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DIFFERENCE AND ACCOMMODATION IN VISIGOTHIC GAUL AND SPAIN

A Thesis

Presented to

The Faculty of the Department of History

San José State University

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts

by

Craig H. Schamp

May 2010

The Designated Thesis Committee Approves the Thesis Titled

DIFFERENCE AND ACCOMMODATION IN VISIGOTHIC GAUL AND SPAIN

by

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APPROVED FOR THE DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY

SAN JOSÉ STATE UNIVERSITY

May 2010

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ABSTRACT

DIFFERENCE AND ACCOMMODATION IN VISIGOTHIC GAUL AND SPAIN

by

Craig H. Schamp

This thesis examines primary sources in fifth- and sixth-century Gaul and Spain and finds a surprising lack of concern for ethnicity. Authors in the fifth century expressed concern for the sanctity and safety of the church, their patria, and themselves, but seldom mention any issues that could be related to ethnicity. Even the Arian Christianity of the Goths seems to be of little or no concern. This changes in the middle of the sixth century, when Arian Christianity becomes an overarching issue in Visigothic history. The sources portray nearly every political concern in the second half of the sixth century as one of Arian versus Catholic. Contrary to the idea of a Spain in which Roman-Gothic relations were very important, no other mention of ethnic differentiation appears in the sources even at this time.

CONTENTS

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

Note: Abbreviations of ancient authors and works follow the *Oxford Classical Dictionary* except as noted.

Greg. Tur. *Hist.*   Gregory of Tours, *Historiae*.

Isid. *HG*   Isidore of Seville, *Historia Gothorum Vandalorum Sueborum*.

Hyd.   Hydatius, *Chronicon*.

John Bicl.   John of Biclaro, *Chronicon*.

MGH   *Monumenta Germaniae Historica*

PLRE2   J. R. Martindale, *The Prosopography of the Later Roman Empire*, 2.

PLRE3   J. R. Martindale, *The Prosopography of the Later Roman Empire*, 3.

Procop. *Wars*   Procopius, *History of the Wars*.

VPE   *Vitas patrum sanctorum emeritensium.*

Southern Gaul and the Diocletianic provinces of Spain, including Mauretania Tingitana, in late antiquity.

Chapter 1

Introduction

This thesis project started with an interest in discovering the ways Romans and

barbarians viewed each other in late antique Spain. It soon expanded to include Gaul,

mainly because of the Visigothic presence in that province prior to their settlement in

Spain, and also because the scarcity of sources for fifth-century Spain seemed to make

Sidonius a necessity for establishing a clearer picture of the Goths. But while trying to

discover what Romans and barbarians said of each other, looking for specific ethnic

indicators in the surviving sources, another change in focus presented itself. The

barbarians left no discernable written record of their own history in Spain and southern

Gaul prior to about the middle of the sixth century. Not until the second half of the sixth

century do authors identified as Goths appear. Additionally, many of the expected ethnic

indicators are themselves hard to detect or are altogether missing.

Some record of ethnicity survives in late antique sources, of course. Authors of

the period mention Goths, Sueves, and other groups with ethnic names. But the research

method originally envisioned for this thesis involved the creation of a catalogue of ethnic

indicators, from which one might find patterns or, over a long enough span of time,

trends and changes in the way barbarians and Romans thought of each other. However,

lacking barbarian sources, this method might reveal the ways Romans described

barbarians, but not vice versa.

Looking at the divisions and alliances in late antique Gaul and Spain, the sources

reveal that Catholics worked closely with Arian Christians, that Romans enlisted the help

of one barbarian group to suppress others, and that the associations between people came

and went as political circumstances changed. Even without an abundance of

documentation on supposed ethnic differences, understanding something about these

social and political phenomena helps in the evaluation of the modern literature on

ethnicity in late antiquity. With this in mind, the phrase "ethnic identity" in the proposed

title of the thesis became "difference and accommodation."

This study is not about biological differences between Romans and barbarians, or

what in modern parlance would be called "race." This word is burdened with

preconception, history, and myth. Few scholars today subscribe to the notion that

biology distinguishes one group of people from another in any significant way.[1] The

important human qualities—mental capacity, to take one example—are the same from

one population to the next, removing any scientific justification for racism.[2] This is not

to say that scientists see no physical differences between one group and another, but traits

such as hair and skin color or the shape of a person's eyes are superficial even to a

biologist. Furthermore, any attempt to create a scientific classification of people is

arbitrary. Why should a division based on skin color be any better than a division based

on eye shape? Why stop at one criterion? Why not use two or more characteristics

simultaneously?

In her analysis of racism, Barbara Fields observes that ideological context, not

biology, dictates which traits people emphasize.[3] Scientists do speak of population

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[1] Barbara J. Fields, "Ideology and Race in American History," in *Region, Race, and Reconstruction: Essays in Honor of C. Vann Woodward*, ed. J. Morgan Kousser and James McPherson (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982), 149.

[2] Many of the thoughts expressed in this paragraph owe a significant debt to Luca Cavalli-Sforza's work cited here. L. Luca Cavalli-Sforza, Paolo Menozzi, and Alberto Piazza, *The History and Geography of Human Genes*, Abridged pbk. ed. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), 19-20. See also Jonathan M. Hall, *Ethnic Identity in Greek Antiquity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 20.

[3] Fields, "Ideology and Race," 146.

groups, but these groups have meaning only for the scientist working to understand

human development, migration, or evolution. The fact is, there is only one species of

homo sapiens, and the prevailing scientific view provides no justification for the concept

of biological determinism. In the context of late antiquity, there were no significant

biological differences between Romans and barbarians. Even if certain population groups

exhibit a tendency for blond hair or blue eyes and other groups for brown hair and eyes,

for example, these differences do nothing to change the fact that all are human.

Having dismissed race as an element of this study, the question of "ethnicity"

remains open. In modern discussion, perhaps especially in the United States, the term

"ethnicity" often appears on equal terms with "race."[4] At times it seems that the two

words mean the same thing. Sometimes people use "ethnicity" to refer to cultural

distinctions between groups, while "race" often carries the misguided implication of

biologically defined categories. Precise definitions are seldom easy to find. One could

simply say that both "race" and "ethnicity" are social constructions. As Fields once asked,

"what makes Hispanics an ethnic group, while blacks, whites, and Asians are racial

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[4] Fields, "Ideology and Race," 152.

groups?"[5] In her analysis of this mystery, she noted that those Americans whose ancestors were brought to the New World as slaves originally came from many different parts of Africa and shared neither a common language nor a common culture, and exhibited variety in physical appearance. Yet the European slave traders began referring to all African slaves as "black" without regard to these differences. The decision to use some attributes while ignoring others for the purposes of classifying people, claims Fields, is dictated by ideological context.[6]

When Jonathan Hall tried to define ethnicity for his study of Greek antiquity, he adopted Donald Horowitz's terminology of *criteria*, those social features required for group membership, and *indicia*, those features that are often associated with group membership but are not exclusive to one particular group.[7] The primary criterion of an ethnic group, according to Hall, is a belief in a common origin story. Members of an ethnic group may use many characteristics, including physical features, language, and

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[5] Fields, "Ideology and Race," 144.

[6] Fields, "Ideology and Race," 145-146.

[7] Hall, *Ethnic Identity*, 20-21; Donald L. Horowitz, "Ethnic Identity," in *Ethnicity: Theory and Experience*, ed. Nathan Glazer and Daniel P. Moynihan (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1975), 119-121.

dress, to indicate group boundaries, but the qualities that distinguish the ethnic group

from other types of social groups are a "connection with a specific territory" and, most

important, a shared belief in a common ancestry.[8] The claim to common ancestry might

be based on factual historical events, but, as often as not, it is based on a legendary

account of the group's origins, finding expression in what scholars call the foundation

myth. If the primary criterion of membership in an ethnic group is a belief in common

descent, all other signs of ethnicity—the *indicia* in Horowitz's terminology—serve as

boundary markers. The *indicia* are not unique to an ethnic group, however, and the traits

and societal details that may be important in one place and time may not be important

distinctions of ethnic boundaries elsewhere in history.[9]

Since ethnicity is a social construction, it follows that ethnicity has meaning only

in a social context, that is to say, ethnicity exists only when people indicate and interpret

the boundaries of ethnic groups.[10] Anthropologists and sociologists sometimes speak of

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[8] Hall, *Ethnic Identity*, 25.

[9] Hall, *Ethnic Identity*, 3, 23, 166.

[10] Hall, *Ethnic Identity*, 19; Walter Pohl, "Telling the Difference: Signs of Ethnic Identity," in *Strategies of Distinction: The Construction of Ethnic Communities, 300-800*,

primordialist and instrumentalist (or circumstantialist) analytical models of ethnicity.[11]

The primordialist view assumes that ethnic divisions have a deep basis in history, often

described through kinship relationships. The historical justification for ethnic divisions

in the primordialist model can lead to statements about a deterministic role for ethnicity

in history. The instrumentalist model, on the other hand, claims that ethnic groups form

primarily out of immediate or recent events and circumstances.[12] In the instrumentalist

view, the ethnic groups may form, disappear, and return as circumstances and claims to

power and resources change over time. Jonathan Hall suggests that members of an ethnic

group are more likely to subscribe to the primordialist view, while outside observers such

as anthropologists or members of competing groups are likely to prefer the

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ed. Walter Pohl and Helmut Reimitz (Leiden: Brill, 1998), 21; Fields, "Ideology and Race," 150-152.

[11] Nathan Glazer and Daniel P. Moynihan, "Introduction," in *Ethnicity: Theory and Experience*, ed. Nathan Glazer and Daniel P. Moynihan (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1975), 19-20; Hall, *Ethnic Identity*, 17.

[12] Cf. Fredrik Barth, "Pathan Identity and Its Maintenance," in *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries: The Social Organization of Culture Difference*, ed. Fredrik Barth (Long Grove, Illinois: Waveland Press, 1998), 133-134.

instrumentalist model.[13] In the context of the history of late antiquity and the theories of

ethnic group formation during the period, the instrumentalist model resembles

ethnogenesis theory, discussed briefly in chapter two.[14]

Ethnicity is a social phenomenon with political implications. An ethnic group

exists through signs of ethnicity that distinguish the group from others, although

individual signs of ethnicity, the *indicia*, are not necessarily specific to any one group. As

for the *criteria* of ethnicity, belief in a common origin associated with a specific place or

developed through purported kinship ties is the chief criterion for membership in an

ethnic group, although multiple criteria may dictate group membership. Members of an

ethnic group might view their ethnicity differently than outside observers view them.

The signifiers of ethnic boundaries can include nearly any distinguishing trait, including

language, costume, and religion, although these indicators are not always coterminous

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[13] Hall, *Ethnic Identity*, 18-19.

[14] See also Patrick Amory, *People and Identity in Ostrogothic Italy, 489-554*
(Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 16.

with ethnic boundaries.[15] Ethnic groups can and often do change over time, following the

instrumentalist view. These changes sometimes develop in response to changing

circumstances of power and influence.

In the following pages, the reader will encounter certain terms that require some

clarification here. Scholars generally use the term "Roman west" to refer to the entirety of

the western Roman empire, including Italy. Since this study deals primarily with only a

portion of the western empire, the term "western provinces" will refer to the provinces of

Gaul and Spain. It might seem that "Visigothic west" is a better term, but Spain did not

come under any semblance of Visigothic control until the late fifth century at the earliest,

and even then the ability of a Visigothic leader to exert control in Spain was extremely

limited. Not until after the Franks pushed the Goths out of Gaul at the battle of Vouillé in

507 did Visigothic political attention turn more clearly toward Spain. In a similar

fashion, Gaul was never entirely under Visigothic control. The predominant focus of the

Goths was southern Gaul, including Arelate, Tolosa, and Narbo. After 507 only Narbo

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[15] Jan-Petter Blom, "Ethnic and Cultural Differentiation," in *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries: The Social Organization of Culture Difference*, ed. Fredrik Barth (Long Grove, Illinois: Waveland Press, 1998), 74, 80-84. See also Amory, *Ostrogothic Italy*, 17.

remained Visigothic. So with these considerations, the term "western provinces" serves

as a convenient reference to southern Gaul and Spain.

The outlines and names of Roman provinces changed over the course of the

imperial period. Late in the third century, Diocletian established the diocese, an

administrative unit incorporating multiple provinces governed by a *vicarius*. The diocese

of Spain included the entire Iberian peninsula plus the province of Mauritania Tingitana.

In this study, "Spain" refers to the *diocesis Hispaniarum*.[16] Similar remarks apply to Gaul,

which includes all of the western empire on the continent between Italy and Spain.

The names of ethnic groups are somewhat more problematic than geographic

names. As discussed below in chapter two, finding a collective name for non-Roman

groups that eliminates all modern political considerations is impossible. Even the term

"non-Roman" is troublesome. What does "Roman" mean in the first place? Sidonius

Apollinaris, like Symmachus before him, sought to retain those qualities of *romanitas* that

he felt were slipping away. For Sidonius, literary skill, *eloquentia*, was perhaps the

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[16] For a thorough discussion of the Diocletianic reforms and their impact on the
Iberian peninsula, see Michael Kulikowski, *Late Roman Spain and Its Cities* (Baltimore:
Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004), 65-84.

paramount sign of *romanitas*.[17] This motivated Sidonius to publish his letters and to

write poems, panegyric, and satire. But what of the Gothic king Theoderic II? According

to Sidonius, Theoderic studied the Latin of Virgil under the tutelage of Avitus.[18] Does

this display of *romanitas*, however slight, make it more or less difficult to label the Gothic

king "non-Roman"? In general, this thesis adopts the convention of using words such as

"barbarian," "Germanic," and "non-Roman" with no ideological intent. This seems

acceptable after acknowledging the pitfalls. In any case, the word "barbarian" on the

following pages should never be taken to mean "uncivilized," "primitive," or "wild."

When used in this study, the word simply refers to a Goth or a Sueve or a member of

some other non-Roman ethnic group named in the sources.[19] Chapter two offers a short

treatment of other issues with nomenclature.

This thesis examines primary sources in fifth- and sixth-century Gaul and Spain

and finds a surprising lack of concern for ethnicity. Arian Christianity, an important

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[17] See below, ch. 2, and also Jill Harries, *Sidonius Apollinaris and the Fall of Rome, AD 407-485* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), 122.

[18] See below, ch. 3.

[19] Cf. Walter Goffart, *Barbarian Tides: The Migration Age and the Later Roman Empire* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006), 187-188.

facet of Visigothic history for modern scholars, is rarely mentioned in Spain until the

middle or late sixth century. But these observations apply only to Spain and Gaul in that

era. It would be a mistake to generalize the conclusions of this thesis to other times and

places. In a similar vein, it would be misguided to think that two men, Hydatius and

Sidonius, represent an entire century of history in two provinces. The thesis examines

their work and that of sixth-century writers in the hope that the late antique sources

provide additional insight to allow for clarification and reflection on some of the modern

assumptions about the past.

