mind of some authors, ambiguous ones of partially official status, with protection and promotion but full of obstacles and problems that complicate the normal development of the language. In these circumstances, authors like Pérez Fernández (2006: 257), quoting other jurists, understand under Article 3 (2) of the Spanish Constitution, by the phrase 'shall also be official' that those drawing up the statutes are obliged to declare the regional languages in the respective autonomous communities as co-official together with Spanish/Castilian and have no margin for manoeuvre. From this, therefore, it can be seen that there is no other resolution than that of official status for the language in the following reform of the Autonomous Statute of

²² Non-official translation of the original quotation from the source text.

the Principality of Asturias, based on this legal interpretation criteria of Article 3 (2) of the Spanish Constitution and on the unusual situation created by Article 4 of the Statute and Law 1/1998 — *Ley de uso y promoción del asturiano/bable* [Law No 1 of 1998 governing Bable/Asturian usage and promotion] — that refers to the language as partially official, with official status in part and being actively protected and promoted, but which, in reality, breeds effective discrimination against Asturophone people and a genuine imbalance in the citizens' civil rights. As can be witnessed in this text from the *Academia de la Llingua Asturiana* to the *Junta General del Principado* [Regional Executive of the Principality of Asturias] on the lack of acknowledgment of linguistic rights of 30 March 2007, which reflects the real situation in terms of the protection and promotion of Asturian-Leonese-language speakers' rights:

[...] The Asturian Language Academy deeply and genuinely regrets that this task of monitoring language rights must be one of its most frequent obligations, since it is an extremely clear illustration the democratic rights that we enjoy as Asturian citizens are not being respected.

No longer is it because that Asturian is the only language in Spain that has been not been recognised as having official status, but that, at the same time, the exercise of an indisputable right, as is that of the employment of the language itself in the relationship between the citizens and the regional government, is being obstructed by decisions that seriously breach European legislation (The European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages), Spanish legislation (the Spanish Constitution) and the legal system itself in the Principality of Asturias (Statute of Autonomy and Law of Use of Asturian).

And it is the Asturian Government, the very institution that must protect our linguistic rights, which is seriously failing to comply with this moral obligation, by openly rejecting the exercise of these rights. Decisions such as the one not to process a doctoral thesis by the lecturer Faustino Zapico, or the refusal to process authorization for Mr Xurde Blanco, an Asturian legal service civil servant, to undergo medical tests, due to use of the Asturian language, are solid proof of our message.

In addition to these incidents, which were reported by the *Academia de la Llingua Asturiana* at the time they took place, there is the non-process on the part of the Regional Ministry for Education of a secondment request, made by the teacher, Xosé Nel Comba, in Asturian. This case is an even more serious one, if that can be possible, since the aforementioned teacher had been exercising this right, recognized under Article 4 of the law on the promotion and usage of Asturian, since 2004 and without any bureaucratic obstacles raised in his path. The malicious nature of this is considerable bearing in mind that the document conferred for process is an administrative one that any civil servant could understand, irrespective of their knowledge of the Asturian-Leonese language.

This practice is an especially unpleasant one considering the official line of argument of the Government of the Principality of Asturias, which maintains that an official status is not required for the language because, in accordance with the law, the people enjoy the freedom to use the language. The reality, however, is different, for it is this government itself that fails to comply with its obligation to promote Asturian and, in this case, simply outlaws use of the language. [...]

In 2001 Spain ratifies the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages in which it is outlined that:

'Spain declares that, for the purposes of the mentioned articles, are considered as regional

or minority languages, the languages recognized as official languages in the Statutes of Autonomy of the Autonomous Communities of the Basque Country, Catalonia, Balearic Islands, Galicia, Valencia and Navarre. For the same purposes, Spain also declares that the languages protected by the Statutes of Autonomy in the territories where they are traditionally spoken are also considered as regional or minority languages. [...]

[...] All the provisions of Part III of the Charter, which can reasonably apply according to the objectives and principles laid down in Article 7, will apply to the languages mentioned in the second paragraph. [...]

The European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages, then, is to be applied in the case of Asturias, taking Paragraph 2 as a reference, upon the language coming under the provisions of, and being protected by, the Asturian Statute of Autonomy. But neither the Spanish authorities, nor the Asturian ones have respected this. It has led the European Council, highlighting the growing social prestige of the language, to recommend co-official status for Asturian (2005²³) and overrule the Spanish Government's stance of refusing this co-officiality for Asturian-Leonese language and of not recognizing the establishment of a degree in Asturian Philology with respect to the work on corpus standardization of the Asturian-Leonese language by the *Academia de la Llingua Asturiana*.

