

GALLAECIA GOTHICA

From the Conspiracy of Dux Argimundus
(AD 589/590) to Integration in the
Visigothic Kingdom of Toledo

Rafael Barroso Cabrera, Jorge Morín de Pablos
and Isabel M. Sánchez Ramos



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Introduction

The history of the Visigothic kingdom of Toledo is full of dark episodes difficult to elucidate, either because of the precariousness of the literary sources that report the events or because the stories they make are in contradiction with each other. All this has caused different and even conflicting interpretations of the same facts. In addition, on a few occasions our data refers to individuals or places that will never appear again mentioned in the historical documentation, which makes research difficult. On top of this, for the last decades of the life of the Visigothic kingdom – a time for which we have more extensive and proven information – the problem is accentuated due to gaps in the reliable data, since often what we do have comes from chronologically post-fact sources, which are also contaminated by the controversy surrounding the end of the Visigothic kingdom of Toledo and the vexed question of the responsibility of ‘la pérdida de España’ (‘the loss of Spain’).

In truth, the main cause of our ignorance about the Visigothic past derives largely from the nature of the contemporary sources. Indeed, the fact that our main sources of information for the events that took place in Spain between the 6th and the first half of the 7th century – John of Biclaro and Isidore of Seville – are written in the form of an historical chronicle is a real misfortune for the historian, since, by the very nature of the chronological genre, each paragraph only provides a record of the news and the year in which the events it narrates happened. As is known, the chronicle is an historical-literary genre, whereby a series of historical events in the form of brief information and the year in which they took place are reviewed. Therefore, the main disadvantage of this genre is that virtually nothing is said about the context and circumstances in which the events took place and that they hardly provide information about the individuals involved in them.

Based on these premises, the reader is asked not to look in our study for irrefutable certainties, but only hypotheses and questions linked to what the texts often hint at, but at the same time remain silent about. Far from a banal exercise of erudition with few major pretensions, this is an attempt to open new lines of research on the territorial reality of the Visigothic kingdom, with special emphasis on the assimilation of the Suevic kingdom of Gallaecia and its subsequent influence on the development of power relations between the different elements in conflict that led to the fall of the Visigothic kingdom of Toledo in 711. In this way, as a prosecutor might do in a trial – because we have to deal with a famous judicial process– we have tried to link here proven data and evidence with reliable but difficult (perhaps impossible) evidence to contrast against (at least in the current state of the investigation), and in this way, after joining the different pieces that make up this complex puzzle, reconstruct the historical context in which Argimundus’ rebellion took place and the problems presented by the incorporation of the Gallaecian province into the Visigothic kingdom. Undoubtedly these shortcomings pose a serious problem, but, after all, this is precisely an historian’s job. Does not the historical method consist, after all, in ordering within a coherent account the data provided by different historical sources in the light of archaeological, epigraphic, and numismatic investigations? Following, then, this elementary premise, we will try along these lines to clarify a dark episode within the reign of Reccared, the significance of which, although repeatedly pointed out in almost all the studies dealing with this crucial period, we believe of great relevance for the knowledge of the end of the Suevic kingdom of Gallaecia and the consolidation of the political theory of the kingdom of Toledo.

Conspirators and Conspiracies in the Reign of Reccared

*Provincias autem, quas pater proelio conquisiuit, iste pace conseruavit, aequitate disposuit, moderamine rexit.*¹ With this succinct statement praising the conservation of peace in the provinces conquered by King Leovigild (568–586), Saint Isidore of Seville summarises the peaceful reign of Reccared I (586–601). But despite the atmosphere of apparent harmony with which the bishop of Seville wishes to depict this period, the truth is that Reccared’s reign can be considered anything but quiet, at least from the point of view of the kingdom’s internal politics. E.A. Thompson underscored this dramatically: ‘...there is no parallel in the reign of any other sixth-century king of Spain for so many revolts and conspiracies against the throne’.²