Chapter 2

Historiographical Overview

Any study of late antiquity must include a discussion of the history, style, and purpose of the chronicle genre, one of the most common forms of historical writing of the period. The two primary influences on the chronicle form were the Greek chronographic tradition and the consular annals.[20] Greek writers developed the chronicle as a vehicle for dating the heritage of various cultures, whether Greek or foreign. Jewish historians adopted the chronicle for similar reasons, defending their own culture against Hellenistic attack by showing that Moses predated the Trojan war, then relating all other events in Jewish history to Moses.[21] Christian millenarianists of the third century used the chronicle format to put a date on the Genesis story. This then allowed them to

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[20] R. W. Burgess, ed., *The Chronicle of Hydatius and the Consularia Constantinopolitana* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), 7; Steven Muhlberger, *The Fifth-Century Chroniclers: Prosper, Hydatius, and the Gallic Chronicler of 452*, ARCA, Classical and Medieval Texts, Papers, and Monographs, vol. 27 (Leeds: Francis Cairns, 1990), 9.

[21] Muhlberger, *Fifth-Century Chroniclers*, 11-12.

predict the second coming of Christ, an event that, according to millenarianism, was to occur 6000 years after Creation.[22]

Although Eusebius adopted the chronicle for recording his research, first published in 303 and surviving only in fragments today, he departed from his predecessors by shunning millenarianism, and by recognizing the contradictions in the chronologies presented in the Septuagint and the Hebrew and Samaritan biblical texts.[23] For Eusebius the chronicle was a means to produce a universal history rather than an *apologia*. He was not only a careful and thorough researcher, but also an inventive historian, perhaps the first to present a timeline in graphical form. His chronicle showed the events of various civilizations in columns aligned in time, allowing the reader to correlate world history by scanning across the page.[24] Jerome translated the chronicle of Eusebius and extended it down to the death of Valens in 378, and may have invented the

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[22] Muhlberger, *Fifth-Century Chroniclers*, 12-15.

[23] Burgess, ed., *Hydatius*, 6; Muhlberger, *Fifth-Century Chroniclers*, 15-16.

[24] Muhlberger, *Fifth-Century Chroniclers*, 17-18.

technique of using two ink colors, red and black, to help clarify the presentation.[25] Like

Eusebius, Jerome's intent was to write a universal history.

A good deal of the historical picture of fifth-century Spain comes from the

chronicle of a bishop by the name of Hydatius.[26] He was born around the year 400 in the

civitas Limicorum or *civitas Lemica* in the Roman province of Gallaecia. Except for some

travel as a youth and some diplomatic missions as a bishop, he seems to have remained in

Gallaecia his entire life, and became bishop of Aquae Flaviae in that province in 428.[27] Of

the remoteness of his post, Hydatius remarks that his appointment to bishop came "as

much at the end of the earth as at the end of my life."[28] In fact, he would live at least

another forty years following his election to the bishopric, as indicated by his chronicle,

which stops in the year 468 or 469.[29]

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[25] Muhlberger, *Fifth-Century Chroniclers*, 19-20.

[26] On the importance of Hydatius as a source for 5th century Spain, see Kulikowski, *Late Roman Spain*, 153-156.

[27] Burgess, ed., *Hydatius*, 3-4; Kulikowski, *Late Roman Spain*, 153.

[28] Hyd. pref. 1. All citations to Hydatius's *Chronicle* use the section numbering of the edition by Burgess.

[29] Burgess, ed., *Hydatius*, 5; Muhlberger, *Fifth-Century Chroniclers*, 199.

The *Chronicle* of Hydatius is a continuation of those of Eusebius and Jerome.[30]

Continuations such as this became popular with Latin writers in the west turn the fifth and

sixth centuries.[31] Hydatius departs from the genre by eschewing the extreme brevity that

is its hallmark, although his chronicle is assuredly dense and compact. Hydatius was

motivated by a belief that the end of the world was imminent, making another break from

his predecessors, but he was a skilled and knowledgeable historian who carefully

evaluated his sources, even though his chronicle might seem crude and laconic to modern

readers.[32] When reading Hydatius, one should keep in mind that his work augments

Eusebius and Jerome, meant to preserve—or in his view, to extend—a record of the world

leading up to the apocalypse.[33] In spite of the eschatological tone, Hydatius's main

concerns are with corruption in the church, evidenced by "indiscriminate appointments"

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[30] Hyd. pref. 1-3.

[31] Hyd. 5, 20-57; Burgess, ed., *Hydatius*, 6-8; Elisabeth M. C. Van Houts, *Local and Regional Chronicles*, Typologie des Sources du Moyen Âge Occidental (Turnhout: Brepols, 1995), 53-54.

[32] Burgess, ed., *Hydatius*, 10.

[33] Hyd. pref. 5. See also Burgess, ed., *Hydatius*, 9-10; Stefan Rebenich, "Christian Asceticism and Barbarian Incursion: The Making of a Christian Catastrophe," *Journal of Late Antiquity* 2, no. 1 (2009): 50-59.

to ecclesiastical positions and a decline in sound religious teaching, along with concerns

over the state of the Roman Empire, which he thinks is "doomed to perish." These are in

fact related issues for Hydatius. It is the instability of the Empire and "the disruption of

hostile tribes" that distracts and weakens the church in its attempt to deal with "the

domination of heretics."[34]

The eschatological focus of early medieval chronicles has sometimes relegated

them to a category of second-rate or uninteresting and unreliable sources. But Hydatius's

chronicle, perhaps more than any other contemporary source, includes a significant

amount of information on diplomatic embassies in fifth-century Spain.[35] The

information that Hydatius provides on embassies yields some insight into the interactions

between various political groups—between local officials and barbarians, for example, or

between local and imperial officials—at a time when imperial influence in the western

provinces was in decline. The fact that diplomacy continued in the Roman tradition into

the early middle ages shows that the successors of the Roman empire saw value in

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[34] Hyd. pref. 5. See also Muhlberger, *Fifth-Century Chroniclers*, 230.

[35] Burgess, ed., *Hydatius*, 8-9; Andrew Gillett, *Envoys and Political Communication in the Late Antique West, 411-533* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 37-40.

adopting Roman institutions and traditions of government rather than turning solely to

their own traditions or developing new ones.

Although the chronicle was popular in late antiquity, some writers preferred other

forms of expression. Sidonius Apollinaris, a younger contemporary of Hydatius, chose to

write poems and letters in a classical style. Unlike many of his predecessors and

contemporaries, Sidonius did not write history *per se*. He likened himself to Pliny, the

man of letters, in contrast to Tacitus, the historian, and felt that writing history was

unsuitable for a bishop.[36] Sidonius was more concerned with those qualities and pursuits

that defined a Roman aristocrat, namely letter writing, panegyric, and a command of

Latin and literature.[37] His letters are reminiscent of Seneca or the younger Pliny,

although stylistically different.[38] In his letters, Sidonius was not simply writing to his

friends. The bishop edited and published his papers as part of his goal to display his

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[36] Sid. Apoll. *Ep*. 4.22.2, 8.22; Walter Goffart, *The Narrators of Barbarian History (A.D. 550-800): Jordanes, Gregory of Tours, Bede, and Paul the Deacon* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2005), 117.

[37] Harries, *Sidonius Apollinaris and the Fall of Rome*, 3.

[38] Harries, *Sidonius Apollinaris and the Fall of Rome*, 1-3.

romanitas.[39] One must keep Sidonius's objective in mind when reading his comments on

barbarians, with his seemingly precise accounts of how they differ from Romans.[40]

Even though the style of Sidonius had no connection to the works of Eusebius and

Jerome, the influence of the famous chroniclers went well beyond their specific genre.

Writing around a hundred years after Sidonius, Gregory of Tours, in the preface to his

Decem libri historiarum, acknowledged his debt to them.[41] Yet Gregory did not write a

chronicle, he wrote a narrative history. Indeed, Walter Goffart describes Gregory as the

"first historian since Orosius." Orosius and Gregory mark the endpoints of more than a

century and a half where no similar narrative style is preserved in the west.[42] In contrast

to Jerome, Eusebius, and even Orosius, Gregory wrote contemporary and social history

rather than a universal history.[43] It should come as no surprise to learn that Gregory was

[39] Harries, *Sidonius Apollinaris and the Fall of Rome*, 3.

[40] Cf. Harries, *Sidonius Apollinaris and the Fall of Rome*, 122.

[41] Martin Heinzelmann, *Gregory of Tours: History and Society in the Sixth Century*, trans. Christopher Carroll (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 104. On the title of Gregory's work, see Heinzelmann, *Gregory*, 106-107.

[42] Goffart, *The Narrators of Barbarian History (A.D. 550-800): Jordanes, Gregory of Tours, Bede, and Paul the Deacon*, 117-118.

[43] Heinzelmann, *Gregory*, 108.

not writing objective Rankian history "*wie es eigentlich gewesen*." For Gregory, history

had a didactic purpose.[44] Gregory believed that history is driven by the opposing forces of

good and evil, and that kings and leaders of the church have a decisive influence on

history.[45] Heretics and pagans appear in his *Histories* against Catholic kings and martyrs

to teach these principles. This colors his account of events, especially in the context of

Visigothic history. After all, the evil Visigoths adhered to the heretical belief of Arian

Christianity, unlike the good Catholic Franks.

Isidore of Seville is best known for his *Etymologiae*, compiled sometime between

615 and 630, but his most important work for the study of sixth century Spain is perhaps

the *Historia gothorum vandalorum sueborum*.[46] The text survives in two forms, a short

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[44] Heinzelmann, *Gregory*, 36-37.

[45] Heinzelmann, *Gregory*, 102.

[46] Stephen A. Barney and others, eds., *The Etymologies of Isidore of Seville* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 3. Considering the popularity of the *Etymologies* during the middle ages and its importance for medieval historians and philologists, only recently has it finally been translated into English. As for Isidore's *Historia*, Kenneth Baxter Wolf has published an English translation of the Gothic portion without the brief history of the Vandals and Sueves. Kenneth Baxter Wolf, ed., *Conquerors and Chroniclers of Early Medieval Spain*, 2nd ed., Translated Texts for Historians (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1999), 79-109.

version running to 619 or 620, and a longer one running to about 624 or 626.[47] The long

version is the more common of the two. The short version is not simply an abbreviated

redaction of the longer edition. The manuscript tradition is more complicated than that,

with each recension containing information not found in the other. Although it is

speculative, some scholars suggest that the short version is a lost *historiola* of Maximus of

Zaragoza and was the source for Isidore's own derivative work now identified as the long

edition of the *Historia gothorum*.[48]

Several sources fall beyond the purview of the current project. One western

source omitted due to the lack of a modern translation is the *Chronica Caesaraugustana*,

sometimes cited as the *Consularia Caesaraugustana*.[49] This work, written sometime after

the late sixth century and preserved in only one manuscript dating to the sixteenth, would

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[47] Much of the historiographical information on the *Historia Gothorum* presented here comes from an extensive footnote running several pages in Kulikowski, *Late Roman Spain*, 403n81. See also Roger Collins, "Isidore, Maximus and the *Historia Gothorum*," in *Historiographie im Frühen Mittelalter*, ed. Anton Sharer and Georg Sheibelreiter (Vienna and Munich: 1994), 348.

[48] Kulikowski, citing Roger Collins and Theodor Mommsen, believes this to be the case. Kulikowski, *Late Roman Spain*, 404-405.

[49] See, for example, Kulikowski, *Late Roman Spain*, 417-418; Muhlberger, *Fifth-Century Chroniclers*, 314.

seem to have questionable value to the present work other than to provide some

corroborating details for the historical narrative.[50] Another source lacking a modern

translation is the *Gallic Chronicle of 452*, which might have had more direct value here.[51]

The chronicler lived in southern Gaul, perhaps in Marseille, and wrote a continuation of

Jerome.[52] Steven Muhlberger notes that the anonymous chronicler attributed the decline

of the empire to "barbarians," using the term much more frequently than Prosper or

Hydatius.[53] The chronicler of 452 also seemed more preoccupied with Arianism,

mentioning it directly five times and indirectly three more times in his brief and terse

work.[54] This differs substantially from Hydatius, who mentions Arianism infrequently

and only in the context of persecutions of the church.[55] However, the *Gallic Chronicle of*

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[50] For an overview of the *consularia*, see Kulikowski, *Late Roman Spain*, 381n44, 382n51.

[51] For one side of a debate on the value of the *Gallic Chronicle of 452* with respect to Saxon history in Britain, see R. W. Burgess, "The Gallic Chronicle," *Britannia* 25 (1994): 240-243.

[52] Muhlberger, *Fifth-Century Chroniclers*, 136-139.

[53] Muhlberger, *Fifth-Century Chroniclers*, 174-175.

[54] Muhlberger, *Fifth-Century Chroniclers*, 175-176.

[55] *infra*

452 omits any mention of events that would explain the author's concern for Arianism, who, in a further departure from Hydatius, does not even cite the persecutions of Geiseric.[56]

Another class of works omitted from this project are those of eastern writers. With few exceptions, notably Procopius and his *History of the Wars*, eastern authors appear in the current research only rarely. The reason for this is that the goal of this project is to try to discover the ways that people living in the western provinces described each other and how they distinguished one group from another. Of course, eastern writers can contribute correlative information, and their works also help to fill out the narrative of late antiquity, but they do not represent western views. Eastern authors such as Sozomen, Zosimus, and Cassiodorus must regrettably remain outside the bounds. Cassiodorus is certainly important to Gothic history, but his writings are most appropriate to a study of the Goths in Italy and the Baltic region.[57]

Among the sources that might seem to be conspicuously missing from the current work are the various legal codes of the period. Perhaps due to the paucity of extant

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[56] Muhlberger, *Fifth-Century Chroniclers*, 176.

[57] For one such study, see Amory, *Ostrogothic Italy*.

sources from the Iberian peninsula, and the complete lack of any sources in Spain and

Gaul by barbarian authors prior to the sixth century, some scholars turn to legal codes in

an attempt to gain insight into barbarian customs and viewpoints. Some very interesting

studies have come out of such research, particularly in scholarship on the Visigoths.[58] But

a well-known problem with legal codes as historical evidence is that laws generally do not

indicate actual practice but merely reflect the codification of custom or administrative

intent. The lack of other sources that would help gauge the value of legal texts might even

make the legal texts more problematic. Michael Kulikowski notes that in the case of

Visigothic law, the sources leave little to no evidence about the times and places where the

laws were enforced.[59]

One of the more interesting theories of barbarian historiography posits that

ancient Germanic law was "personal" rather than territorial, in contrast to Roman law.

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[58] See in particular P. D. King, *Law and Society in the Visigothic Kingdom*, Cambridge Studies in Medieval Life and Thought, 3d Ser., V. 5. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972).

[59] Kulikowski, *Late Roman Spain*, 399n37. The term "Visigothic law" frequently appears as shorthand for several sets of Visigothic legal sources, which Kulikowski enumerates as the *Codex Eurici*, the *Lex Romana Visigothorum*, also known as the *Breviari Alarici*, and several editions of the seventeenth century compilation known as the *Leges Visigothorum*.

This theory supports the view of a society split along ethnic lines, where Gothic

monarchs, according to the theory, applied the Germanic law only to ethnic Goths while

allowing the indigenous Roman population to govern itself under Roman law. Recent

scholarship questions some of these assumptions without denying the coexistence of

Roman and Germanic law codes in the post-Roman west. At issue is the practical

application of these dual law codes, particularly with respect to ethnic differentiation.