Finally, the *Aconceyamientu de Xuristes pol Asturianu* [The Advisory Council of Lawyers for Asturian] presented in 2007 the *Dictame xurídicu sobre'l conflictu llingüísticu n'Asturies*²⁴, a report that looks in-depth into the interpretation of the constitutional mandate on official status and that of Article 3 (2) of the Spanish Constitution of 1978. By way of jurisprudence and explanation of the facts, the authors of the report come to the same conclusions as those of other authors, and an attempt is made to solve Asturias's linguistic conflict from a legal sphere. There are examples and genuine illustrations of this lack of acknowledgement, and even of linguistic repression, part of this linguistic conflict, in the report *Informe sobre la represión y non reconocencia de los drechos llingüísticos n'Asturies* (*Academia de la Llingua Asturiana*: 2002).

3.1.2. The Autonomous Community of Castile&León.

As has already been mentioned at the start of this paper, Asturian or Asturian-Leonese is spoken in various parts of the provinces of León and Zamora in the north and the west. They are western varieties, and are less spoken, than in the north, in Asturias, and have not yet been suitably addressed, nor has the relevant appropriate action been taken, in the legal sphere. Castile&León is being questioned by León/Llión itself as an autonomous community ever since its creation by the Spanish State in 1983. There is a strong feeling of a Leonese identity and the people who hold it are in favour of autonomy for the Leonese region, of splitting with this non-historical autonomous community of Spain that is based on the basin of the Duero river and seen as artificial. The Autonomous Community of Castile&León is not characterized by respect for, and development of, the minority languages belonging to this administrative framework — Galician, Asturian-Leonese and Basque —, but it is known for the distribution of, and work for, a language that is cultural and linguistic heritage of this autonomous community, in which Castile is the home of Spanish and the language does not require any special attention in the Community in the way that Galician-Portuguese, Asturian-Leonese and Basque do. This is an attitude that can be clearly seen in Act 1/1998 of 4 June 1998 of the *Régimen Local de Castilla y León* [of the Local Code of the Autonomous Community of Castile&León], which

²³ <http://www.lavozdeAsturies.es/noticias/noticia.asp?pkid=226293>.

²⁴ This is displayed on the website <http://www.xuristes.as> in the section 'trabayos'.

states in Article 24 (1) **that the names of municipalities must be in Spanish**, respecting the names that exist at the time this law comes into effect, without clashing with, or generating confusion between, others in the territory of the State. It is an article that rules out the employment of the traditional names for places and makes the usage of the Spanish/Castilian ones for them mandatory.

The following provision became part of Article 4 (2) of the Statute of Autonomy of Castile&León, when it was revised in 1999:

The Galician language and linguistic modalities shall be respected and protected in the places in which they are commonly used.²⁵

In a later law, Law 12/2002 of 11 July 2002, on the Cultural Heritage of Castile&León in Article 64 and Article 65, linguistic heritage is defined: languages, dialects and linguistic modalities that have been traditionally used within Castilian and Leonese territory and require the competent administrative authority to implement measures for distribution and protection of the language. This has not been done so far.

However, in the latest reform of the statute, undertaken in 2007, Organic Law 14/2007, a fifth article has been added in which linguistic heritage is discussed:

[...] Article 5. Castilian language and linguistic heritage in the Community.

1. Castilian language is part of the historical and most valuable heritage of the Community, spanning the entire nation and many other States. The *Junta de Castilla y León* (Government of Castile&León) will promote the correct employment of Spanish in education, administration and culture. Likewise, it shall promote learning of Spanish/Castilian, especially on an international level and in cooperation with the Community's universities, and shall undertake the measures it deems necessary for this purpose.

2. Leonese shall be the object of special protection by the institutions on account of its special value as part of the Community's linguistic heritage. The protection, use and promotion of the language shall be regulated.

3. The Galician language and linguistic modalities shall be respected and protected in the places in which they are commonly used. [...]²⁶

These facts convey a step forward in terms of the legal recognition of the language upon their entry into the articles of the statute, in the second paragraph of Article 5 and the inclusion of the mandate of regulation by law.