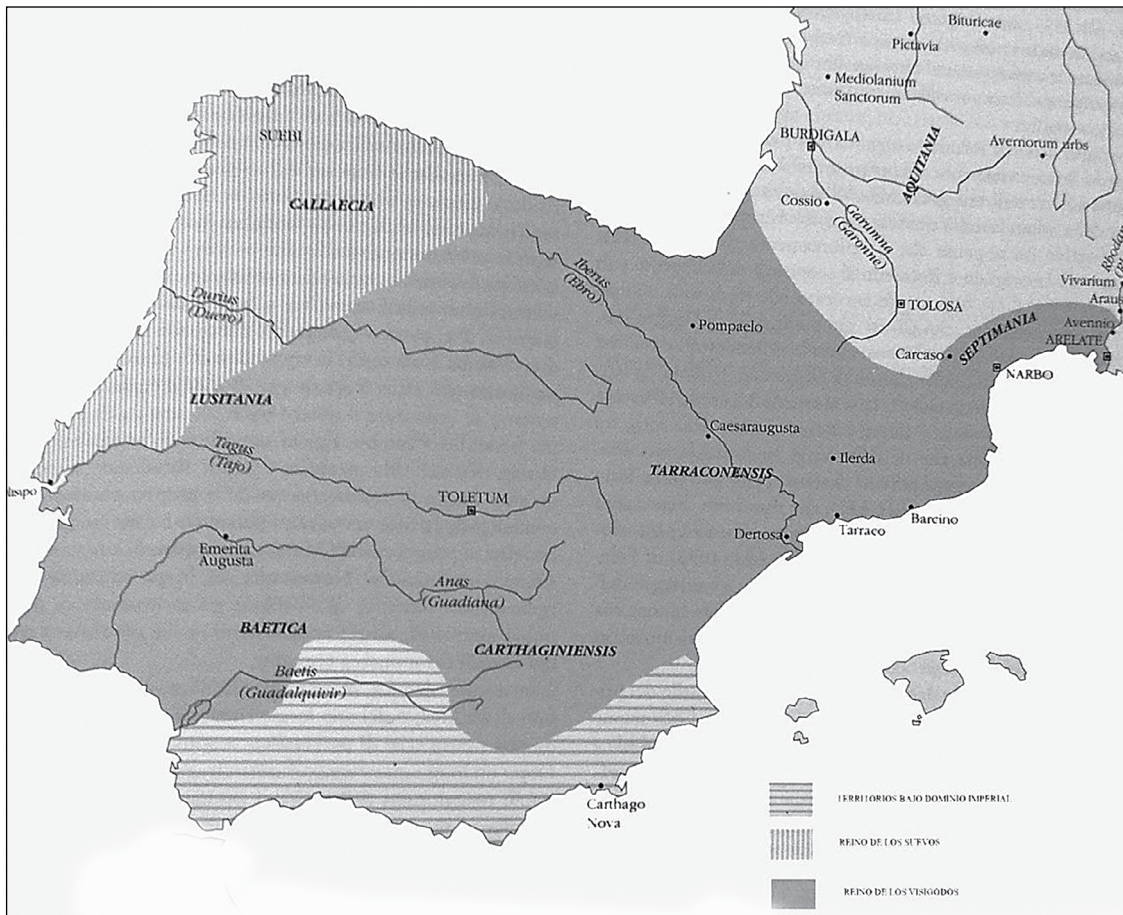


Figure 1. Hispania in the mid 6th century AD.

This has undoubtedly been a great boon to scholars, because it could be said that ‘quiet’ reigns produce no history. And, indeed, few Visigoth kings had to face so many enemies, and such formidable obstacles to remain on the throne, as the son of the great King Leovigild. And much of the instability during his

¹ HG 55. This is a new example of the contrast between the characters of Leovigild and Reccared, as can also be seen in HG 52, where Isidore compares the figures of father and son in complimentary terms for the latter. John of Biclaro also notes that Reccaredo had succeeded his father *cum tranquillitate*: Iohan. Biclaro. Chron. a. 586.2.

² Thompson 1985: 123 (=1969: 104). On the rebellions of Reccared’s reign and the political context in which they developed, see Valverde 2000a: 260–263 and Petit 2009: 2–4. As this present study is a translation of the Spanish version, the original works in English will often appear cited from the corresponding Spanish edition.

reign was the result of an act that would profoundly mark the future of the Visigothic kingdom and the subsequent history of Spain: the conversion of the Goths to the Catholic faith (Figure 1).