Patrick Amory takes the view that the Germanic and Roman divisions in the law codes of

Ostrogothic Italy represent divisions along professional or occupational, not ethnic or

cultural, lines. According to Amory, Cassiodorus, writing for Theoderic, used the

ethnographic term "Goth" to categorize the military population of his kingdom, and

"Roman" for the civilian population, thus making a legal division between soldiers and

civilians, a traditional Roman distinction.[60] Other scholars take a less radical departure

from the theory of personal law, yet still take positions at odds with it. Michael

Kulikowski sees no evidence for a separation of Roman and Germanic jurisprudence, but

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[60] Amory, *Ostrogothic Italy*, 51-52, 51n24.

instead proposes that a single Gothic legal apparatus "legislated equally" for both Roman and Goth.[61]

Two related yet distinct theories dominate the modern historiography of the Roman west in late antiquity. The first of these tries to explain the nature of barbarian migrations from the Rhine into Gaul and Spain in the fifth century. The traditional view maintains that the Vandals, Alans, and Sueves who crossed into Gaul in 406 and entered Spain in 409 were part of a *Völkerwanderung*, a mass migration of entire "peoples," perhaps numbering in the tens of thousands and composed not only of soldiers but also of women and children.[62] Some recent scholarship revises this view by casting doubt on the validity of the numbers reported in the sources and by downplaying the notion that the barbarian groups represented entire, intact societies.[63] Furthermore, Walter Goffart views the commonly applied term "migration age" as a hindrance to clarity, making the reasonable argument that it obscures nuance and brings with it the implication that the

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[61] Kulikowski, *Late Roman Spain*, 399n37, 401n51.

[62] Peter Heather, "Why Did the Barbarian Cross the Rhine?," *Journal of Late Antiquity* 2, no. 1 (2009): 6-7.

[63] For but one example, see Amory, *Ostrogothic Italy*, 30.

period preceding the "migration age" was one of calm and stasis.[64] The strongest impetus

for a revision of the *Völkerwanderung* assumption, though, seems to have more to do

with what opponents see as the evident nationalism of the theory.[65] This runs into the

other important model of recent scholarship, namely, the theory of ethnogenesis.

Herwig Wolfram, whose historical models are strongly influenced by Reinhard

Wenskus, is perhaps the most well-known of scholars in the ethnogenesis camp, leading

some to refer to an "Austrian school" of thought.[66] Proponents of ethnogenesis theory

argue that Gothic identity in late antiquity developed around small groups of elite

warriors and *Traditionskerne*, or "nuclei of tradition." These warriors garnered

followings of heterogeneous groups, taking the collective name Goth (and eventually

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[64] The term itself is far from novel, having been in use since Konrad Peutinger coined it in 1515. Goffart, *Barbarian Tides*, 13-16.

[65] Heather, "Why Did the Barbarian Cross the Rhine?," 7.

[66] For the English translation of his influential study of the Goths and his development of ethnogenesis theory in that context, see Herwig Wolfram, *History of the Goths* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988; reprint, 1990). Florin Curta refers to the debate on ethnogenesis as between "the Vienna and the Toronto 'schools'" due to Herwig Wolfram as a proponent and Walter Goffart as a skeptic of the theory. Florin Curta, "Some Remarks on Ethnicity in Medieval Archaeology," *Early Medieval Europe* 15, no. 2 (2007): 160.

Visigoth or Ostrogoth) along the way of gradual "ethnic group" formation.[67] Patrick

Geary identifies three forms of ethnogenesis, which are, first, group formation around "a

leading royal family" that had some kind of agreement with the imperial government,

second, confederations of "polyethnic" groups of steppe peoples (Ostrogoths, Gepids,

Longobards, Bulgars, and so on), and third, the uniting of "decentralized peoples" who

came together around a strong leader in response to "outside elements."[68]

The concept of ethnogenesis has generated some of the most heated debate in

recent scholarship on late antiquity. One collection of papers is almost entirely focused

on disproving in the theory.[69] The debate, at least in part, focuses on whether nineteenth-

and twentieth-century European nationalism, especially but not exclusively National

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[67] See Michael Kulikowski's succinct summary in the new edition of E. A. Thompson's study of the Goths that was first published in 1966. Michael Kulikowski, foreword to E. A. Thompson, *The Visigoths in the Time of Ulfila*, 2nd ed. (London: Duckworth, 2008).

[68] Patrick J. Geary, "Barbarians and Ethnicity," in *Late Antiquity: A Guide to the Postclassical World*, ed. G. W. Bowersock, Peter Brown, and Oleg Grabar (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1999), 108-110. Walter Goffart names Geary as "the major channel of transmission for Wolfram's ideas to the English speaking public." Goffart, *Barbarian Tides*, 268n11.

[69] Andrew Gillett, ed., *On Barbarian Identity: Critical Approaches to Ethnicity in the Early Middle Ages* (Turnhout: Brepols Publishers, 2002).

Socialism, inspired the theory and might continue to influence it. Alexander Callander

Murray is quite direct in associating the views of Wenskus, Wolfram, and Pohl to the

German nationalist sentiment of the 1930s, particularly as expressed by Otto Höfler in

1934.[70] The complaint is even more acutely expressed by Goffart in a recent book, in

which he states that "'ethnogenesis theory' is a subtle device for demonstrating to the

Germans of today that they are linked to their ancient ancestors" by creating a prehistoric

"ethnic consciousness" that never existed in antiquity nor over a long time span.[71]

Pohl responds that Murray's argument is not only simplistic in its attempt to

relate modern scholarship to that of the National Socialists, but also that it is based on

outdated works on the topic of barbarian ethnic identity.[72] Ethnogenesis theory, Pohl

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[70] See in particular Alexander Callander Murray, "Reinhard Wenskus on 'Ethnogenesis,' Ethnicity, and the Origin of the Franks," in *On Barbarian Identity: Critical Approaches to Ethnicity in the Early Middle Ages*, ed. Andrew Gillett (Turnhout: Brepols Publishers, 2002), 53-59.

[71] Goffart, *Barbarian Tides*, 20.

[72] Walter Pohl, "Ethnicity, Theory, and Tradition: A Response," in *On Barbarian Identity: Critical Approaches to Ethnicity in the Early Middle Ages*, ed. Andrew Gillett (Turnhout: Brepols Publishers, 2002), 222-224.

claims, "made possible the overthrow" of older theories that treated ethnicity as a

"biological and immutable" characteristic.[73]

Concern over German nationalist undercurrents in scholarship on barbarian

identity has led some authors to avoid using terms such as "Germanic peoples," not to

mention "Germans," when writing about Late Antiquity. Of course, Tacitus wrote about

Germania in an earlier era, adopting a term that might have first been employed by Julius

Caesar as a means to distinguish those living across the Rhine from those closer to Italy.[74]

But Goffart believes "barbarian" is the preferred term when writing about the migration

age because it was the one used by authors of the period, with derivatives of "German"

being a rarity in the late antique sources.[75] In an attempt to diffuse or avoid some of the

issues of modern and ancient names, Patrick Amory, in his study of Ostrogothic Italy,

developed a somewhat clumsy vocabulary that includes "the settlers" and "the followers

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[73] Pohl, "A Response," 221.

[74] J. B. Rives, ed., *Tacitus: Germania* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1999), 21, 24-27.

[75] Goffart, *Barbarian Tides*, 187-188. See also Rives, ed., *Tacitus: Germania*, 3.

of Theoderic" instead of "Goths," and "natives" or "indigenous population" for

"Romans."[76]

Nevertheless, the anthropological model of ethnogenesis does have a place in the

argument, in spite of, or perhaps because of, the controversies it brings. Patrick Amory

laments that too many scholars ignore ethnogenesis theory, yet he suggests that an "over-

reliance on the *Getica*" of Jordanes weakens the arguments of Wolfram and other

supporters of the ethnogenesis model.[77] Roger Collins, in his survey of recent scholarship

on Gothic history, notes that all theories of Gothic group formation have their problems,

not least because any evidence, if it exists at all, comes well after late antique claims that

attempt to tie Alaric and his followers to societies in existence before the battle of

Adrianople in 378.[78] Yet for the current study it seems sufficient and accurate enough to

view "the Goths" of fifth and sixth century Spain and Gaul as a changing definition, at

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[76] Amory, *Ostrogothic Italy*, xv.

[77] Amory, *Ostrogothic Italy*, 34, 36.

[78] Roger Collins, *Visigothic Spain, 409-711* (Malden, Mass.: Blackwell Publishing, 2004), 23.

times referring to mercenary soldiers, at other times to a society settled among the local population.[79]

Material remains might seem to be a valuable source for insight into the organization and culture of late antique ethnic groups, but one must be careful about ascribing "ethnic identity" and connections between peoples where none exist.[80] The difficulty is, in part, wrapped up in questions about the relationship of material remains to the social groups mentioned in the literary sources, especially when those groups were not static over time, nor if, as the instrumentalist view of ethnicity assumes, ethnic identity can change according to personal or collective motivation.[81] As Sebastian Brather notes, ethnic identities discovered through archaeological research are models intended to help the researcher and are thus constructions of the discipline.[82]

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[79] Cf. Collins, *Visigothic Spain*, 24.

[80] Goffart, *Barbarian Tides*, 10-11.

[81] Sebastian Brather, "Ethnic Identities as Constructions of Archaeology: The Case of the *Alamanni*," in *On Barbarian Identity: Critical Approaches to Ethnicity in the Early Middle Ages*, ed. Andrew Gillett (Turnhout: Brepols Publishers, 2002), 150; Collins, *Visigothic Spain*, 3; Hall, *Ethnic Identity*, 17.

[82] Brather, "Ethnic Identities," 170.

Archaeologists, he continues, use quantity and statistical distributions to organize the

evidence along "ethnic" lines, and although this is not without scholarly value, such

evidence can speak only for groups, not for individuals.[83]

On the other hand, archaeology can help to show general continuities and

discontinuities over time, leaving any presupposed ethnic identification aside. In the case

of late Roman Spain, studies of churches have shown that the material culture of

Visigothic Spain, in particular the art and architecture of the period, is a continuation of

late Roman culture.[84] Not until Syrian architecture appears some time after the Muslim

conquest of 711 is there a break in architectural continuity. For the late Roman period,

Michael Kulikowski relies on literary and archaeological evidence to argue for a

continuation of Roman government at the local level and for a gradual, not an abrupt,

shift in urban infrastructure, even after Roman imperial control came to an end on the

peninsula.[85]

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[83] Brather, "Ethnic Identities," 153, 173.

[84] Collins, *Visigothic Spain*, 193.

[85] Kulikowski, *Late Roman Spain*, xvi.

Yet Spain ultimately did change, and the empire did come to an end in the west. The seventh century map of Spain, organized around fewer than a hundred ecclesiastical *civitates* rather than the several hundred *civitates* of the imperial era, would foreshadow the Iberia of the twelfth century.[86] However tempting it might be to emphasize continuity and to downplay "the fall of Rome," or vice versa, the fifth and sixth centuries represent a period of significant change in the western provinces, some of it abrupt, even as other social and political structures remained "Roman" into the medieval period long after imperial control ended.[87]

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[86] Kulikowski, *Late Roman Spain*, 287.

[87] Cf. Chris Wickham, *Framing the Early Middle Ages: Europe and the Mediterranean, 400-800* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 11-14.

Chapter 3

Imperial Decline in the Fifth-Century West

At the end of 405 or 406 groups of Alans, Vandals, and Sueves crossed the Rhine

frontier into Gaul.[88] The composition and size of these groups continues to foster debate

among scholars, with few signs of arriving at a consensus any time soon. Some claim that

the crossing represented one part of a mass migration of entire communities, or a

Völkerwanderung, while others argue that it was simply the movement of a modestly

sized group of mercenaries comprised mostly of young men looking for opportunities to

join the Roman military or to extract riches from the Roman population.[89] Whatever

their overall composition, these groups made their way from the Rhine to cross the

Pyrenees into Spain within three or four years, on a Tuesday in the fall of 409, and began

what Hydatius calls a "vicious slaughter" on the peninsula.[90] The peculiar detail of the

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[88] Although most modern studies date the crossing to the last day of 406, Michael Kulikowski makes a case for December 31, 405. Michael Kulikowski, "Barbarians in Gaul, Usurpers in Britain," *Britannia* 31 (2000): 326-331. Cf. Heather, "Why Did the Barbarian Cross the Rhine?," 3 n. 1.

[89] Heather, "Why Did the Barbarian Cross the Rhine?," 13-14.

[90] Hyd. 34, 38.

day of the week is interesting only because Hydatius typically mentions events with much

less precision. Still, he was unsure of which Tuesday it was, giving as possible dates

September 28 and October 12, both of which were in fact Tuesdays in 409. Perhaps

Hydatius's reference to the day of the week shows that the event remained vivid in his

memory, although he was about nine years old and probably living in the province of

Gallaecia, hundreds of miles from the provincial frontier. In the same year as the

invasion of Spain, Hydatius continues, Goths besieged Rome and kidnapped Placidia,

daughter of Theodosius and sister of Honorius.[91] Thus begins a period in which an

overriding theme is the rapid dissolution of central imperial power in Spain and Gaul.

The events in Spain from about 409 to 418 are closely tied to the rise and fall of

the usurper Constantine III.[92] In early 407, after a year or so of turmoil in Gaul caused by

the marauding groups, combined with events elswehere that redirected imperial attention

from Gaul to the east, Roman soldiers in Britain raised three usurpers to deal with the

situation in Gaul, the first two of whom lasted only a short time before their execution at

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[91] Hyd. 35-36. Athaulf, Alaric's successor, would marry Placidia in January 414. *PLRE2* 888.

[92] Kulikowski, "Barbarians in Gaul," 332. On Constantine III, see *PLRE2* 316-317.

the hands of the same troops who elevated them. The army then chose a man with an

auspicious name, Constantine III, who was a common soldier and not an officer.[93] The

fact that another Constantine started his contest for the purple in Britain almost one

hundred years earlier provided remarkable symbolic value to the plans of this new

usurper and his supporters. The new Constantine added Flavius Claudius to his own

name and changed the names of his sons to Constans and Julian, further adding to his

mystique among contemporaries and signaling his dynastic ambitions.[94]

 After about two years of turmoil in Spain, the Vandals, Alans, and Sueves began to

establish more or less permanent settlements, partitioning the peninsula among

themselves in 411. The apportionment was done by lot, with the Alans gaining the largest

region, taking control of Lusitania and Carthaginiensis, a swath from the Atlantic to the

Mediterranean. The Asding Vandals and the Sueves split Gallaecia, and the Siling

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[93] Kulikowski, "Barbarians in Gaul," 327-328, 333. See also Hyd. 42.

[94] John F. Drinkwater, "The Usurpers Constantine III (407-411) and Jovinus (411-413)," *Britannia* 29 (1998): 272; Kulikowski, "Barbarians in Gaul," 333 n. 47.

Vandals gained control of Baetica. According to Hydatius, the local population in the

surviving forts and cities "surrendered themselves to servitude under the barbarians."[95]

The cessation of hostilities and the process of partitioning the peninsula indicates

a recognition on the part of the invaders that anarchy benefited no one. Hydatius makes

no mention of imperial or local Roman diplomacy to oversee or encourage the settlement

of the Alans, Vandals, and Sueves, but with Constantine III and his supporters

undermining imperial power in the west, Honorius and his advisors in Ravenna must

have had a keen interest in getting the barbarian situation under relative control in order

to concentrate on the rebellion of the usurper.[96] Whether or not the imperial

administration had any hand in the matter, the partition brought a temporary end to the

disturbance that began in Spain in 409. This certainly made it easier to pursue the other

political and military matters that challenged the authority of Honorius. Constantine's

days were now numbered. In the same year as the partition, 411, Constantius, *dux* under

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[95] Hyd. 41. *Spani per ciuitates et castella residui a plagis barbarorum per prouincias dominantium se subiciunt seruituti.*

[96] Orosius states that Honorius had to first supress the usurpers before dealing with the barbarians. See Oros. 7.42, which also gives a summary of the various usurpers and their fates.