Upon analysis of this Article 5 (2) of the Statute of Castile&León, the only concession to the Leonese stances and proposals, it can be seen that:

a) The name is 'Leonese', without any further specification or adjectives to categorize it by, or any reference to linguistic territory unity, and uses Pidal's historicist term and the main cause for the nationalist and Leonese demand in León/Llión but does not clear up what it is referring to. This appears to be done with an intentional ambiguity. The name must be accompanied by a clarification

25 Non-official translation.

26 There is no official translation of the Statute of Autonomy of Castile&León into English.

of the linguistic connection with the other Asturophone territories. If not, it will open up the doors to the interpretation that it is a new language, at least in terms of the name. This is something that appears to encourage a pro-Leonese political movement, which has no hesitation in declaring the strong Leonese connection with Terra de Miranda in Portugal whilst splitting from Asturias, and a sui generis reinterpretation of the history of the language, as do groups such as **El Fueyu, El Toralín** and **La Barda**, the inside cultural movement of the political youth organization **Conceyu Xoven**. Unlike these, civil cultural groups such as **Facendera pola Llingua** and **La Caleya** in León province, or **Furmientu** in the province of Zamora, are looking into a joint Asturian-Leonese-Mirandese initiative, something that brings together both sides of the Cantabrian mountain range under the same linguistic unit, but acting from each of the three corresponding Asturophone regions and with a line of argument focused on the historical Leonese territory, undertaken by the social and cultural agents of the Leonese region in Spain. This means they do not close the door on cooperation with Asturias and Terra de Miranda, so to learn from where they have got things right and wrong in the campaign for Asturian-Leonese(-Mirandese) language official status and take advantage of the activities performed and materials used already. Therefore, it is maintaining the unity of the Asturian or Asturian-Leonese linguistic territory, with the maintenance of the unity of spelling with Asturias, and as far as possible, with the Mirandese model. It is a language model that in the context of the standard Asturian-Leonese spelling proposed by the *Academia de la Llingua Asturiana* in Spain serves the basically western dialects actively spoken in the provinces of León and Zamora. The question is one of linguistic coherence, of defending affiliation to the same linguistic territory, of resources and of making full use of cultural resources.

b) A second feature to be analysed is the combination of words for Leonese ('Asturian-Leonese', or 'Asturian', terms that have been employed the same way in this paper) in which it is spoken of as an object of special protection forming part of Castile&León's linguistic heritage. This particular definition does not include it in a linguistic territory and is unclear; reference to Leonese as a 'language' is avoided and it is left as an ambiguous 'linguistic heritage', part of something bigger within the borders of a Spanish Autonomous Community. Therefore, it has been written in a manner that is sufficiently ambiguous for the phrase to be interpreted in various ways and be to the liking of holders of the various viewpoints and sensitivities. However, the wording of the article does not extend as far as that of the Asturian Statute of Autonomy, speaking of protection and usage and simultaneously referring one to Article 3 (3) of the Spanish Constitution: where the different language modalities of Spain are described as 'cultural heritage that shall be the special object of respect and protection'. So we see how the concept of heritage, respect and protection appear in the wording with a possible interpretation as a reference to Article 3 (3) of the Spanish Constitution, but not as one to Article 3 (2), which discusses other Spanish languages, and renders 'Leonese' inapplicable for co-official status and blocks any recurrence to the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages as a language without doing the same to it as a linguistic modality. In a more favourable interpretation, 'Leonese' is distinguished and there is a reference to protection, usage and promotion that could lead it to become partially official, or asymmetrical, should the article be developed, an appropriate act on languages be established and the relevant measures actually be put into action. The interpretation of this is something that must be seen and analysed in the coming years. It is a linguistic heritage that the laws of Castile&León themselves ambiguously define as 'languages', 'dialects' and 'linguistic modalities' that have been traditionally used within the territory of Castile&León.