We know that already in the same year, AD 587, therefore shortly after Reccared's accession to the throne of Toledo, a conspiracy led by the Arian bishop of Mérida Sunna and a nobleman named Segga occurred against the king. Among the plotters were also two other nobles, who, like the afore-mentioned Segga, were probably counts, elevated by Reccared himself: Witteric and Vagrila.³ The anonymous author of the *Vitas* notes that the conspirators were all Goths – a testimony that endorses the onomastic of them – and that they had risen against Bishop Masona, one of the most important personalities of the moment, and no doubt as well a reference to the new policy inaugurated by King Reccared based on the collaboration between the Gothic nobility and the Hispano-Roman element.⁴ However, John of Biclaro confirms that although the events took place in Mérida, far from the court, the conspirators' intentions were much greater: the real goal was to usurp the throne (*tyrannidem assumere*). Once the plot was discovered both leaders were exiled and had their properties confiscated. The recalcitrant Bishop Sunna was banished to Mauritania Tingitana and Count Segga was taken to Gallaecia, but not before having both his hands cut off.⁵ Witteric was forgiven after having confessed his crime to Bishop Masona.⁶ Some years later this nobleman was to succeed in another attempt that would overthrow Liuva II, son and successor of Reccared. As for Vagrila, who took shelter in the basilica of Santa Eulalia, King Reccared was content to deprive him of all his honours and riches and condemn him and his family to perpetual servitude in that church, this sentence being later revoked by Bishop Masona.⁷

To this first conspiracy we must add at least two more. The first took place in Narbonne, capital of the Gothic province of Gallia Narbonensis or Septimania, where, shortly after the conspiracy of Sunna in Mérida, the Counts Granista and Wildigern and the Arian bishop of Narbonne Athaloc rose in rebellion. John of Biclaro, the anonymous author of the *Vitas*, and Gregory of Tours give accounts of this conspiracy, providing insights into the importance of the rebellion, aggravated without doubt by foreign intervention. However, despite the fact that the rebels had the support of a Frankish army sent by Guntramn of Burgundy, under the command of *dux* Bosso, the rebellion was masterfully subdued by *dux* Claudius, achieving one of the most resounding successes in Gothic military history.⁸ The rebellion of Granista and Wildigern was an important challenge for the new king because of the obvious strategic nature of Septimania, located on the frontier with the Franks, traditional enemies of the Goths, and, on the other hand, the desire of King Guntramn of Burgundy to expand his domains to the Mediterranean coast, factors that turned Septimania into a settlement of an important part of the Visigothic army. For this reason it is not strange that, since Septimania was an area of constant friction between the two

³ This follows from VSPE V 10 1: *...quosdam Gothorum, nobiles genere opibusque perquam ditissimos, e quibus etiam nonnulli in quibusdam ciuitatibus comites a rege fuerant constituti.*

⁴ VSPE V 10–11.

⁵ Iohan. Bicl. Chron. a. 588.1: *Quidam ex Arrianis, id est Siuma episcopus et Segga, cum quibusdam tyrannidem assumere cupientes deteguntur; conuicti Siuma exilio truditur et Segga manibus amputatis in Gallaeciam exul transmittitur.*

⁶ Actually there were two attempts to assassinate the Bishop: the first in the same palace and the second during the procession to the Basilica of Santa Eulalia that took place by Easter. The revelation of this second attempt is what saved Witteric: VSPE V 11 1–10.

⁷ VSPE V 11 17–21. Although the *Vitas* point to a supernatural explanation for Witteric's betrayal, Alonso (1986: 153) reasonably assumes that this was because the candidate to the throne was not the traitor himself. On the conjecture, see García Moreno 1974a: no. 664, 128, 172 and 157. For the date in which the events took place, see García Moreno 1974a: no. 35 n. 3. See also García Moreno 2008a: 61–63.

⁸ Iohan Bicl. Chron. a. 589.2; VSPE V 12 1– 5; Greg Tur. HF IX 15 (conversion) and 31 (rebellion). Apparently Reccared would have counted on this occasion with the express support of Brunhild and Childebert. See García Moreno, 1974a: no. 69, 165 and 663, who dated in the year AD 589, following the more precise chronology of Gregory of Tours. For *dux* Claudius, see García Moreno, 1974a: no. 35. This confrontation also seems to refer to Isid. Hisp. HG 54. Likewise, Faria (1988: 80) assumes that some deposits of Reccared's coins documented in eastern Tarraconensis could be related to the rebellion of Narbonne.