Honorius, captured and executed Constantine III at Arelate in Gaul, putting an end to the three-year usurpation.[97]

Following Constantine III, Jovinus, a nobleman from a prominent family in Gaul, proclaimed himself emperor, gaining early support for his revolt from Alan and Burgundian leaders along with the Goth Athaulf.[98] According to Olympiodorus, Jovinus was unhappy when Athaulf expressed interest in the usurpation and assumed that Athaulf's involvement came at the behest of Attalus, a man of Roman senatorial rank from Gaul who figured prominently in dealings with Alaric and his successors and with Honorius. Attalus himself had risen to power with the backing of the Goths.[99] The

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[97] Hyd. 42., Oros. 7.42.

[98] Olympiodorus fr. 18, R. C. Blockley, *The Fragmentary Classicising Historians of the Later Roman Empire: Eunapius, Olympiodorus, Priscus, and Malchus*, ARCA Classical and Medieval Texts, Papers, and Monographs, vol. 10 (Liverpool: Francis Cairns, 1983), 183. See also Drinkwater, "Usurpers," 288; Wolfram, *History of the Goths*, 161. On Jovinus, see Drinkwater, "Usurpers," 287-290.; *PLRE2* 621-622; Sid. Apoll. *Ep.* v 9.1. On Sebastianus, see Drinkwater, "Usurpers," 290.; *PLRE2* 983.

[99] On Attalus, see *PLRE2* 180-181; Athaulf, *PLRE2* 176-178. According to Orosius, Alaric viewed the series of usurpers that followed Constantine III as rank amateurs: "Alaric, who made, unmade, remade, and again unmade (*facto, infecto, refecto, ac defecto*) his emperor, doing all this almost more quickly than it takes to tell it, laughed at the farce and viewed the comedy of the imperium." Oros. 7.42.

involvement of Attalus might indicate growing Gallic disdain for Honorius specifically

and rule from Ravenna generally.[100] But Athaulf's support for Jovinus would not last.

When Jovinus made his brother Sebastianus his colleague without consulting

Athaulf on the matter, Athaulf withdrew his support for the usurper and returned to the

camp of Honorius, the legitimate emperor, implying that Athaulf had expected, if not

negotiated, significant involvement in the nascent administration of Jovinus.[101] After this,

in 413, Honorius sent his *duces* to deal with Jovinus and Sebastianus.[102] About the Goths

at this time, Hydatius says only that they "entered Narbona at the time of the vintage."[103]

But one of the aforementioned *duces* sent to deal with Jovinus and Sebastianus was

probably the Goth Athaulf himself, who handed Jovinus over to Dardanus, *praefectus*

praetorio Galliarum.[104]

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[100] Drinkwater, "Usurpers," 290.

[101] Drinkwater, "Usurpers," 290; Wolfram, *History of the Goths*, 162.

[102] Hyd. 46.

[103] Hyd. 47.

[104] Citing the anonymous *Chronica Gallica* of 452, Drinkwater, "Usurpers," 290. On the *Chron. Gall. 452* see Muhlberger, *Fifth-Century Chroniclers*, ch. 4 and passim. On Dardanus, see *PLRE2* 346-347; Drinkwater, "Usurpers," 291-292.

In 414, still in Narbona, Athaulf married Placidia, an event which Hydatius describes as a fulfilment of a prophecy of Daniel, wherein "the daughter of the king of the south was to be united with the king of the north," but would have no children.[105] Two years later, the *patricius* Constantius forced Athaulf "to abandon Narbona and make for Spain."[106] Once in Spain, a Goth murdered Athaulf. Hydatius gives no reason for the incident other than that it happened "during an intimate conversation." The circumstances of Athaulf's murder suggest that there was dissention among his closest associates, an unsurprising detail if one allows that the personal and political motivations of the Goths were no less complex than those of the Romans. Any other view would seem to deprive the Goths of agency and relegate them to some special, marginal status.

Vallia succeeded Athaulf as king and immediately seemed to reach a peaceful accord with Constantius, indicating the possible involvement of Constantius and his supporters, some of them Goths, in the murder of Athaulf and the selection of Vallia.[107]

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[105] Hyd. 49. A son born to the couple, probably in 415, died in infancy. Muhlberger, *Fifth-Century Chroniclers*, 216-217; Wolfram, *History of the Goths*, 163.

[106] Hyd. 52; *PLRE2* 321-325.

[107] On Vallia, see *PLRE2* 1147-1148.

The agreement between Vallia and Constantius led to Gothic military action against the

Alans and Siling Vandals who had been settled in Lusitania and Baetica since the

partition of Spain in 411. Further augmenting his power and prestige, in 416 Constantius

married Placidia, sister of Honorius and now widow of Athaulf.[108]

Vallia's campaigns on behalf of the empire against the Alans and Siling Vandals

continued for nearly two years, according to Hydatius, who says that Vallia "inflicted a

vast slaughter upon the barbarians within Spain."[109] In 418 Vallia destroyed the Siling

Vandals in Baetica. He dealt such heavy losses to the Alans, killing Addax, their king, that

they sought refuge under the protection of the Vandal king Gunderic in Gallaecia,

turning the political situation upside down.[110] For whatever reason, perhaps due to the

stress of war, Gunderic and the Suevic king Hermeric had a falling out, leading to a

Vandal blockade of the Sueves in the Erbasian Mountains.[111] Clearly, Vallia's actions had

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[108] Hyd. 54.

[109] Hyd. 55.

[110] Hydatius says that the Alans "were ruling over the Vandals and Sueves" up until this turn of events. Hyd. 60. On Addax, see *PLRE2* 8, 522.

[111] Hyd. 63. Hydatius refers to the site of the blockade as "in the Erbasian Mountains (*in Erbasis montibus*)," a location that remains unidentified but is perhaps

a profound impact on the political structure of the peninsula. He seemed on the verge of

destroying the Alans, if not the Sueves and Vandals, but he would not complete this

campaign.

At some date in 418, Vallia died and Theoderic I became king, but not before

Constantius stopped the Gothic campaign on the peninsula and recalled Vallia's army to

Gaul. Once back in Gaul, the imperial adminstration granted the Goths land for

settlement in Aquitania Secunda.[112] The details of the settlement remain obscure.

Hydatius states that the region of the settlement stretched "from Tolosa all the way to the

Ocean," but says nothing about the apportionment of the land or how it impacted the

local landholders.

The settlement of soldiers in frontier areas was a centuries-old practice of the

imperial government, and it is possible, even likely, that the settlement of 418 followed

the frontier pattern in both legal and practical terms. On the frontier, the billetting of

troops under rules of *hospitalitas* was a means to fortify the area near the *limes* and

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between modern León and Oviedo. See Michael Kulikowski, "The Career of the *Comes Hispaniarum* Asterius," *Phoenix* 54, no. 1/2 (2000): 127. On Theoderic I, see *PLRE2* 1070-1071.

[112] Hyd. 61-62.

maintain its agricultural system with soldier-farmers.[113] Whether the settlement of 418

impacted the local population in any significant way, one can only speculate, but one view

is that there was plenty of arable land for both the declining local labor pool and the

Goths, and therefore the impact would have been negligible at best, at least initially.[114]

Furthermore, the permanent presence of the Gothic military force in Gaul provided

protection against incursions from other enemies during a time of political and social

turmoil in the wake of declining imperial involvement. In this view of events, the

imperial administration used the military conventions and methods previously common

on the frontier as part of a reconquest of the western provinces. In a sense, these western

regions had become the new *limes*, or boundary of the empire.

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[113] Thomas S. Burns, "The Settlement of 418," in *Fifth-Century Gaul: A Crisis of Identity?*, ed. John F. Drinkwater and Hugh Elton (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 61. See also Hagith Sivan, "On *Foederati*, *Hospitalitas*, and the Settlement of the Goths in A.D. 418," *American Journal of Philology* 108, no. 4 (1987): 764, 767-770; Peter Heather, *The Goths* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1996; reprint, 2002), 181-182.

[114] Burns, "Settlement of 418," 63. Walter Goffart argues that *hospitalitas* was irrelevant to the process by which the barbarian groups settled in the west or to their success once settled. Goffart, *Barbarian Tides*, 8; Walter Goffart, *Barbarians and Romans, A.D. 418-584: The Techniques of Accommodation* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1980), 162.

While insight into the opinions of the indigenous Roman population toward the Gothic presence in fifth-century Gaul and Spain is unlikely in any general terms, gaining an understanding of the Gothic view of their hosts is even more difficult. None of the authors of the extant sources were Goths. Hydatius's description of the havoc in Spain in 409, with cannibalism and other dreadful acts, is perhaps best read as an apocalyptic *topos*, although one should be careful not to completely discount the horrors of war and the likely disruptions to civil society in the period.[115] Hydatius notes that "tax-collectors" and soldiers—presumably imperial soldiers—carried out attrocities against the local civilian population.[116] He uses the term "barbarian" sparingly, reserving it for those who undermine the well-being of either the church or the empire.[117] Life on the Iberian peninsula may have been anything but serene in the fifth century, but it is difficult to know whether it was any more brutal than in the rest of the empire during periods of heightened military activity.

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[115] Hyd. 40. Kulikowski, *Late Roman Spain*, 161-165.

[116] Hyd. 38, 40. See also Kulikowski, *Late Roman Spain*, 161-167.

[117] Muhlberger, *Fifth-Century Chroniclers*, 228-229.

Along with the destruction of the empire and the eschatological implications of that, Hydatius also expresses concern over corruption in the church, which is understandable given his ecclesiastical position. One concern especially important to the church in Spain was Priscillianism, an ecclessiastical faction which started in Gallaecia in the late fourth century. Its founder, Priscillian of Avila, was briefly a bishop, that is until a synod at Bordeaux in 384 declared him a heretic.[118] Among the charges against Priscillian were the claims that he held to a heretical view of the Trinity and that he taught Manichaeist beliefs.[119] When Hydatius recounts the activities of Manichees in Spain, it is possible and perhaps likely that he means Priscillianists, although he uses both words.[120] Elsewhere, Hydatius mentions Gaeseric's persecution in 440 of the Catholic community

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[118] Henry Chadwick, *Priscillian of Avila: The Occult and the Charismatic in the Early Church* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976), 44-56.

[119] Chadwick, *Priscillian*, 56; Victoria Escribano, "Heresy and Orthodoxy in Fourth-Century Hispania: Arianism and Priscillianism," in *Hispania in Late Antiquity: Current Perspectives*, ed. Kim Bowes and Michael Kulikowski (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 121-130; Kulikowski, *Late Roman Spain*, 243-249. The matter ended in a civil trial that sentenced Priscillian and three of his followers to death under Theodosian laws that prohibited Manichaeism. This is the first documented instance of an execution for the crime of heresy in the empire.

[120] Priscillianists: Hyd. 127. Manichees: Hyd. 122, 130.

at the instigation of the Arian leader in Sicily, Maximinus.[121] But not once does Hydatius

mention a persecution of the church in Spain and Gaul. Contrast this with Victor of Vita,

whose principal extant work is entirely concerned with persecution and forced

conversions to Arianism in North Africa after the movement of the Vandals from Spain

to Mauritania.[122] Interestingly, Hydatius's references to Arianism are entirely related to

the Vandals, never the Goths. He reserves his strongest complaint about Vandal

Arianism when repeating a rumor that Gaiseric converted from Catholicism, thereby

becoming an apostate.[123]

Hydatius's other significant concern with the religion of the barbarians relates to

the Catholic faith of Rechiarius, who became king of the Sueves in 448 after the death of

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[121]Hyd. 107, 112.

[122] The Vandals left Spain in 425. Hyd. 77. Victor wrote his *Historia persecutionis Africanae provinciae* in 484 and covers the period from 429–484. John Moorhead, ed., *Victor of Vita: History of the Vandal Persecution*, Translated Texts for Historians (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1992), x. See also E. A. Thompson, "The Conversion of the Spanish Suevi to Catholicism," in *Visigothic Spain: New Approaches*, ed. Edward James (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980), 77.

[123] Hyd. 79.

his father Rechila in Emerita.[124] Rechila, according to Hydatius, was not Arian but pagan.

Of course, as E. A. Thompson notes, this remark about Rechila's paganism does not

imply that Rechila was in any way exceptional in this regard, but instead helps to

highlight the Catholicism of Rechiarius in contrast.[125] Although Thompson is certainly

correct in his observation that Hydatius made no other references to the paganism of the

barbarians in Spain because he could assume that his readers would already take

barbarian paganism for granted, the religion of the Goths is another matter. The Goths

were Christian, albeit Arian, and yet Hydatius seems oddly unconcerned with this.

Instead he is preoccupied with political and economic instability and with the well-being

of the church. The Priscillianists bother him because they are a danger to the orthodoxy

of the church, contanimating the church with doctrinal poison. But the Arian Goths are

no danger since they do not persecute the church and remain clearly separate from

orthodox believers. This goes for the Vandals as well, at least until Hydatius hears of

Vandal persecution in Africa and Italy, at which point their Arianism becomes a concern

for him.

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[124] Hyd. 129. On Rechiarius, see *PLRE2* 935; Rechila, *PLRE2* 935-936.

[125] Thompson, "Conversion of the Spanish Suevi," 77.

The orthodoxy of Rechiarius does not save him from criticism. Although

Hydatius speaks in generally positive tones about Rechiarius's marriage to Theoderic's

daughter, he also criticizes the Suevic king's pillaging of the area around Caesaraugusta in

449.[126] The Sueves seem to have been in perennial conflict with their neighbors for

several years during the reign of Rechiarius. In 452 or 453 Mansuetus, the *comes*

Hispaniarum, and Fronto, another *comes* of some sort, sent envoys to the Sueves to try to

renew previous treaties and bring the Suevic depredations in eastern Spain to an end.[127]

This mission seems to have been successful, restoring order to Tarraconensis for a time,

but in 455 the Sueves renewed their hostilities and again plundered areas "that they had

returned to the Romans."[128]

In the following year, 456, the emperor Avitus sent Fronto to the Sueves yet again,

but this time he was accompanied by Theoderic II's envoys.[129] The Gothic king's interest

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[126] Hyd. 132, 134.

[127] Hyd. 147. On the value of Hydatius as an observer of late Roman diplomacy, see Gillett, *Envoys*, 37-38. On Fronto, see *PLRE2* 486; Mansuetus, *PLRE2* 706.

[128] Hyd. 161.

[129] Hyd. 163. On Theoderic II, see *PLRE2* 1071-1073.

involved an existing treaty between the Goths and the Sueves. This diplomatic mission

failed. Shortly thereafter, Theoderic sent another envoy, this time without the company

of an imperial delegation. Perhaps Theoderic initiated this diplomatic mission on his

own volition, but according to Hydatius, the king acted at the behest of Avitus.[130] This

effort to restore peace also failed, prompting Theoderic to make a strong military

response, defeating a Suevic force near Asturica. The king of the Sueves himself barely

escaped with his life.