However, if we bear in mind the record so far of the *Junta de Castilla y León* [Regional Government of Castile&León] for defending Leonese linguistic heritage, the future does not look very promising, and even less so if we read, for instance, in this same Statute of Autonomy of Castile&León, Article 4, which states the essential values:

Article 4. *Essential values*

The Spanish language and the historical, artistic and natural heritage are essential values for the identity of the Autonomous Community of Castile&León, and will be the object of special protection and support, with institutions being created for these purposes.²⁷

Here only Spanish/Castilian can be seen receiving that essential value from the autonomous community, a value that Asturian-Leonese, Galician and Basque do not have in Castile&León, languages that come under this administrative framework and are in a very precarious situation. There is excessive protection in the first paragraph of Article 5, which we have already looked at, for a language — namely, Spanish — that is a global benchmark and is not exactly in danger in this geographic region — nor is it so in any other of Spain —, but is accumulating speakers at the expense of its other language communities and is eliminating possible linguistic diversity in Castile&León. The wording of the article suggests that Spanish/Castilian is one of the essential values of the autonomous community, regarding both its formation and the identity, and rules out a possible linguistic diversity in Castile&León. The linguistic diversity is, then, considered to be of secondary importance and is not taken into account, part of a non-transparent cultural heritage that is distant from the Spanish identity of this Autonomous Community, and must endure the current attitude of things just being left to take their course, of action not being taken, leading directly to the short- or middle-term extinction of the other indigenous languages that exist in the Autonomous Community of Castile&León.

c) A third element, in the context of particular protection of Leonese, is the regulation of its protection, usage and promotion; that is, the implementation of a law for Leonese that ensures it can be used and is protected, and sets in place the relevant measures for promotion of Leonese, a Languages Act of Castile&León — since, in Article 5 (3), Galician also enjoys legal recognition in Castile&León — that must care for fundamental aspects in the linguistic restoration of Leonese, of Asturian-Leonese. There must be clear legislation to regulate it and a will to apply it — this will is the actual obstacle to any of these measures and one which can render the law meaningless. The territorial sphere of application must be set out and laws on teaching the language must be introduced. And there must be a promotion of language attitudes that curb derogation of language and generate the appreciation by the Leonese population of Asturian-Leonese as cultural heritage, both by the people that speak it, and by people from other areas, in which it is not spoken nowadays.

An active policy to reinforce literature in the language and the distribution of it must be incorporated. This has to be done if we do not want books and publications to pile up in an attic somewhere and have no presence in society or any influence on it whatsoever. The language must be able to be seen and heard in the media, and be visible in the form of the traditional toponyms of the areas still have speakers of the language. Only these measures would ensure the initiation of a large road to the recovery of Asturian-Leonese in the Leonese region, **a language that has no academic or technical institution in Castile&León** to look out for the status and corpus establishment. The creation of an autonomous body or institution that takes care of the aforementioned activities for establishment of the language is crucial, beginning with the acknowledgment of the *Academia de la Llingua Asturiana's* authority on the language in this area. This autonomous body would operate either as a branch of the Asturian Language Academy or as a Leonese partner institution of the Asturian *Academia*, whilst still working independently within its own Leonese territory.

²⁷ There is no official translation of the article into English.

Ultimately, this law should follow the directives of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages applicable to non-official regional or minority languages that are covered by the different Statutes of Autonomy in Spain:

‘ [...] All the provisions of Part III of the Charter, which can reasonably apply according to the objectives and principles laid down in Article 7, will apply [...]’.

Likewise, Article 7 (1) (b) of the charter demands respect for the geographic area of the regional or minority language over administrative divisions, without these divisions being able to obstruct the promotion of the relevant regional or minority language. Then, on the other hand, there is Article 14 (b) that authorizes cooperation between regional and local authorities across borders for the benefit of a regional or minority language. These elements mean we can speak of cooperation between autonomous regions on the protection and promotion of the language and of cross-border agreements for the Mirandese-speaking area in Portugal.

3.1.3. *Terra de Miranda: Mirandese Language Law*

Mirandese is the name by which the western variety of Asturian-Leonese spoken in the towns of *Miranda de I Douro* and three villages in the municipality of *Vimioso/Bumioso* in Portugal, enjoys legal provisions and official status — the Portuguese interpretation of ‘official status’ —, via Law 7/1999 of 29 January 1999. The aforementioned law was thrust by the Mirandese MP of the *Partido Socialista* [Socialist Party] Júlio Meirinhos Santanas (currently an ‘honorary academic’ of the Asturian Language Academy), and unanimously approved. It recognizes the rights of the Mirandese community. In *Despacho normativo* [legislative order] 35/1999 of 5 July, from the Ministry for Education of Portugal, the regulations for aspects regarding the teaching of Mirandese are set out.