peoples, many of the main attempts at usurpation of the kingdom (Sisenand, Ilderic and Paulus, Achila II, etc.) arose from this province. In fact, during the entire Visigothic period the province of Narbonensis was considered one of the most important diplomatic issues, hence the interest of successive monarchs to control this territory through their clientele bases. We will return to this subject later.⁹

However, not all attempts at usurpation started from peripheral areas. The next conspiracy against King Reccared we must mention was not set in a distant province of the kingdom, but in the court of Toledo itself. Although chronicles on this point are very scarce, there is no doubt that it was a conspiracy of major import, doubtless a real *coup d'état*, as it had been plotted by individuals from the highest circle of Toledo's aristocracy. Among the conspirators were the widow Queen Goiswintha and the Arian Bishop Uldila (certainly from Toledo). According to John of Biclaro, the plot's objective would have been to restore Arianism, as a response to Reccared's decision to embrace the Catholic faith. This decision had been expressed by the king to the Arian bishops during an assembly held in the first year of his reign (AD 587). This Arian synod was, therefore, prior to the solemn abjuration of the 3rd Council of Toledo (AD 589) and may be considered as a preliminary and preparatory meeting aimed at eliminating any opposition amongst the ranks of the Gothic nobility.¹⁰



Figure 2. Madrid. El Escorial Library. Codex Vigilanus f. 145.
3rd Council of Toledo.

that the measure was not to the liking of all those affected, and it found some isolated resistance in recalcitrant sectors of the Gothic nobility, reluctant to change the political orientation undertaken by Reccared (Figure 2).¹¹

The last of the conspiracies that Reccared had to face, and the one that interests us here, was the attempted usurpation made by *dux* Argimundus. Regardless of the importance that this attempt should have had, the only mention of the plot of Argimundus is a paragraph in the chronicle of John of Biclaro,

⁹ The overall importance of this Gothic territory in Gaul can be seen in the fact that, to ensure a quiet succession to the throne after the death of Athanagild, Liuva decided to remain in charge of the province, leaving his brother Leovigild as co-regent in Toledo: Iohan. Bicl. Chron. a. 569.4 and 579.2; Isid. Hisp. HG 48 (see footnote 206 below).

¹⁰ If we consider AD 589 as probable date of the rebellion in Septimania, as García Moreno defends (see footnote 8 above), in this case the conspiracy involving Goiswinth would have taken place before the rebellion of Granista and Wildigern.

¹¹ Iohan Bicl. Chron. a. 589.1. See also: Chron. a. 587.5. For Uldila, see García Moreno, 1974a: no. 665.

in fact the news with which he closes his work.¹² Unlike the other conspiracies, curiously we hardly have here any details of the plot itself, while, on the contrary, the chronicler gives the minutiae of the punishment inflicted on the leader. As for the chronology, the plot must have happened around the year AD 590, shortly after the celebration of the 3rd Council of Toledo, which had seen the abjuration of King Reccared and all the Gothic nobility of the ‘perfidy of Arrius’, as John of Biclaro places his narration among the news concerning Hispania, just after the official conversion of the monarch.¹³

According to the narration, Argimundus, a prominent member of the *Aula Regia* (*ex cubiculo eius*) and also *dux* of one of the provinces of the kingdom (*etiam prouinciae dux*), which is not cited, would have led a conspiracy (*machinatione*) to seize the kingdom and assassinate the king (*tyrannidem assumere cupiens, ita ut, si posset, eum et regno priuaret uita*). Once the plot was discovered and neutralised, all the conspirators were sentenced to death, although before being executed Argimundus was subjected to a humiliating and tortuous process that would serve as a general lesson. The usurper was convicted of the crime of *maiestas*, and, after interrogation (and probably being whipped, following the usual procedure of the Roman *quaestio*), his head was shaved (*decaluatio*) and sentenced to have his right hand cut off. As a final punishment, and to serve as an example against any future attempts at rebellion, Argimundus was ignominiously paraded on the back of an ass through the streets of Toledo, exposed to the anger and mockery of the crowd in a triumphal parade of derision (*pompizando*).¹⁴ Although not expressly stated, and given the fate of the others involved in the conspiracy, it seems more than likely that Argimundus was ultimately executed, as Roman and Visigothic legislation provided for the crime of *lesa maiestas* with capital punishment.¹⁵ In any event, as has been seen, both the *decaluatio* (however it was carried out)¹⁶ and the amputation were considered infamous penalties in Visigothic legislation, consequently making it impossible for any suffering them to access the throne or exercise power.¹⁷

¹² The chronicle was written in around AD 604: Collins 2005: 79. On the date of the conspiracy, see Martin 2003: 189.