Hydatius continues his account of the conflict between the Sueves and the Goths

for several paragraphs, giving it much more attention than any other topic in his

chronicle. In fact, the Gothic campaign against the Sueves seems to have been the event

that motivated Hydatius to write his chronicle.[131] The conflict ran from October 456 to

April 457.[132] During this time, the Goths, led by Theoderic himself, advanced on Bracara,

which they sacked "without bloodshed" in late October. After capturing king Rechiarius

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[130] Hyd. 166; *PLRE2* 196-198..

[131] R. W. Burgess, "From *Gallia Romana* to *Gallia Gothica*: The View from Spain," in *Fifth-Century Gaul: A Crisis of Identity?*, ed. John F. Drinkwater and Hugh Elton (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 22.

[132] Hyd. 166, 179.

near Porto and accepting the surrender of his remaining soldiers, Gothic troops brought him to Braga. Theoderic executed Rechiarius in December, then moved his army south to Lusitania.[133] Hydatius views this sequence of events as having an utterly destructive effect on the Suevic kingdom, but nevertheless a Suevic presence remained in Gallaecia for some time afterward, as indicated by the selection of Maldras as a new king that same year.[134]

Now in Lusitania, Theoderic prepared to sack Emerita, but for some reason refrained. He did not withdraw from the area immediately, however, staying until the end of March 457 before returning to Gaul.[135] According to Hydatius, Theoderic's army at this point included a "multitude of various nationalities" operating under "their own commanders," bringing to mind Walter Pohl's statement that a barbarian leader had to accept anyone who could fight for him, regardless of ethnicity.[136]

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[133] Hyd. 167, 168, 171.

[134] Hyd. 168, 174.

[135] Hyd. 179.

[136] ". . . *multitudine uariae nationis cum ducibus suis . . .*" Hyd. 179. Pohl, "Telling the Difference," 68.

Michael Kulikowski suggests that when Theoderic decided to stay the winter at

Emerita, it represented a restoration of the diocesan capital to imperial control for the

first time in fifteen years, an interesting opinion that makes sense only if Theoderic were

operating at the request of Avitus, as Hydatius believed.[137] But Roman imperial influence

on the peninsula would not return simply by taking Emerita again.[138] After 460 there are

no documented cases of imperial officials in Spain nor of any Hispano-Roman rising to

imperial office, which for Kulikowski marks the end of Roman Spain.[139]

The Gothic action against the Sueves from 455 to 457, while significant from both

military and political standpoints, did not turn Spain into a Visigothic kingdom.

Visigothic policy remained focused on Gaul. Until Clovis defeated Alaric II at Vouillé in

507, Spain remained a secondary interest for the Visigothic aristocracy, as it frequently

had for successive Roman emperors.[140] The Goths in Spain operated as outsiders, as

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[137] Kulikowski, *Late Roman Spain*, 189.

[138] After 460, Hydatius's chronicle begins to show "the anarchy it is often thought to show throughout its length." Kulikowski, *Late Roman Spain*, 198.

[139] Kulikowski, *Late Roman Spain*, 378 n. 81.

[140] Kulikowski, *Late Roman Spain*, 204.

Michael Kulikowski notes, unlike the Sueves, who by now had been settled on the peninsula for two generations.[141] This might partly explain Hydatius's dislike for the Goths, not to mention their role in disrupting a fairly peaceful state of affairs that had existed in Gallaecia prior to Theoderic's war against the Suevic kingdom.

In all of his discussions of diplomatic envoys, Hydatius never explicitly mentions any language barriers between the participants. Of course, one should be careful about drawing conclusions *ex silentio*. It is possible, for example, that the decision by the Suevic king Hermericus to send a bishop named Symphosius as an envoy to the imperial court in 433 might have been motivated by a need to send someone fluent in Latin for the negotiations.[142] Andrew Gillett suggests that another explanation for the selection of Symphosius is that his adherence to the Catholic creed of the emperor was a diplomatic gesture of good will on the part of the Arian king.[143] It is certainly possible that both his command of Latin and his Catholicism were important in the selection of Symphosius.

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[141] Kulikowski, *Late Roman Spain*, 203.

[142] Hyd. 92. On Hermericus, see *PLRE2* 546-547.

[143] Gillett, *Envoys*, 232-233.

The suggestion that all parties in diplomatic missions spoke Latin in no way

implies that all people living in Spain and Gaul spoke Latin exclusively. In an oft-cited

passage, Sidonius Apollinarus makes fun of the "Germanic speech" of Burgundians, who

he says impinged on his creative writing endeavors.[144] Sidonius provides other examples

of "German" being spoken in Gaul, writing at some point after 460 of the talents of his

friend Syagrius, who learned "the German tongue" to the point that Sidonius, with typical

sarcasm, called his friend the "Solon of the Burgundians," learned in Burgundian law and

embodying "a Burgundian eloquence and a Roman spirit."[145] Yet it is worth keeping in

mind that the elite, whether Roman or not, cultivated an interest in Latin. A young

Avitus may have introduced the future king Theoderic II to the Latin of Virgil when the

two became acquainted at the court of Avitus's father in Tolosa.[146] One can only

speculate on many of the details of diplomatic missions in fifth-century Spain, but it

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[144] Sid. Apoll. *Carm.* 12.3-7

[145] Sid. Apoll. *Carm.* 5.5. For the date, see Harries, *Sidonius Apollinaris and the Fall of Rome*, 61. Herwig Wolfram points out the mocking nature of Sidonius in his letter to Syagrius. Herwig Wolfram, *The Roman Empire and Its Germanic Peoples*, trans. Thomas Dunlap (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 258-259.

[146] Sid. Apoll. *Carm.* 7.495-499.

seems reasonable to suppose that Latin was the common language, and that

representatives of the barbarian kings included recruits from the local Hispano-Roman

population as well as some Latin speakers from the kings' own followers.

Writing in 463 from Arelate in Gaul, close to the Gothic seat of power at Tolosa,

and certainly within the domain of Gothic influence, Sidonius Apollinaris wrote

approvingly of Theoderic, calling him the "pillar and savior of the Roman people."[147]

Elsewhere, in a letter to Agricola, his brother-in-law and the son of the emperor Avitus,

Sidonius described Theoderic in glowing terms, noting his physical characteristics in

great detail and describing the king's religious dedication, his interest in hunting, and the

manner in which he held court.[148] Although Sidonius makes no explicit mention of the

Arian Christianity of Theoderic, he does say that the king's devotion "is a matter of

routine rather than of conviction."[149] But Sidonius's admiration of the Goths changed

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[147] "*Romanae columen salusque gentis.*" Sid. Apoll. *Carm.* 23.71. See also Kulikowski, *Late Roman Spain*, 189; Harries, *Sidonius Apollinaris and the Fall of Rome*, 128.

[148] Sid. Apoll. *Ep.* 1.2. On a possible date in the 460s for this letter, see Harries, *Sidonius Apollinaris and the Fall of Rome*, 128-129.

[149] Hyd. 233; Sid. Apoll. *Ep*. 1.2.4.

abruptly when in 471 an army under Euric, king after murdering his brother, laid waste to

the area around Arelate.[150] No longer is it a Gothic king who represents the salvation of

Rome. Now Sidonius describes the emperor Avitus as the protector of the empire against

the Goths.[151] As conditions for Sidonius and his friends deteriorated in Gaul, Sidonius

became more and more strident in his condemnation of the Goths, a clear departure from

the panegyric he employed in happier times. In 475 the imperial administration ceded

the Auvergne to the Goths, resulting in displacements of several leading figures in the

Gallic aristocracy.[152] To Sidonius, the Goths are now "a race of treaty-breakers."[153]

Walter Pohl observes that of all of the indications of ethnicity in the sources of the

late antique west, the trait that has generated more commentary than any other is

barbarian hairstyle, although most of this commentary is based on the writings of just one

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[150] Sid. Apoll. *Ep.* 3.1.4.

[151] Sid. Apoll. *Ep.* 3.1.5.

[152] Ralph W. Mathisen, "Emigrants, Exiles, and Survivors: Aristocratic Options in Visigothic Aquitania," *Phoenix* 38, no. 2 (1984): 166-169. See also Hugh Elton, "Defence in Fifth-Century Gaul," in *Fifth-Century Gaul: A Crisis of Identity?*, ed. John F. Drinkwater and Hugh Elton (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 173.

[153] Sid. Apoll. *Ep.* 6.6.1.

author, Sidonius Apollinaris.[154] Unlike Sidonius, Hydatius had little or nothing to say on

the matter, nor on other signifiers of ethnic identity. He seems almost completely

unconcerned with such things. Sidonius, however, includes several details about

barbarian dress, hairstyles, and other customs in his letters and poems, but it is worth

questioning whether what he relates can be generalized. Some of his descriptions do not

agree with those of other late antique and early medieval authors in various places and

times.[155] It could very well be the case that Sidonius describes styles that were specific to

the retinue of a particular warlord or king, not to all people called Franks, Goths, or

Burgundians. Furthermore, Sidonius styled himself a man of letters in the mould of

Cicero, Fronto, Pliny, and Symmachus.[156] It seems prudent to adopt Peter Heather's

cautious approach and consider that, unless corroborated elsewhere, the possibility exists

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[154] Pohl, "Telling the Difference," 64-65.

[155] Pohl, "Telling the Difference," 55-56.

[156] Sid. Apoll. *Ep*. 1.1.1-2. See also Harries, *Sidonius Apollinaris and the Fall of Rome*, 207-208.

that in some instances Sidonius is simply using classical patterns of literary style and ethnography.[157]

Using the works of two authors to represent the entire Roman west for a century would be a mistake, but a few specific remarks about the interests of Hydatius and Sidonius are worth making in the hope of shedding some light on the societal trends of the fifth century. Although both men were bishops and near contemporaries, the two authors, in many respects, could not be more different. Their extant works display some similarities, however. For one thing, neither bishop was overly concerned with the religion of the barbarians living near them, particularly the Goths. In spite of Hydatius's concern for the doctrinal well-being of the church, he rarely mentions Arianism at all, unless related to persecution of the church, something not evident on the Iberian peninsula. Sidonius makes some off-hand comments about the religious beliefs of barbarians, usually in a slightly disparaging tone, but otherwise says little about Arianism specifically. He certainly had no problem writing laudatory statements about an Arian

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[157] Peter Heather, "Disappearing and Reappearing Tribes," in *Strategies of Distinction: The Construction of Ethnic Communities, 300-800*, ed. Walter Pohl and Helmut Reimitz (Leiden: Brill, 1998), 95-96. Cf. Pohl, "Telling the Difference," 66.

king. This apparent disinterest in Gothic religious beliefs changes in the sixth century

when Arianism figures prominently in the historiography of the peninsula. In fifth-

century Spain, however, Arianism seems to be a relatively minor issue, at least according

to Hydatius and Sidonius.

When possible, the two bishops found ways to work with the barbarians who

controlled the regions around them. In the case of Sidonius it was the Goths, for

Hydatius it was the Sueves. The most important concern for both men involved the

security of their respective localities and the impact of political and social change on their

own lives and those of their friends and associates. Hydatius's impetus for writing his

chronicle, after all, was the Gothic military campaign against the Sueves in Gallaecia. He

interpreted this event as a sign of the end of times, but it was the instability of his *patria*,

not any doctrinal or administrative dispute within the church, that motivated him to

write. Sidonius was also concerned with the end of an era, if not the end of the world,

then the end of what he viewed as the Roman way of life. His interest in panygeric and

letter writing is one piece of this. Comparing Sidonius with Symmachus is interesting in

part because, like Symmachus nearly a century earlier, Sidonius held to fleeting concepts

of *romanitas* for as long as he could. When Theoderic contributed to Roman security, the

Goths were, for Sidonius, the saviors of Rome, but when Euric later threatened Arelate, the Goths had become perfidious traitors.

To view the fifth century as one of barbarians constantly at war with the Roman population of the western provinces, held back from utter destruction by the Roman military, is to oversimplify and misrepresent the facts.[158] While Romans undeniably fought other Romans, often with the help of Gothic or other barbarian auxiliaries, it is equally true that barbarians fought other barbarians. Sometimes this fighting took on the semblance of civil war, as with a conflict between Theoderic and Frederic in 455 and attested, perhaps, by Sidonius and Hydatius.[159] It should hardly seem groundbreaking to note that fifth-century conflict seems to have been more political more than ethnic in nature.

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[158] Michael Kulikowski notes that such a view requires reading the views of later authors, or the later works of Sidonius himself, back into the mid-fifth century. Michael Kulikowski, "*Carmen* VII of Sidonius and a Hitherto Unknown Gothic Civil War," *Journal of Late Antiquity* 1, no. 2 (2008): 337-338.

[159] Kulikowski, "*Carmen* VII," 345-352.

Chapter 4

The Sixth Century and Consolidation in Spain

The history of Spain in the sixth century is overshadowed by the Third Council of Toledo in 589. It was here, according to the commonly recited narrative, that the entirety of the Gothic aristocracy converted *en masse* from Arian Christianity to Catholicism.[160] This is undeniably an important event in the history of the Visigoths, but the preceding eight decades created the setting for it. From a loosely organized and disperse Visigothic nobility, defeated at Vouillé in 507 and pushed out of Gaul, to a consolidation of power in Leovigild, who used the Visigothic kingship as a means to gain control of most of the Iberian peninsula, the events of the sixth century, though poorly attested, show important changes in the identity of the Visigoths.[161]

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[160] In fact, the conversion occurred as long as three years before Toledo 3. Rachel L. Stocking, *Bishops, Councils, and Consensus in the Visigothic Kingdom, 589-633* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2000), 57 n. 129.

[161] For a good overview of the period from 507 to the rise of Leovigild in 569, see Collins, *Visigothic Spain*, 36-50. On the lack of sources from the closing decades of fifth century Spain through the first seven decades of the sixth century, see Kulikowski, *Late Roman Spain*, 256-257. Kulikowski states that "[t]he evidence for Gothic administration in Spain after Vouillé is limited to two letters of Cassiodorus and a few lines of Procopius." Kulikowski, *Late Roman Spain*, 261. E. A. Thompson famously quipped that Isidore of Seville "could hardly have told us less, except by not writing at all." E. A.

With the help of Burgundian allies, the Franks, under the leadership of Clovis,

defeated the Visigothic army and killed their king, Alaric II, in battle at Vouillé in 507. In

the aftermath, the Visigoths lost control of most of their territory in Gaul, including what

had amounted to their capital city of Tolosa. The Franks filled the void, taking control of

territory as far south as Barcino. They might have gone further, but in 508 the Ostrogoth

king Theoderic the Great, brother-in-law to Clovis and father-in-law of Alaric, sent his

army from Italy to Gaul to force Clovis's withdrawal from Septimania.[162] This region,

along the Mediterranean, returned to Visigothic control and remained so more or less

until the Arab conquest in 711.

Having lost their king in battle at Vouillé, the Visigoths chose Gesalic, the son of

Alaric by a concubine, to be their new leader.[163] Theoderic, the influential Ostrogothic

king, preferred Gesalic's half-brother, Amalaric, son to Alaric by marriage to Theoderic's

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Thompson, *The Goths in Spain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969), 7. Roger Collins
remarks that "it is tempting to criticize Isidore of Seville for not being Gregory of Tours,"
and yet, he adds, to do so "is patently unfair." Collins, "Isidore, Maximus and the
Historia Gothorum," 345.