ASSEMBLY OF THE REPUBLIC
Law No 7 /99
of 29 January

Official recognition of the linguistic rights of the Mirandese community
The Assembly of the Republic has decided, in the terms of Paragraph c) of Article 161 of the Constitution, to pass as a general law of the Portuguese Republic, the following:

Article 1

This document is for the recognition and the promotion of the Mirandese language.

Article 2

The State of Portugal recognizes the right of cultivation and promotion of the Mirandese language, in so far that it is cultural heritage and that it is an instrument of communication and of reinforcement of the identity of the Terra de Miranda.

Article 3

Children are recognized to have the right to be taught Mirandese, in the terms and conditions that apply.

Article 4

Public institutions situated in Miranda de I Douro or with their main office in the Concelho de Miranda de I Douro region may issue documents accompanied by a translation of them into Mirandese.

Article 5

The right to support for science and education is recognized, with regard to the training of Mirandese language and culture teachers, in the terms that apply.

Article 6

Regulation for this document shall be established within 90 days after it has come into effect.

Article 7

This document shall come into effect 30 days after it has been published.²⁸

As Pérez Fernández (2006: 278-279) observes, this recognition by law is not an official status for the language in its fullest sense as understood by the Spanish, but it is an acknowledgement of rights on the part of Portugal that grants the right to cultivate and promote the Mirandese language as cultural heritage, as an instrument of communication and as a reinforcement of the identity of Terra de Miranda (Article 1 and Article 2, and Law 7/1999).

The focus of this protection is, on one hand, on education, with regulation under *Despacho normativo* [legislative order] 35/1999, on the right to be taught Mirandese in primary and secondary education (Article 3 of Law 7/1999); and on the other, the instruction of Mirandese teachers (Article 5 of Law 7/1999).

The law on linguistic rights of the Mirandese community also deals with the issue of the administration. Therefore, Fernández Pérez (2006: 278) states:

In the administrative sphere, public institutions that are situated in, or have their headquarters in, the municipality of Miranda do Douro, may issue documents accompanied by a translation of them into Mirandese (Article 4 of Law 7/1999). It all conveys the impression that Portuguese is still the only official language. Furthermore, the citizens' right to express themselves in Mirandese when addressing public institutions under the provisions of Article 2 of Law 7/1999 must be taken as implicit.²⁹

As Fernández Pérez's words show, it is not complete official status but an acknowledgement of the linguistic rights of the Mirandese community, one that appears to concentrate on education and on the possibility of bilingual communication on the part of the *Câmara Municipal de Miranda do Douro* [the *Miranda de I Douro* local council], which reflects non-official status as it is understood in Spain. And, besides a law on usage or law for the establishment of the language that takes into account other aspects of life in the society, the economic life and the administrative life of Terra de Miranda, there are two fundamental aspects missing: the actual implementation and development of what has already been passed, and the ratification by Portugal of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages. Ultimately, there is no real commitment or development of laws that, in some way, ought to — and this would be applicable to the Autonomous Community of Castile&León on the other side of the border in Spain —, **include a reference to linguistic territory unity**, regardless of the independent operation of each Asturophone region and of **cross-border cooperation**. A law for the Mirandese community in which the following rights are recognized (Ferreira, 2002: 77-82): the right to the language as an individual or as a group of individuals, in *Terra de Miranda*, an

28 There is no official translation of this document into English.

29 There is no official translation of this work into English.

instrument for communication, cultural heritage and part of Mirandese identity. There is a right to campaign for the Mirandese cause, but no obligation is imposed and this could mean that the right is not exercised. The right to learn Mirandese is recognized, but, as Ferreira puts it (2002: 81), the Despacho normativo [legislative order] 35/1999 must be amended upon the observation of it as a way to avoid putting the law into practice, upon their being no commitment from the State, and as a wasted opportunity to set out a real curriculum for teaching Mirandese, including the literacy of adults in the language, and a request must be made for this law to be replaced by one that does not infringe the laws and secures the right to learn Mirandese.

The law is of symbolic importance upon being considered a language by Portugal itself and by other countries, and especially, according to Ferreira (2002: 84) a law that exists and can be monitored by the courts and can be used as a basis for making demands to the State and all of its organs, and serve as a guide for a genuine policy on the Asturian-Leonese language in Portugal.