¹³ Iohan. Bicl. Chron. a. 590.1: *Anno VIII Mauricii imperatoris, qui est Reccaredi regis IIII annis.*

¹⁴ Iohan. Bicl Chron. a. 590.3: *Reccaredo ergo orthodoxo quieta pace regnante domesticae insidiae praetendeuntur. nam quidam ex cubiculo eius, etiam prouinciae dux nomine Argimundus aduersus Reccaredum regem tyrannidem assumere cupiens, ita ut, si posset, eum et regno priuaret et uita. sed nefandi eius consilii detecta machinatione comprehensus et in uinculis ferreis redactus habita discussione socii eius impiam machinationem confessi condigna sunt ultione interfecti. ipse autem Argimundus, qui regnum assumere cupiebat primum verberibus interrogatus, deinde turpiter decaluatus, post haec dextra amputata exemplum omnibus in Toletana urbe asino sedens pompizando dedit et docuit famulos dominis non esse superbos.* The last sentence has a metric character, which has led some to think that the prisoner was preceded in his humiliating parade by *tituli* that exposed his crime, in the manner of Roman triumphs: McCormick 1986: 303, n. 30, and 326. This interpretation seems a correct one, especially since the term *pompizando* seems to refer to a staging and with a clear desire for show and ceremony (in terms of burlesque parody). However, see Arce (2011: 72) who considers this interpretation excessive.

¹⁵ On the condemnation of *dux* Argimundus, see Petit 2009: 3f.; Maple 2011: 151–153. For the punishment for treason against the king, see King, 1981: 59–70.

¹⁶ Historians are divided between those who hold that the punishment consisted of a simple shaving of the hair, a sign of nobility between the Goths, and those who believe that the scalp was torn off; Thompson 1985: 123 (=1969: 104); King 1981: 111 n. 33 (based on Mer. 15); Teillet 1984: 100f, 445 and 595; Maple 2011: 154–157. In either case, the penalty imposed made it impossible for the accused to occupy the throne. Note that the punishment of whipping, ignominious *decaluatio* (*turpiter decaluatus*), and permanent exile, will later be ruled, by the 16th Council of Toledo (c. 3), as punishments for sodomites: *...illius legis quae de talibus est edita nihilominus ferientur sententiae atque ab omni christianorum sint alieni caterva, insuper contentis uerberibus correpti ac turpiter decaluati exile perpetua mancipetur.* Note that Tejada y Ramiro, in the commentary on this canon, explained that the *decaluatio* did not consist of a simple shaving of hair to debase members of the nobility only, as it was applied equally to slaves. This seems to indicate that the scalp was torn off. At least this is what the author of the *Fuero Juzgo* also understood when he interpreted L.V. VIII 2.2 (=Fuero Juzgo IX), and translated the expression as ‘desfolar la frente laydamente’ (‘deflate the forehead flatly’); Ramiro y Tejada 1850: 568. Against this interpretation, however, Isidore’s testimony is raised regarding the case of Samson (*Allegor.* 81) and the LV XII 3.11 (*Erwig*) dedicated to the Jews who taught the children the books of their religion, a law that details that *decaluatio* could be ordered if their impious practices continued: Crouch 2010. In this case the head would be shaved in such a way that the guilty party would be stigmatised socially. We are inclined to think, however, that the punishment simply referred to shaving the head, as some of the rebel nobility seem to have been subsequently rehabilitated.

¹⁷ King 1981: 110f.; Arce 2011: 154–157.

Before continuing with the interpretations given to the Argimundus conspiracy, it seems appropriate to make a short digression on the symbolic meaning of these punishments inflicted on the conspirators in the Visigothic legislation.