[162] Kulikowski, *Late Roman Spain*, 257-258.

[163] *PLRE2*, 509-510.

own daughter Theodogotho. Lacking Theoderic's support, Gesalic lost a battle to the

Burgundians and allowed Narbo, his capital, to come under attack.[164] His failure to

secure his territory ultimately forced Gesalic into exile in Africa in 511, providing

Theoderic the chance to exert influence more directly on Visigothic affairs.[165] Procopius

says that Theoderic ruled as regent during the minority of Amalaric, although the

Ostrogothic king may have ruled the Visigothic kingdom on his own from 511 until 522

or 523, at which time Amalaric's own reign begins.[166] In 526 Theoderic died of natural

causes.[167] Five years later, in 531, Amalaric met an untimely end in Barcino following his

defeat in battle against the Franks, murdered either by his own men or by a Frank.[168] The

Visigothic nobility next chose as king an Ostrogoth named Theudis, who had formerly

been a bodyguard for Theoderic and a governor of Spain prior to Amalaric's accession to

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[164] Isid. *HG* 37-38.

[165] Collins, *Visigothic Spain*, 41.

[166] Procop. *Wars*, 5.12.46. On the theory that Theoderic ruled on his own, Collins sites Isid. *HG* 39, as corroborating evidence. Collins, *Visigothic Spain*, 41 n. 8.

[167] *PLRE2*, 1077-1084.

[168] *PLRE2*, 64-65.

the throne.[169] Although Theudis lost Cueta in Mauretania Tingitana to eastern imperial

control, one of his generals, Theudisclus, managed to defeat a Frankish invasion of

Tarraconensis.[170] Theudisclus then succeeded Theudis to the throne after the latter's

murder in 548, and reigned a little more than a year before his assassination.

The fact that the Visigothic nobility chose Theudis, an Ostrogoth, seems to

indicate the ready acceptance of Ostrogothic influence in Visigothic affairs.[171] Perhaps

the Visigothic nobility in Spain did not even consider there to have been any difference

between an Ostrogoth and a Visigoth. And since Theudis was no newcomer to Spain,

having served as governor there during the minority of Amalaric, and having married

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[169] *PLRE2*, 1112-1113; Collins, *Visigothic Spain*, 41-42. For the view that Theudis represents a non-royal figure who garnered a strong following and became powerful enough to challenge the king, see Peter Heather, "Theoderic, King of the Goths," *Early Medieval Europe* 4, no. 2 (1995): 157, 169. For a counterpoint, claiming that Theudis was a loyal subject who rose from bodyguard to kingship through dedicated service, see Wolfram, *History of the Goths*, 292, 351.

[170] *PLRE2*, 1234, *s.v.* Theudegiselus; Collins, *Visigothic Spain*, 42; Kulikowski, *Late Roman Spain*, 271-272.

[171] Collins, *Visigothic Spain*, 43. See also Procop. *Wars*. 6.30.15-17.

into a Hispano-Roman aristocratic family, the Hispano-Gothic nobility might have

accepted Theudis as one of their own.[172]

Here it might be useful to consider the ways the Visigoths identified themselves,

but without any explicitly Visigothic documentary evidence from the period, there is no

way to definitively answer that question. Procopius, writing about a hundred years after

Hydatius, uses the word "Visigoths" (*Οὐισιγόθων*) at one point.[173] Hydatius himself never

makes any distinction between Ostrogoths and Visigoths, employing the word Goths

(*Gothi* and its variants) on all occasions, although he does distinguish the Siling Vandals

from other Vandals in three instances.[174] Curiously, Hydatius never refers to any group

as Asding Vandals. Writing in the early seventh century, Isidore used Goths (*Gothi*) in

his *History* in all instances save one, in which he writes "*Odoacar rege Ostrogothorum*,"

either in reference to Odoacer as an Ostrogoth, or in reference to Theoderic the

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[172] On the Hispano-Roman aristocratic standing of Theudis's wife, see Procop. *Wars*. 5.12.50-52; Collins, *Visigothic Spain*, 43.

[173] Procop. *Wars*. 4.30.15.

[174]*Vandali cognomine Silingi*: Hyd. 41; *Vandalis Silingis*: Hyd. 52; *Vandali Silingi*: Hyd. 59.

Ostrogoth becoming king after Odoacer.[175] And in his *Etymologies*, Isidore always uses

"Goth," never Visigoth or Ostrogoth. The anonymous author of the *Vitas patrum*

emeritensium uses "Goth" on five occasions and "Visigoth" on two, one of which comes

in a direct quotation of the *Dialogues* of Gregory the Great.[176] Although this is not an

exhaustive list of all of the writers from Spain during the period, it suggests that

"Visigoth" or "Ostrogoth" were more commonly employed by writers foreign to the

peninsula. Writers in Spain seemed to prefer the unembellished term "Goth."[177]

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[175] *Aera DXLIX, anno XXI imperii Anastasii. Theudericus iunior, cum iam dudum consul et rex a Zenone imperatore Romae creatus fuisset peremptoque Odoacar rege Ostrogothorum atque devicto fratre eius Onoulfo et trans confinia Danuvii effugato XVIII annis Italia victor regnasset, rursus extincto [expulso] Gisaleico rege Gothorum [rege Guisigotharum Geselico] Spaniae regnum XV annis obtinuit [regnavit in Hispania annis XV] quod [quam] superstes 'Amalarico nepoti suo' [eiusdem] reliquit.* Isid. *HG* 39.

[176] These statistics ignore words in section titles in the *VPE* since these are later additions. *Unde accidit ut haec opinione saevissimi atque crudelissimi Visegotorum Leovegildi regis penetraret auditum et suae invidiae draco immanissimus…* *VPE* 5.4.1. Quotation of Gregory the Great, *Dial.* 3.31, as it appears in the *VPE* (italicized): qui *non patrem perfidum sed* Christum dominum *sequens ab Arrianae haereseos pravitate conversus est totamque Wisegothorum gentem* mira praedicatione *ad veram fidem perduxit. VPE* 5.9.3. For discussion, see also Joseph H. Garvin, ed., *The Vitas Sanctorum Patrum Emeretensium*, Studies in Medieval and Renaissance Latin Language and Literature (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1946), 483.

[177] This is a somewhat different view to that of Roger Collins, who claims that only the term "Goth" can be found in sixth- and seventh-century sources. His point is similar,

The *Vitas patrum emeritensium* is one of the most extensive accounts of the sixth

century prior to the Third Council of Toledo. It is an anonymous work from the seventh

century sometimes attributed to one Paul the Deacon of Emerita.[178] The author's claimed

intent was to show that the miracles related by Gregory the Great in his *Dialogues* were

true by offering stories of similar miraculous events from Emerita. Most of the work

deals with the life of Masona, metropolitan of Emerita from c. 570 to c. 600.

The city of Emerita Augusta in Lusitania had become an important city for the

Roman administration of Spain when Diocletian organized the empire into various

dioceses in the third century. Emerita became the capital of the diocese of Spain, a region

that encompassed not only the provinces of the Iberian peninsula but also a stretch of

land called Mauretania Tingitana on the coast of modern Morocco, making Emerita

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however, namely that the terms "Visigoth" and "Ostrogoth" as used today are "anachronistic." Collins, *Visigothic Spain*, 19.

[178] For background on the *VPE*, including an explanation of the work's title in common use today, as well as an explanation of purpose and comments on authorship, see the introduction of Garvin, ed., *VPE*, 1-33. See also Roger Collins, "Mérida and Toledo: 550-585," in *Visigothic Spain: New Approaches*, ed. Edward James (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980), 192-193; A. T. Fear, ed., *Lives of the Visigothic Fathers*, Translated Texts for Historians (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1997), xxix-xxxiii; Kulikowski, *Late Roman Spain*, 389n84; Stocking, *Bishops, Councils, and Consensus*, 46.

geographically central to the diocese.[179] As late as the year 420, Emerita still had a Roman

diocesan *vicarius* by the name of Maurocellus, attested by Hydatius, although the

vicariate would have been interrupted when the wars and political upheaval that followed

the events of 409 spilled over into the region.[180] In fact, Maurocellus himself was probably

in a precarious position, having lost a fair number of men to a Vandal attack when his

men tried to escape the fighting around Bracara Augusta.[181] Nevertheless, in spite of the

upheavals of the early fifth century and occupation by Suevic kings for about twenty years

starting in 439, Emerita did return to Roman imperial control and functioned again as a

diocesan capital after Theoderic took the city at the end of his year-long campaign against

the Sueves, sometime around 456.[182] That Theoderic took Emerita at the behest of the

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[179] Kulikowski, *Late Roman Spain*, 71, 75, 336 n. 30. Note that A. T. Fear makes a
passing comment that archaeological research dating to 1982 lends support to Corduba as
the diocesan capital. Fear, ed., *Lives of the Visigothic Fathers*, xxix-xxx. However,
Kulikowski's arguments for Emerita are strong, and, generally, modern sources tend to
assume that Emerita was the capital.

[180] Kulikowski, *Late Roman Spain*, 171, 369 n. 102.

[181] Hyd. 66

[182] Hyd. 163-175; Kulikowski, *Late Roman Spain*, 187-189. See also above, ch. 3.

emperor Avitus shows its strategic and political importance, even as the reach of the imperial administration faltered in Spain.

Although Roman imperial influence became increasingly weak, the church functioned and grew in Emerita in the ensuing years. For Christianity, Emerita was an important site at least as early as the third century, as a letter from Cyprian to the bishop of Emerita attests.[183] A mausoleum or *matyrium* for the city's patron saint, Eulalia, who according to tradition suffered martyrdom in the third century, probably dates to about the middle of the fourth century, and was later subsumed into a basilica erected in the late fifth or early sixth century.[184]

Masona's story, as related in the *Vitas*, offers some insight into interactions between secular and ecclesiastical leaders, between Catholic and Arian, and between Roman and Goth, during the latter part of Leovigild's reign, from about 569 to 586. Leovigild's reign is characterized by his concerted efforts to strengthen the Visigothic

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[183] Citing Cyprian *ep*. 67: Kulikowski, *Late Roman Spain*, 216-217, 235.

[184] Kulikowski, *Late Roman Spain*, 236-240. José Orlandis, citing the *VPE*, called the thirty-year pontificate of Masona, at the end of the sixth century, a "golden age" for Emerita and all of Lusitania. José Orlandis, *Historia del Reino Visigodo Español* (Madrid: Ediciones Rialp, 2003), 190-191.

kingship. His predecessor, Athangild, was unable to exert control outside the province of

Baetica and the city of Toletum, and even those regions acceded to his claim with great

reluctance.[185] Athanagild also made the mistake of asking Justinian for military assistance

in a civil war against Agila, from whom the former had wrested the kingship. But instead

of solidifying his control over the peninsula, Athanagild ended up with a permanent

eastern Roman garrison around Carthago Nova, a garrison that remained until the early

seventh century.[186] When Athangild died, probably in 568, the Visigothic throne went

unclaimed for five months.[187] Eventually Liuva of Narbo took the throne without

challenge, a fact that further shows the irrelevance of the monarchy to the Gothic nobility.

In the second year of his reign Liuva began to share his authority with his brother

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[185] Kulikowski, *Late Roman Spain*, 282-283.

[186] Isid. *HG* 47; Thompson, *Goths*, 17. But see Kulikowski, who states that although the eastern Roman military presence certainly started with Athangild's request for aid, an eastern imperial administrative enclave in Spain came much later. Kulikowski, *Late Roman Spain*, 409 n. 110.

[187] Kulikowski, citing Isidore of Seville and John of Biclaro, notes that not only was the kingship so weak that it remained unclaimed for five months, but the Visigothic nobility had such little interest in the kingship that "no one troubled to murder" Athangild. Kulikowski, *Late Roman Spain*, 283, 411 nn. 132-134. E. A. Thompson, noting the general weakness of the kingship, observed that "Athalagild was the first Visigothic king to die in his bed since Euric." Thompson, *Goths*, 18-19.

Leovigild, taking Narbo for himself and giving Spain to Leovigild.[188] Against this

backdrop, Leovigild became one of the most successful of Visigothic kings, establishing

control over most of the Iberian peninsula, including the Suevic region in Gallaecia.[189]

The kingdom apparently returned to financial stability, even affluence, during

Leovigild's reign, as evidenced by accounts of Leovigild dressing in fine clothing unlike

that worn by the rest of the population, a first for a Visigothic king.[190] The city of Emerita

itself saw a period of prosperity under his reign, exhibited by an increase in gifts to the

church, resulting in the construction of a new *xenodochium*, or hospice, and other

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[188] Isid. *HG* 48. The only other known case of co-rulership among the Visigoths is the joint kingship of Theoderic II and his younger brother Frederic, approximately a century earlier. Kulikowski, *Late Roman Spain*, 284.

[189] Kulikowski provides a clear and succinct summary of Leovigild's city-by-city campaigns to wrest control of the peninsula from local municipal authorities, from the Sueves in Gallaecia, and from the eastern imperial garrison in the south in the first decade of his reign. Kulikowski, *Late Roman Spain*, 284-285. The main sources of information on the reign of Leovigild are John of Biclaro and Isidore of Seville. Isidore is himself dependent on John's *Chronicle.* Collins, *Visigothic Spain*, 51-52.

[190] Thompson, *Goths*, 57.

facilities, and by new silken apparel for Masona and his attendants.[191] These new royal

and ecclesiastical raiments point not only to an increase in wealth but also to stronger

commercial ties with Constantinople, suggesting that Leovigild was on good terms with

the eastern Roman enclave in Spain.[192]

Leovigild's efforts to strength his authority over the peninsula met with some

resistance, which should come as no surprise. After all, his gains were made at the

expense of local authorities who had become comfortable with the weak kingship of

Leovigild's predecessor. Conflict resulting from Leovigild's efforts to strengthen his

kingship often shows up as a struggle between Arianism and Catholicism in the

sources.[193] This may be a *topos*, of course, particularly in light of the mass conversion of

the Visigothic nobility to Catholicism during the reign of Leovigild's son Reccared, with

later authors attempting to show the rightness of the conversion and the perfidy or

wickedness of Arianism. But there is also the likelihood that doctrinal matters had

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[191] *VPE* 5.3.1-13. For a discussion of the origins of the *xenodochium* and a comparison with other charitable institutions in the period, see Garvin, ed., *VPE*, 438; Fear, ed., *Lives of the Visigothic Fathers*, 74 n. 123.

[192] Cf. Fear, ed., *Lives of the Visigothic Fathers*, 76 n. 130.

[193] Stocking, *Bishops, Councils, and Consensus*, 52-53.

become increasingly important to the nobility, either for truly religious reasons or for political advantage, or both.

In 579, after nearly a decade spent strengthening his control of the Iberian peninsula, Leovigild's eldest son, Hermenegild, now based in Baetica with his young Frankish wife, Ingund, rebelled against his father.[194] John of Biclaro's account of the revolt indicates that Goisuintha, Leovigild's wife and Hermenegild's step mother, had some involvement, but John does not give the details nor offer any motivation for the queen's actions.[195]

Leovigild did not mount a military response to Hermenegild's rebellion until 582, several years after the start of the "domestic quarrel," as John called it.[196] This delay may indicate that Hermenegild was no threat to the overall stability of Leovigild's kingdom, or at least that any challenge to his power from Hermenegild was isolated in its effect and

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[194] Kulikowski, *Late Roman Spain*, 285; Thompson, *Goths*, 64-73. See also *PLRE3* 449.