However, in the Constitutional Law of the Portuguese Republic No 1/2001 of 12 December amending the Constitution, Portuguese is declared as the official language³⁰:

Article 11 National symbols and the official language

1. The National Flag, which shall be the symbol of the sovereignty of the Republic and of Portugal's independence, unity and integrity, shall be that adopted by the Republic formed by the Revolution of the 5th October 1910.
2. The National Anthem shall be *A Portuguesa*.
3. The official language shall be Portuguese.

Therefore, the official status of the Portuguese language, which has always been *de facto* in Portugal, has now become *de iure* as the official language of the Portuguese Republic. Portuguese is exclusively recognized as the sole official language. This leaves very little margin for the interpretation of Mirandese as an expressly and legally recognized official language. Measures to protect the Mirandese variety are supported but without the chance of the language being granted full official status, since Article 11 (3) of the Constitutional Law of the Portuguese Republic only states that Portuguese is. However, Amadeu Ferreira (2002: 65-86), when discussing the legal statute of Mirandese, considers this declaration of Portuguese as the official language of the country the outcome of the recognition of the linguistic rights of the Mirandese community. He discusses the non-existence of legal-linguistic studies in Portugal, the lack of specification of the concept of 'official language' in the Constitution of the Portuguese Republic and, in particular, the monolingual nature of Portugal. When comparing Portuguese and foreign languages Mirandese is left out of this comparison because, as Ferreira says (2002: 71-72), its statute is that of a national language, but it is applied on a regional level and is different to a foreign language; and that as a language of Portugal, Asturian-Leonese has legal status alongside Portuguese languages, although it is restricted to its natural environment and its speakers' community. The law is one that, according to Ferreira (2002: 84):

[...] even if it has limitations, acknowledges the linguistic rights of the Mirandese community. The law is a landmark in the evolution of Mirandese and has provided the necessary means to resolve some of the main issues regarding the language, provided there are proper regulations for the language and a will to apply them, on the part of both Mirandese speakers and Portuguese citizens and on that of State organs on a

³⁰ <http://www.tribunalconstitucional.pt/tc/crp.html>.

national and local level. [...] ³¹

4. Final considerations

Now that the main features of Asturian-Leonese-Mirandese language and the legislation on it have been considered, it can be seen that this north-western Iberian Peninsula Romance language, spoken in Spain in Asturias and in parts of the provinces of León and Zamora as well as in parts of the *Bragança* district in Portugal (the Terra de Miranda region), is a **minority language that is in danger of dying out in the Leonese region in Spain** because of the absence, so far, of effective measures to protect and promote the language and of legal recognition measures for this. Alongside this prospect of the Leonese situation, we stand before that of the language becoming gradually substituted in Asturias and Terra de Miranda if it does not become effectively established versus the current laws that lack any substance.

There is no full official status for the language in any part of the three Asturophone regions. There are references to the language in Statutes of Autonomy and there are laws on usage, and, in the case of Mirandese, a law for the language community, but the language enjoys no true official status and has not been suitably established in society in any of the three territories. The laws often have no real force, and the statements are empty ones which, as has been seen throughout this paper, are so because of the failure to back them up afterwards with the relevant action. It is a situation for which the only resolution is, firstly, compliance in Asturias and the Asturophone region in Castile&León on official legal status for the language according to the Spanish Constitution; in particular to Article 3 (2), an article that has been interpreted by jurists as a mandate when statutes are drafted. Secondly, there must be compliance with the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages (a Council of Europe convention), and with the later laws for the social establishment of the language. And, thirdly, there must be a process parallel to this, being undertaken in Terra de Miranda in the municipalities of *Miranda de l Douro* and *Vimioso/Bumioso*: compliance with the law for the Mirandese community, with special emphasis on schooling and instruction of the teachers, and, on the other hand, the ratification of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages, by Portugal, which the country then must adhere to.

Laws for language establishment should take into consideration the sociolinguistic specifics of each region but not forget that the language varieties belong to a single linguistic territory. This must lead to concurrent solutions, regarding the language system, that respect the special features of the language, as is the case with the Mirandese variety. And it must also lead to laws based on linguistic coherence, to defend the academic approach of belonging to the same linguistic territory, **to preserve and strengthen the Asturophone language community**, and likewise, cultural resources and means for the full development of the language, but also focused on each of the three Asturophone regions and attentive to their features.