From an ideological point of view, both measures are justified by the ritual custom recorded in many ancient societies (e.g. Iberians and Celts, but also among Latin, German, and Scythian tribes) of shaming the enemy by depriving him of the two members that govern the body: the head, considered the receptacle of the soul or vital essence of man, and the hands, whose main function in the warrior societies of the ancient world was to hold arms and exhibit the strength and courage of the warrior. These types of ritual practices were adopted by the Romans, who used them, stripped of all ritual character, in a purely punitive sense, applying them to enemies and deserters.¹⁸ Certainly, such ideological considerations should still influence, like other primitivisms and barbarisms, Late Roman and Visigothic legislation. In this regard, J. Arce emphasises that the *decaluare* action was ‘como quitarle a un noble el poder, la fuerza, el prestigio, e inhabilitarle para desempeñar funciones de poder correspondientes a su rango’ (‘like taking away a nobleman’s power, strength, prestige, and preventing him from exercising the powers corresponding to his rank’).¹⁹ In fact, the penalty of *decaluatio* – however the penalty was carried out, as a scalping or tonsure – can be taken as a symbolic substitute for decapitation, and obviously a less bloody one, as it meant the civil death of the victim, i.e. being reduced to servility, as happened to Segga and Argimundus, and probably also in the case of *dux* Paulus and his accomplices (HWR 27 and 30), or to a clerical state – e.g. Eboric and Audeca among the Suevi; Vagrila, Tulga, and, with nuances, Wamba. In mitigating the punishment in both cases it is not difficult to guess the beneficial influence of the Church.²⁰

On the other hand, E.A. Thompson drew attention to the fact that amputation was a foreign punishment to the Visigothic legal practice and was reserved almost exclusively for usurpers.²¹ The mutilation of the hand was intended, obviously, to incapacitate the subject in the exercise of arms, which, although not exclusively, as we have seen in the case of *dux* Claudius, was undoubtedly the main occupation of the Gothic nobility. This punishment, therefore, effectively ruled the victim out of commanding the army, which can be viewed among the Germans one of the key functions of royalty, if not the main one. Hence, as R. Collins rightly observes, when unable to exercise military authority, the amputation of hands also barred the accused from exercising sovereignty. In either case, the prisoner, reduced to a religious or servile state, and stripped of the power to command the militia, was unable to reign.²²

¹⁸ In the case of the ancient Indo-European peoples, a ritual sense can be envisioned in such practice as a pledge of guarantee of a judicial process: Dumézil 1990: 71–74. For Pre-Roman peoples, see Sopena 2009 and Torres-Martínez 2011: 400–404. If they were army deserters, the penalty of amputation was justified as the offence was considered equivalent to a crime against the state: Vallejo 1993.

¹⁹ Arce infers from this, additionally, that only certain sections of the Gothic communities wore their hair long: the nobility, the members of the *palatium* (*duces, comites*), and, probably, the *gardingi*, the personal guard of the king: Arce 2011: 157. Actually, in the Germanic world long hair was a sign of distinction for freemen: Hoyoux 1948; López Sánchez 2002. Thus it is very likely that most of the Goths wore long hair with a distinctive cut and a unique dress, at least until the first third of the 7th century AD, as the judges could distinguish them from the Hispano-Romans: Thompson 1985: 38 and 375f. (=1969: 25, 314); King 1981: 22, 36f.

²⁰ In general terms, and in spite of the opinion of Fredegar, the Visigothic kings seem to have been more civilised in these matters than their Frankish or Byzantine neighbours, see Besga 2007a.

²¹ Thompson 1985: 122 (=1969: 102), based on R.S. Lopez 1942–1943: 454f. In fact, the Visigothic law provided for the penalty of amputation of the hands in cases of royalty-related crimes, such as the falsification of royal documents or the royal seal (LV VII.5.1), or for monetary offenses in the case of slaves (LV VII.6.2): King 1981: 110. The latter scholar, in addition, opposes the idea of R.S. Lopez that such penalties were introduced in Spain under the influence of the Emperor Heraclius, as it is not demonstrated that LV VII.5.1 is not an *antiqua* and also that this was the usual punishment for traitors already in the 6th century, as evidenced by the penalties imposed on those who conspired against Reccared.