[195] John Bicl. 55; *PLRE3* 542.

[196] John Bicl. 65-66.

was overshadowed by other matters vying for the king's attention.[197] This is plausible, but according to John, the result of Hermemegild's rebellion in Baetica caused far greater destruction "to Goths and Romans alike" than any external attack might have done.[198] Nearly two years after he decided to take military action against his son, action that primarily involved a hard-pressed siege of Hispalis, Leovigild brought the rebellion to an end in early 584, capturing Hermenegild in Corduba.[199] The king then exiled his son to Valentia, but a year later, without explanation, he appears in the record in Tarraco, where a Goth named Sisbert murdered the defamed prince.[200]

As to Hermenegild's motivation for staging a revolt, and the motivation of his supporters, one can only speculate. One view, based largely on a reading of Gregory of Tours, is that Hermenegild's wife, Ingund, refused to convert to Arianism at the behest of Goisuintha, her husband's step-mother and her own grandmother. Ingund withstood

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[197] Collins, *Visigothic Spain*, 58.

[198] John Bicl. 55.

[199] Thompson places the date of Hermenegild's capture at February 584. Thompson, *Goths*, 72-73. See also Greg. Tur. *Hist.* 5.38.

[200] John Bicl. 74; Fear, ed., *Lives of the Visigothic Fathers*, 71 n. 73.

Goisuintha's subsequent persecution and then convinced her husband to convert to

Catholicism, so the story goes.[201] This episode created understandable tension in the

royal family, if the events transpired as Gregory claims. In this scenario, Leovigild

decided to take action to contain and punish his son in response to Hermenegild's

conversion. This in turn pushed Hermenegild to enter an alliance with the eastern

Roman *magister militum* in Spain in response to his father's threatening maneuvers. But

this account of events comes mainly from Gregory, who has a well-known bias against the

Arian Visigoths. The possible involvement of eastern imperial operatives remains a

subject of further speculation.[202]

The sources from Spain shed little light on the matter. Isidore of Seville makes no

mention of Hermenegild at all, even though Isidore's brother Leander was closely

associated with Hermenegild, may have received him into the church, and certainly went

to Constantinople at Hermenegild's request.[203] The *Vitas patrum emeritensium* makes no

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[201] Greg. Tur. *Hist.* 5.38; Ian N. Wood, *The Merovingian Kingdoms, 450-751* (Harlow, England; New York: Longman, 1994), 71.

[202] Collins, *Visigothic Spain*, 58.

[203] Thompson, *Goths*, 76-77; Collins, *Visigothic Spain*, 58-59. Thompson believes strongly that religious issues formed the basis of the conflict between Hermenegild and

reference to Hermenegild and removes all references to him when quoting Gregory the

Great, who called Hermenegild a martyr.[204] John of Biclaro never mentions

Hermenegild's conversion, although he does provide details about the military

engagements between father and son, including Hermenegild's alliance with Miro, the

Catholic king of the Sueves.[205] It might seem that Gregory the Great was too far removed

from the events to be a reliable source, but at some point during the rebellion,

Hermenegild sent his wife, Ingundis, and their young son, Athanagild, to the protection

of the eastern imperial representatives in Spain, who then sent her and the child to

Constantinople. In 585 or 586 she died in Carthage or Sicily on the journey east.

Athanagild apparently made it to the imperial city, although little is known of this visit

and he disappears from the historical record around 587.[206] The future pope Gregory,

then a deacon, was in Constantinople at that time, serving as papal *apocrisiarius*, and it

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Leovigild and seems to take the account of Gregory of Tours at face value. On Leander's
involvement in Hermenegild's conversion, see Gregory the Great, *Dialogues* 3.31.

[204] Gregory the Great, *Dialogues*, 3.31; Thompson, *Goths*, 76.

[205] John Bicl. 66.

[206] *PLRE3*, 141; Collins, *Visigothic Spain*, 59; Thompson, *Goths*, 73.

seems plausible, although speculative, that Gregory might have learned significant details

of Hermenegild's rebellion and its aftermath, perhaps even from those traveling with the

young prince.[207]

Whether Hermenegild converted to Catholicism before he rebelled or after

continues to foster debate.[208] The incident does at least bring doctrine to the forefront of

the history of late sixth-century Spain. In an apparent attempt to strengthen the political

and social stability of his kingdom through changes in doctrine, Leovigild convened a

council of Arian bishops in 580 in the royal city of Toletum, the main result of which was

an important change to the Arian creed and to Arian church policy towards converts

from Catholicism. According to the account of John of Biclaro, no longer would

Catholics be required to undergo the Arian rite of baptism, but instead the "imposition of

hands and the receiving of communion" would suffice to "cleanse" converts coming from

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[207] *PLRE3*, 550.

[208] Thompson reconstructs the events so that Hermenegild's conversion preceded his actual revolt. He also offers the reasonable observation that it was a conflict of "Goth against Goth, not of Goth against Roman." Thompson, *Goths*, 64-67. Collins offers a summary of alternative scenarios, including the possibility that Hermenegild's conversion came as long as three years after the start of the revolt. Collins, *Visigothic Spain*, 56-58. See also Collins, "Mérida and Toledo," 215; Stocking, *Bishops, Councils, and Consensus*, 53 n. 116.

"the Roman religion to our catholic faith."[209] In the same passage, John called this a "new

error" imposed on an "ancient heresy," which nevertheless drew "many of our own" to

convert to Arianism "out of self-interest rather than a change of heart." Significant in

John's account is the instruction that converts must also "give glory to the Father through

the Son in the Holy Spirit" (*et gloriam patri per filium in spiritu sancto dare*), a traditional

Arian formulation which highlights the defining theological difference between Arian

and Catholic.[210] According to Gregory of Tours, Leovigild began to pray at Catholic

churches and *martyria* throughout Spain. Gregory believed that this was part of the

king's attempt to destroy the Catholic faith, but he also reported that Leovigild confessed

that "Christ is the Son of God and equal to the Father," a significant change from Arian

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[209] "Catholic faith" here means Arianism. John Bicl. 58: *Anno IIII Tiberii, qui est Leovegildus XII annus [. . .] Leovegildus rex in urbem Toletanam synodum episcoporum sectae Arrianae congregat et antiquam haeresem novello errore emendat, dicens de Romana religione a nostra catholica fide venientes non debere baptizari, sed tantummodo per manus impositionem et communionis praeceptionem pollui et gloriam patri per filium in spiritu sancto dare. per hanc ergo seductionem plurimi nostrorum cupiditate potius quam impulsione in Arrianum dogma declinant.*

[210] For background on the creed of Ulfilas and similar forms of "Homoian Arianism," see R. P. C. Hanson, *The Search for the Christian Doctrine of God: The Arian Controversy, 318-381* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005), 104-106, 557-572.

doctrine that might indicate a concession to Catholicism.[211] Gregory's source for this, an

ambassador of the Frankish king Chilperic, then added that Leovigild denied any

scriptural evidence for equating the Holy Spirit with God, which of course provided the

ambassador (and Gregory) with new reasons for condemning the Visigothic king.[212]

These theological issues of the nature of the Trinity may not have mattered to the

commoner in Spain, and they may not have mattered to most of the Visigothic nobility,

but for some reason doctrine became an important matter for Leovigild. Whether the

catalyst for his concern sprang from his rebellious son's conversion to Catholicism or

from the king's own desire to further strengthen his political standing by uniting the

Hispano-Roman and Gothic population under a common creed is impossible to say. It

may even be the case that Leovigild came to a truly religious decision about his faith

which then motivated him to try to bring the Arian and Catholic communities closer

together. Gregory the Great thought that Leovigild converted to Catholicism before he

died. Catholic bishops might have viewed with suspicion Leovigild's attempt to make

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[211] Stocking, *Bishops, Councils, and Consensus*, 53, 53 n. 118.

[212] "*Dicit enim: 'Manefeste cognovi, esse Christum filium Dei aequalem Patri; sed Spiritum sanctum Deum penitus esse non credo, eo quod in nullis legatur codicibus Deus esse'.*" Greg. Tur. *Hist.* 6.18.

Arian Christianity more palatable to Catholics, seeing it as a threat to their jurisdiction.

The conversion of some number of Catholics to Arianism following the synod of 580,

mentioned by John of Biclaro, the new Arian statement on the equality of the Father and

Son, and the apparent increase in royal support for the Arian church could obviously

upset the *status quo* between Arians and Catholics and would have made it more difficult

for Catholic bishops to protect the church's material assets from disputes with the Arian

communities in their jurisdiction.[213]

Although Hermenegild's conversion to Catholicism may have come as many as

two or three years after he began the revolt against his father, during his brief period as

Catholic ruler he may have weakened Arian influence in those places under his control.[214]

Although no record survives to offer details on Hermenegild's policies, the account of

Masona in the *Vitas patrum emeritensium* gives hints that in the aftermath of the conflict

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[213] Stocking, *Bishops, Councils, and Consensus*, 54-56.

[214] On the distinction between Hermenegild's rebellion and his conversion, see the summary by Collins, *Visigothic Spain*, 159-160.

his father sought to restore Arian communities following their possible diminution under

Hermenegild's reign.[215]

The *Vitas patrum emeritensium* is essentially a hagiographical piece, and the

account of Masona—a Goth and the Catholic bishop of Emerita starting in about 570—

conforms to this genre.[216] The episode involving Masona probably takes place between

584, the year Leovigild took control of Emerita from his son, and 586, the year of

Leovigild's death. Masona seems to have been a very successful bishop, establishing

several monasteries and, as mentioned earlier, founding a hospice (*xenodochium*), which,

under his instruction, was to serve "travelers and the sick" whether "slave or free,

Christian or Jew."[217] It is impossible to tell whether Masona was any more successful in

his office than other Catholic bishops across Spain, but the author of the *Vitas* claims that

Masona's success and enthusiasm brought the attention of Leovigild, who sent envoys to

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[215] Fear, ed., *Lives of the Visigothic Fathers*, 79 n. 142. On the likelihood that Hermenegild expelled Arian clergy during the rebellion and placed Arian churches under Catholic control, see Thompson, *Goths*, 69, 79-81.

[216] *VPE* 5.2.1. A. T. Fear disputes the notion that "Goth" in this passage means "Arian." Fear, ed., *Lives of the Visigothic Fathers*, 73 n. 114. See also Stocking, *Bishops, Councils, and Consensus*, 47.

[217] *VPE* 5.3.4-6.

the bishop imploring him to abandon Catholicism and bring his congregation to the

Arian doctrine.[218] Perhaps Leovigild hoped to restore order by uniting the entire city

under Arianism and a single prelate, and sought to employ the talents of the successful

Masona to help in this endeavor. If Masona had converted, his popularity and influence

would have gone a long way towards this goal of unity. When Masona refused to convert,

Leovigild sent an Arian bishop named Sunna to Emerita.[219]

Immediately upon his arrival, Sunna, acting on the king's orders, began to take

control of some of the city's Catholic churches, eventually attempting to wrest control of

the basilica of Eulalia, the patron saint of Emerita. Masona resisted and managed to

retain the basilica as a Catholic site. Sunna then escalated the confrontation by writing to

Leovigild, asking the king to seize the property by royal decree.[220] Instead of seizing the

basilica in Emerita, the king called for Masona and Sunna to engage in debate, with

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[218] *VPE* 5.4.2-3.

[219] *VPE* 5.5.2. See also Ralph W. Mathisen, "Barbarian Bishops and the Churches '*in Barbaricis Gentibus*' During Late Antiquity," *Speculum* 72, no. 3 (1997): 685-686.

[220] *VPE* 5.5.8.

arguments supported by Scripture, before a panel of judges.[221] A majority of the judges

were supporters of the Arian cause, and the case would be heard at the episcopal

residence in Emerita.[222] The hagiographical description of the event portrays Sunna as

ineloquent, inconsiderate, and ill prepared, to the point that the judges were embarrassed

for him.[223] It will come as no surprise that the judges ruled in Masona's favor.[224] Up to

this point, Leovigild's treatment of the matter between Masona and Sunna seems

measured, although that is about to change.

 After the trial, Sunna intensified his opposition to Masona, fabricating lies about

him and bringing accusations of purported crimes to the attention of Leovigild, which

caused the king to forcibly remove Masona from his see and call him to the royal court in

Toletum.[225] When the king failed to get Masona to abandon his Catholic faith, that is, to

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[221] *VPE* 5.5.9. See also Fear, ed., *Lives of the Visigothic Fathers*, 80 n. 151.

[222] *VPE* 5.5.9-13. Rachel Stocking considers Leovigild's site selection, that is, Masona's residence in Emerita, as a deliberate attempt to create balance in light of the fact that a majority of the judges were Arian supporters. Stocking, *Bishops, Councils, and Consensus*, 47.

[223] *VPE* 5.5.15-18.

[224] *VPE* 5.5.19-22.

[225] *VPE* 5.6.1-2.

modify his views of the Trinity, Leovigild became enraged and exiled Masona to a

monastery, allowing him to bring only three servants.[226] With Masona absent from his

episcopal see, Emerita gained a new bishop by the name of Nepopis, described as a "false

priest."[227] The name Nepopis is probably of Egyptian origin, although there is no

indication as to the length of time he resided in Spain before moving to Emerita.[228] He is

portrayed as a corrupt man, which may simply be a *topos* on the part of the author of the

Vitas, wanting to denigrate the Catholic priest who apparently cooperated with the Arian

king during the exile of his episcopal colleague.[229] Although the author of the *Vitas* never

says that Nepopis is Catholic, neither does he call him Arian. Several details make it fairly

safe to assume that the man was Catholic. For one thing, he was described as a bishop of

another town, which in itself is interesting in that it implies that Emerita lost its status as

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[226] *VPE* 5.6.2-28. Compare this to the account of Hermenegild's exile, where Leovigild allowed his son to take only one slave. Greg. Tur. *Hist.* 5.38.

[227] *pseudosacerdos VPE* 5.6.29. Garvin makes the reasonable suggestion that this refers to Nepopis's infidelity to his Catholic obligations and does not imply that Nepopis was Arian. Garvin, ed., *VPE*, 473.

[228] Garvin, ed., *VPE*, 473; Fear, ed., *Lives of the Visigothic Fathers*, 87 n. 176.

[229] *VPE* 5.8.8-16.

an episcopal see with Masona's exile.[230] Since the *Vitas* never claims that Sunna left

Emerita before Nepopis arrived, it seems reasonable to assume that Leovigild would not

have sent a second Arian bishop to the city as long as Sunna was there.[231] It is certainly

curious that Leovigild allowed another Catholic bishop to assume the episcopate in

Emerita after working so hard to restore the Arian community there, enduring Sunna's

nearly incompetent efforts in that regard, and finally removing the popular Catholic

bishop himself.[232]

After three years, Masona returned from exile to Emerita.[233] Providing further

evidence that Sunna remained in Emerita after Masona's arrest three years earlier, the

Arian bishop resumed his campaign to get rid of Masona. This time Sunna conspired

with others, including a young Goth named Witteric, later to become king of the

Visigoths, to kill Masona and, perhaps, Reccared, who had become king following the

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[230] *erat alienae civitatis episcopus VPE* 5.6.29. On the change in episcopal status of
Emerita, see Fear, ed., *Lives of the Visigothic Fathers*, 87 n. 176.