It is a course that, respecting the individual focus on action in each of the Asturophone regions, must progress via cooperation between institutions, bodies, associations and people to overcome administrative obstacles and borders and become **a true European language community and, above all, guarantee a future for our language** in this, the 21st century; a future that, together with the required legal measures in the three Asturophone regions, and the appropriate laws for establishment of the language, which develop them and abide by the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages, must set out in search of spheres for communication that are common to

³¹ There is no official translation of this work by Ferreira into English.

all the Asturophone territories: cultural exchange and production as well as the media, cooperation between universities and the possible creation of standard linguistic institutions that attend to all Asturian-Leonese-Mirandese-speakers.

These possibilities are laid out there in the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages, in Article 7 (1) (b) that commands respect for the geographic area of the regional or minority language over administrative divisions, without these divisions being able to obstruct the promotion of the relevant regional or minority language. Then, on the other hand, there is Article 14 (b) that authorizes cooperation between regional and local authorities across borders for the benefit of a regional or minority language.

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Links

Institutions and official bodies

Academia de la Llingua asturiana (the Asturian Language Academy): <http://www.academiadelalengua.com>

Language Policy Office of the Principality of Asturias: <http://www.politicallinguistica.org>

Seminariu de Filoloxía Asturiana, University of Oviedo:

<http://www.uniovi.es/vicinves/unidades/gruposInv/DptoFiloEspanola/FiloAsturiana/main.htm>

Media

Asturies.com website: <http://www.asturies.com>

Asturnews.com website: <http://www.asturnews.com>

Weekly newspaper from Asturias 'Les Noticias': <http://www.lesnoticias.com>

Diário de Tras os Montes: <http://www.diariodetrasosmontes.com> (with some news in Mirandese variety)

Language loyal groups and other websites

Xunta pola Defensa de la llingua asturiana (XDLA): <http://www.exunta.org>

Conceyu Abiertu pola Oficialidá (CAO): <http://www.24payares.org>

Aconceyamientu de Xuristes pol Asturianu (AXA): <http://xuristes.as>

Fundación Caveda y Nava: <http://www.fundacioncavedaynava.org>

Asociación Furmientu: <http://www.furmientu.org>, <http://furmientu.blogspot.com> (Asturian-Leonese language news in Zamora)

Blogs on the language territory

<http://na-lluna.nireblog.com> (Na lluna hai una vieya filando)

<http://tierraalantre.nireblog.com> (Tierra alantre, la mesma fala)

Informative blogs in mirandese

<http://mirandes.no.sapo.pt>

<http://www.lhengua.blogspot.com> (Literature and translations in Mirandese)

<http://tierrademiranda.blogspot.com>

<http://frolesmirandesas.blogspot.com> (Froles Mirandesas)

Annex

Traditional place names used in this paper and their corresponding version in Spanish (in Asturias and León) or Portuguese (Terra de Miranda).

Traditional Names	Names in Spanish or Portuguese
Asturíes	Asturias
Uviéu	Oviedo
Ayer	Aller
L.lena	Lena
Amieva	Amieva
Parres	Parres
Ribeseya	Ribadesella
Cangues d'Onís	Cangas de Onís
Onís	Onís
Cabrales	Cabrales
Llanes	Llanes
Ribadeva	Ribadedeva
Ríu Seya	Río Sella
Llión	León
Los Argüechos~Argüeyos	Los Argüellos
Ponteo	Pontedo
Gordón	Gordón
Foyyeo	Folledo
Sayambre	Sajambre
Valdión	Valdeón
El Bierzu	Bierzo
Cabreira	Cabrera
Maragatos	Maragatería
Cepeda	Cepeda
Oumaña	Omaña
Babia	Babia
L.laciana	Laciana
Palacios del Sil	Palacios del Sil
Furniella	Fornela
Senabria	Sanabria
Aliste	Aliste
La Carbayeda	La Carballeda
Tierra de Miranda	Terra de Miranda
Miranda de l Douro	Miranda do Douro
Sendin	Sendim
Bumioso	Vimioso
Angueira	Angueira
Bilasseco	Vilaseco
Caçareilhos	Caçarelhos
Rueidenor	Río de Onor (Port.)/ Rihonor (Span.)
Guadramil	Guadramil
Bergância	Bragança (Port.)/Braganza (Span.)
Riu Douro	Río Douro (Port.)/ Río Duero (Span.)