²² For that reason, Witteric, after the usurpation of the throne, was content to order the amputation of the right hand of King Liuva II, which presumably would have caused his death: Isid. Hisp. HG 57: [*Liuvaa*] *quem in primo flore adolescentiae Wittericus sumpta tyrannide innocuum regno deiecit praecisaque dextra occidit...*

Interpreting the Plot of Argimundus

The first problem posed by the narrative of events reported by John of Biclaro is that the chronicler does not suggest possible motivations that would have led Argimundus and his collaborators to rise against the king. Our ignorance of what really happened has generated a whole series of likely causes that might have led one of the most distinguished members of the court to rebel against his king. Thus, and since the office of *cubicularius* implies, obviously, that Argimundus belonged to the highest stratum of aristocracy within the Gothic kingdom, R. Collins has speculated that the cause of the rebellion was the discomfort caused the *dux* by being excluded from the political benefits granted by Reccared, or perhaps for not sharing the ideological (i.e. religious) framework of the new king.²³ That is, Argimundus would have tried either to recover his local power or the restoration of Arianism. However, E.A. Thompson noted that, according to Pope Gregory's epistolary testimony, the Arians had been removed from power after the conversion, and there is also no evidence that the conspirators intended to restore Arianism.²⁴ J. Arce, based on precisely the same reference from Gregory that served as an argument to Thompson, believes the hypothesis of Collins has a certain credibility, and that the Arians, discontented as a result of their exclusion from public positions, could have been the cause of the rebellion.²⁵

It is evident that there must have been some cases of exclusion of public office in the new state among the Arians, but this must have happened specifically for those charges raised after AD 589, when conversion to the Nicene faith became official, and a point of no return was reached.²⁶ Certainly, the abandonment of the *gothica fides* had to have generated some discomfort among the most recalcitrant sectors of the Gothic nobility, as we have had occasion to verify in the rebellions of Mérida, Toledo, and Septimania. However, the power of this reaction should not be overrated; especially not after the erratic religious policy followed by Leovigild from AD 580, when the king tried to create a national church, even usurping the name of 'Catholic' in favour of heretics. In this sense, the concessions made by Leovigild over dogma in support of a fruitless approach to Catholics have dissolved the ultimate resistance of even the most fervent Arians.²⁷ A good example of this hesitant stance is the case of the nobleman Agila, who had so well defended Arian beliefs against Gregory of Tours, but who, according to him, would later convert to Catholicism.²⁸ In this context it is unlikely that there were significant numbers of Arians convinced at the time of conversion.

In addition, two other facts that seem relevant to this topic must be taken into account. The first is that, in the event that Argimundus and the rest of the conspirators had effectively decided to re-establish the old Gothic *fides*, it would certainly be unusual if John of Biclaro did not mention religious motivation as a trigger for the conspiracy, especially in a paragraph included in the same year in which the chronicler recounts the meeting of the 3rd Council and the solemn conversion of the Gothic people (*in qua synodo intererat memoratus christianissimus Reccaredus, ordinem conversionis suae et omnium sacerdotum uel gentis Gothicae confessionem tomo scriptum manu sua*). And it would be as, or even more, disconcerting when the

²³ Collins 2005: 66f.

²⁴ Thompson 1985: 123f. (=1969: 103). Greg. Dial. III 31: *...Reccaredus rex non patrem perfidum, sed fratrem martyrem sequens, ab Arianæ haereseos pravitate conversus est, totamque Visigothorum gentem ita ad veram perduxit fidem, ut nullum in suo regno militare permetteret, qui regno Dei hostis existere per haereticam perfidiam non timeret.*

²⁵ Arce 2011: 151f., n. 19.

²⁶ Despite an opinion that is still widespread, there is no evidence that allows Witteric to continue being Arian, much less try to restore the old Gothic *fides* during his reign: Thompson 1985 (=1969: 157); García Moreno 1974a: no. 172.

²⁷ Thompson 1985: 53 (=1969: 40); King 1981: 33–35.