[231] This is Garvin's argument. Garvin, ed., *VPE*, 473.

[232] Fear observes that this shows Leovigild's policies did not preclude working with
Catholics. Fear, ed., *Lives of the Visigothic Fathers*, 87 n. 176.

[233] *VPE* 5.7.1.

death of his father in 586.[234] Sunna and the other conspirators, who may have included a

significant number of the nobility that Sunna drew away from Catholicism to Arianism,

chose Witteric to strike the fatal blow, but, miraculously, he could not draw his sword

from its scabbard, and the assassination attempt failed.[235] When the other would-be

assassins fled, Witteric was left behind and confessed the plot to Masona, who assured

Witteric of God's forgiveness. One of the men present with Masona during this attempt

was someone named Claudius, described as a competent soldier, a devout Catholic, and a

nobleman whose parents were Roman.[236] Claudius was also the *comites civitatum* of

Emerita.[237] Witteric remained under Masona's protection, but Claudius arrested the other

conspirators, including bishop Sunna. Reccared attempted to get Sunna to renounce

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[234] *VPE* 5.10.1-6; John Bicl. 88.

[235] *VPE* 5.10.1-14.

[236] *Idem vero Claudius nobili genere ortus Romanis fuit parentibus progenitus.
Existebat prorsus fide catholicus et religionis vinculis fortiter astrictus, in praeliis strenuus,
in timore Dei valde promptissimus, in bellica studia eruditus, in causis bellicis nihilominus
exercitatus. VPE* 5.10.7. See also Garvin, ed., *VPE*, 494; Fear, ed., *Lives of the Visigothic
Fathers*, 94 n. 198.

[237] *VPE* 5.10.6.

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Fathers*, 94 n. 198.

[237] *VPE* 5.10.6.

Arianism but failed, at which point Sunna went into exile in Mauretania.[238] The other

conspirators faced exile as well, some with corporal and fiscal punishment added to the

sentence.[239] With this, Masona's struggle to retain control of his episcopal office in

Emerita came to an end.

The final saga of the struggles between Masona and Sunna—the assassination

attempt—may have taken place after the conversion of Reccared and the nobility to

Catholicism. It shows that this conversion and its disruption of the *status quo* was not

easily accepted by all parties. In a further sign of dissent after the conversion, John of

Biclaro relates that in 589 the king's stepmother, Goisuintha, and a bishop by the name of

Uldida feigned their own conversion to Catholicism and then conspired against

Reccared.[240] John gives no other details about the plot. Uldida's sentence upon discovery

was exile. Goisuintha may have committed suicide.

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[238] *VPE* 5.11.9-15.

[239] John Bicl. 88; *VPE* 5.11.12.

[240] *PLRE3* 542

Chapter 5

Conclusion

When embarking on a study of ethnicity in the late antique west, one might

expect to find abundant evidence for ethnic differences in the sources, whatever those

differences might be. And yet the characteristics that made a Goth distinct from a Roman

are largely hidden, even when using a broad set of signifiers for ethnic identity. Some

kind of distinction between Goth and Roman did exist, at least into the seventh century,

when the author of the *Vitas patrum emeritensium* wrote his accounts of events from the

previous century, but the specific traits that made a Goth different from a Roman are

difficult to detect in the extant sources from Gaul and Spain. Most of what remains are

simply ethnonyms.

Nearly any trait can act as a signifier for ethnic and group membership.[241] Some

of the most commonly considered traits, especially in modern studies of ethnicity, are

language, costume, hair style, physical characteristics (the color of eyes, hair, and skin, for

example), and religion. In the fifth century, Hydatius says nothing about language as a

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[241] Hall, *Ethnic Identity*, 17-24.

distinguishing trait of the various groups that appear in his chronicle. In none of his

accounts of diplomatic activity does he ever mention language as an obstacle or a

concern. Of course, this does not mean that it was not an issue, but it is noteworthy that

he never mentions it.

Evidence of linguistic difference is also missing from the accounts of sixth century

Spain. Admittedly, sources from Spain are rare for this period, leaving large holes in the

record. But when the sources become more numerous in the middle of the sixth century,

some of the authors, for the first time in the west, are Goths. Writing in Latin themselves,

they never indicate any linguistic distinction between ethnic groups. Leovigild conducted

hearings into political and theological disagreements between Catholic and Arian, Roman

and Goth, yet never does the author of the *Vitas patrum emeritensium* provide evidence

that language was a barrior for the king or those around him. A reasonable explanation is

that the king conducted all of his business in Latin.

Although opinions vary, scholars generally agree that Gothic survived as a

liturgical language in the Arian church after it died out as a spoken language. Exactly

when the Goths lost their language would be an interesting topic for further study. Some

scholars find no evidence for a spoken Gothic language by the time the Goths arrived in

Spain in the early fifth century.[242] Others take a more cautious view, but still agree that by

the sixth century Gothic was no longer a spoken language in the western provinces.[243] To

some, this suggests a strong degree of assimilation on the part of the Goths, a

phenomenon that is perhaps epitomized by the story of a young Theoderic II, who

studied the Latin of Virgil under the guidance of Avitus, the future emperor.[244] Since

dynastic succession was a rarity among the Visigoths, none of the Visigothic aristocracy

would have been educated as a future king *per se*. This fact, along with evidence of a

Visigothic royal school in Toletum, leads Roger Collins to suggest that an interest in a

classical education ran through a broad segment of the Visigothic aristocracy.[245]

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[242] Collins, *Visigothic Spain*, 242; Gisela Ripoll López, "Symbolic Life and Sign of Identity in Visigothic Times," in *The Visigoths from the Migration Period to the Seventh Century: An Ethnographic Perspective*, ed. Peter Heather (Woodbridge, Suffolk, UK: Boydell Press, 1999), 406. For views on Gothic as an Arian liturgical language in sixth-century Italy, see Amory, *Ostrogothic Italy*, 102-103, 247-256.

[243] See, for example, Roger Wright, *Late Latin and Early Romance in Spain and Carolingian France*, ARCA Classical and Medieval Texts, Papers, and Monographs, vol. 8 (Liverpool: Francis Cairns, 1982), 82, 184.

[244] See above, ch. 2.

[245] Roger Collins, "Literacy and the Laity in Early Mediaeval Spain," in *The Uses of Literacy in Early Mediaeval Europe*, ed. Rosamond McKitterick (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 115.

Assimilation, of course, can run in two directions. Although Sidonius famously complained about a Burgudian woman whose Germanic speech annoyed him while he attempted to write, he also referred to the ability of his friend Syagrius to speak Burgundian. These two episodes provide examples not only of the attitude of Sidonius towards non-Romans, but also, in Syagrius, of a Roman aristocrat who adapted to the changing political situation in Gaul.[246] Yet it is interesting that Sidonius says nothing about a Gothic language, even though he has much else to say about the Goths.

The question of whether a Gothic dialect or language survived into the late sixth century western provinces and the role of Gothic as a liturgical language merits additional research. In his study of Ostrogothic Italy, Patrick Amory suggests that Roman soldiers spoke a pidgeon of Gothic as military slang.[247] Such a development is certainly possible in sixth century Gaul and Spain as well, and none of the sources surveyed for the current project would contradict this theory, but neither do they support it. For the time being,

[246] This is the view of Syagrius expressed by John F. Matthews, *Western Aristocracies and Imperial Court, A.D. 364-425* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975; reprint, 1990), 340.

[247] His hypothesis is based, in part, on the fact that of only four references to spoken Gothic in the sources for sixth century Italy and nearby territories, all are from military contexts. Amory, *Ostrogothic Italy*, 102-108.

questions of any form of spoken Gothic in the Visigothic domains of the west must

remain a subject of speculation.

One of the predominant topics in Gothic historiography is Arian Christianity.

This is naturally an important aspect of Gothic history, starting with Ulfilas, his

proselytizing work in the Balkans in the fourth century and his Gothic Bible, and

continuing up to the conversion *en masse* of the Visigothic aristocracy at the Third

Council of Toledo in 589. Modern sources sometimes treat the Arian Goths as somehow

less Christian than the Catholic Romans and Franks. Furthermore, some scholars suggest

that, for the Romans, the problem with the barbarians was not their barbarism but their

Arianism.[248] This may be true in some parts of the Roman empire which are beyond the

purview of the present investigation. However, the surprising thing in fifth-century Gaul

and Spain is that the sources seem mostly unconcerned with Arianism, except when it

relates to persecution of the Catholic church, something that seems not to have happened

in these regions. Hydatius's dislike of the Goths is based not on their Arianism but on

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[248] Thus Barbara Rosenwein in her undergraduate textbook: "For Romans, the chief objection to the new barbarian overlords was their Arian Christian beliefs." Barbara H. Rosenwein, *A Short History of the Middle Ages* (Orchard Park, NY: Broadview Press, 2002), 30.

their war against the Sueves in Gallaecia, his *patria*. In spite of the fact that the Suevic

king was Catholic at the time of the Gothic attack, Hydatius never mentions the Arianism

of the Goths in this or any other context. He did not view enmity between Goths and

Sueves as a religious phenomenon.

In a similar vein, Sidonius Apollinaris considered Theoderic a friend and ally, and

wrote platitudes about the Gothic king, calling him the "pillar and savior of Rome," in

spite of Theoderic's Arianism.[249] Later, when Theoderic's brother Euric besieged Arelate,

Sidonius complained that the Goths were "a race of treaty breakers." Their Arianism did

not enter the picture. For Sidonius, it was the impact of political instability on the Roman

way of life that mattered most. Not until the sixth century does the Arianism of the

Visigoths seem to become an important topic in the sources.

Most modern views of Arianism draw on accounts and commentary from those

who prevailed in the theological disputes following the Council of Nicaea.[250] The strong

response against Arianism so often attributed to late antiquity in modern surveys did not

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[249] Although Sidonius considered Theoderic a friend, the king of the Goths and all other barbarians remained outside of the system of patronage and *amicitia* that Sidonius describes in many of his letters. Matthews, *Western Aristocracies*, 345.

[250] Hanson, *Christian Doctrine*, xviii.

develop suddenly at the Council of Nicaea in 325. The theological developments that led

to a Catholic versus Arian confrontation occurred over several decades.[251] In detail,

Arianism meant different things at various times, although in general, it seems to have

become a short-hand for any views on the Trinity that diverged from what ultimately

became the orthodox one.[252] The silence of Spanish authors towards Arianism in the fifth

and sixth centuries might be better understood by making a broader survey of the

literature around the Mediterranean in the hopes of discovering intellectual or social

trends that led to a sudden interest in Arianism in the reign of Leovigild. Another

question worth investigating is whether contemporaries viewed the Visigothic conversion

of 589 as the final saga in a conflict not only between Catholics and Arians but also

between Romans and Goths.[253] Continuing such an investigation into the eighth century

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[251] Hanson, *Christian Doctrine*, 869-875. Collins observes, with good reason, that "there really was no such thing as Arianism in the fourth century." Collins, *Visigothic Spain*, 158.

[252] For some insight into the variety of philosophical and theologial thought involved, see Hanson's discussion of "homoian Arianism." Hanson, *Christian Doctrine*, 557-572.

[253] J. N. Hillgarth, *The Visigoths in History and Legend*, Studies and Texts (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 2009), 39; Thompson, *Goths*, 105-106.

might then shed light on the intellectual and political changes in the Visigothic kingdom that occurred after the Third Council of Toledo.

To explain the surprising lack of concern of Catholic Roman authors for the heretical views of the barbarians amongst them, Roger Collins suggests that, at least in Spain, important theological works were either lost or difficult to find during the general instability that started in 409 and ran into the second half of the sixth century, resulting in a sort of intellectual vacuum in the church in Spain. This changed when travelers from Africa to Spain in the middle of the sixth century brought with them an intellectual and theological revival to the peninsula.[254]

Indications for costume and hair style as an ethnic signifier in Visigothic Gaul and Spain come predominantly from Sidonius.[255] Hydatius seems entirely unconcerned with such matters. One issue with Sidonius's descriptions of costume and style is whether his observations can be generalized. As Walter Pohl observes, Sidonius notes that the Franks are clean shaven, yet a century later Gregory of Tours describes Franks with beards.[256]

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[254] Collins, *Visigothic Spain*, 158-161.

[255] See above, ch. 3, and also Pohl, "Telling the Difference," 64-65.

[256] Pohl, "Telling the Difference," 55.

Without more extensive evidence, spotting trends in styles that might indicate general

ethnic difference rather than just local or personal preference is difficult.

One interesting development in the sixth century, as related by Isidore of Seville,

occurs when Leovigild became the first Visigothic king to wear "royal raiment" to

distinguish himself from his subjects.[257] In similar fashion, the bishop Masona

introduced new silken attire for himself and his attendants in Emerita.[258] The adoption of

special attire among the elite could indicate that the strata of society were as likely, if not

more so, to follow the contours of prestige and power as they were to follow any ethnic

divisions. Along these lines, Alexander Demandt provides a detailed analysis of the ties

between Germanic and Roman aristocratic families.[259] But another interpretation is that

this episode represents the adoption of eastern Roman clothing to replace customary

Gothic attire. A topic for further study would broaden the current project to include

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[257] See above, ch. 4, and also Thompson, *Goths*, 57.

[258] See above, ch. 4, and also *VPE* 5.3.1-13.

[259] Alexander Demandt, "The Osmosis of Late Roman and Germanic
Aristocracies," in *Das Reich und die Barbaren*, ed. Evangelos Chrysos and Andreas
Schwarcz (Vienna: Böhlau Verlag, 1989), 75-86. See also Goffart, *Barbarian Tides*, 9.

archaeological and other evidence to gain insight into any possible "Romanization" of the barbarians and reciprocal adoption by Romans of barbarian fashion and material goods.

During the fifth century, the Visigoths were one of the most prominent groups within the boundaries of the western Roman empire. They would eventually be pushed out of Gaul in 507 by the Franks under Clovis, after which the Franks become the most influential group in Gaul. The Visigoths then turned their attention westward to Spain, and by the second half of the sixth century, they were undoubtedly in control of the entire peninsula. Their Arian Christian beliefs became a paramount concern for both Visigothic rulers and Catholic bishops sometime around the middle of the sixth century, although prior to the reign of Leovigild, the few extant sources from Gaul and Spain show little concern for the Arianism of the Goths.

In spite of the predominance of the Goths in the political and social history of the later Roman empire, they left surprisingly little indication of their identity beyond their ethnonym. They adopted Roman customs and language, abandoning their own, and yet no texts of Gothic authors appear in the record until the late sixth century, and even then the Gothic authors are "romanized" Catholic bishops. The scarcity of sources, Gothic or Roman, from the fifth- and sixth-century west probably explains, in part, the invisibility

of the Goths. But Gothic assimilation to Roman customs and society could also explain

their absence from the record. Although the sources for the period are sparse, other

evidence, such as material remains, as well as other methods, such as a broad comparitive

study of the Roman world, might shed more light on the identity of the Goths. For

whatever reason, authors in late antiquity thought it important to distinguish people as

Goths and Romans, which in all likelihood will continue to pique the interest of students

and scholars for some time to come.

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