²⁸ Most likely it was Aila, one of the four Gothic magnates (*seniores Gothorum*) who signed the abjuration of the 3rd Council of Toledo. For this character, see Greg. Tur. HF V 43; Thompson 1985: 50 and 182 (=1969: 37 and 104); Isla 1990: 16–20; Orlandis 1992: 71–74.

author had previously related other attempts to restore Arianism, and when such a motivation would corroborate the fact that Reccared came to fulfil the central theme of his work, that is, the conversion of the Goths to Catholicism and the definitive unification of the kingdom.²⁹

Secondly, we must bear in mind that, notwithstanding the testimony of Pope Gregory – a foreigner who obviously writes based on hearsay, and whose intention is none other than comparing Reccared's reign with that of his perfidious father – the author of the *Vitas Patrum Emeritensium* explicitly states that some of Mérida's conspirators had been named counts by Reccared himself.³⁰ It is more than likely, then, that many of the Arian nobles had been confirmed in their positions by the sovereign, even after the conversion. This measure would echo the political logic of the moment, which went on to integrate the Gothic aristocratic element within the structures of the new state. And since, after the synod of AD 580, the majority of the Gothic nobility would only feel nominally Arian, there would be no drawbacks in maintaining it in the exercise of their duties and honours after what had happened at the 3rd Council of Toledo. After all, a similar measure had been followed with the Arian ecclesiastical population, which must be considered more obstinate in the doctrine and obviously much more involved in religious controversy, and whose representatives were confirmed in their dignity with the sole condition of fulfilling certain, not too burdensome, requirements.³¹

Therefore, regardless of some isolated attempts to overthrow Reccared by that section of the nobility still loyal to the *Gothica fides*, it does not seem that the Arian reaction had had enough support, even within the ranks of the Gothic nobility itself, where conversions had already been a habitual phenomenon for some time, as evidenced by such prominent examples as Masona, or John of Biclara himself. E.A. Thompson, in the reference cited above, agreed with this judgment when he stated that 'And yet the Arian protest against the conversion, though spearheaded by members of the nobility and supported by some of the rank and file of the population, appears surprisingly feeble and half-hearted'.³²

It does not seem that Arianism would have been an inconvenience when it came to keeping Argimundus in his offices after AD 589, although it is true that considering, on the one hand, that he was a *cubicularius* and *dux provinciae*, roles both of enormous importance within the political organisation of the kingdom and which indicate that the *dux* was a member of the *Officium Palatinum*, and, therefore, in tune with the king,³³ and on the other that John of Biclara does not specify that it was a religious motive, then the

²⁹ Iohan. Bicl. Chron. a. 588.1: *Quidam ex Arrianis, id est Siuma episcopus et Segga, cum quibusdam tyrannidem assumere cupientes deteguntur...*; Chron. a. 589.1: *Uldida episcopus cum Gosuintha regina insidiantes Reccaredo manifestur et fidei catholicae communionem, quam sub specie Christiana quasi sumentes proiciunt, publicantur...* Nor is this reason mentioned by the author of the *Vitas*, who nevertheless does narrate the rebellion of the Arian Bishop Athaloc and the nobles Granista and Vildigern in the Narbonensis (VSPE V 12), although here the omission can be justified because the author seems more interested in exalting the figure of *dux* Claudius, and everything that somehow surrounds the Emeritensis Church, than in narrating with any detail the conspiracies against Reccared.

³⁰ See footnote 3 above. Having said that, this does not completely deny the testimony of Pope Gregory, for surely the rebels of Mérida had been appointed before the conversion of the king. Of course, with the exception of the recalcitrant Bishop Sunna, it does not appear that the conspirators were bitter Arians: Vagrila was forgiven on the sole condition he stayed true to the Catholic faith (VSPE V 11 20–21).

³¹ A new ordination is simply prescribed for presbyters and deacons: II Conc. Caesar. C. 1 (Vives 1963: 154). As for the bishops, still in AD 599, ten years after the official conversion, the former Arian prelates Ugnus of Barcelona (*Ugnus Barcinonensis episcopus...*) and Fruisclus of Dertosa (*Fruisclus... ecclesiae Dertosane episcopus*) signed the acts of the 2nd Council of Barcelona next to the Catholic prelates of said sees Asiaticus and Iulianus: Vives 1963: 160f.; Thompson 1985: 117 (=1969: 113).

³² Thompson 1985: 123 (=1969: 104).

³³ It seems that there were at least two *cubiculorum comites*. This is stated in the VIII Conc. Tol., where they appear at the top of the list of signatory leaders of the conciliar acts, and in the XIII Conc. Tol., although only one in the IX Council: King 1981: 73, n. 5. Petit (2009: 3f.) assumes that Argimundus was part of the *Aula Regia*, which, according to Sánchez Albornoz (1946a: 22–27), would have been established already in the time of Leovigild in imitation of Constantinople. On the *Aula Regia*, see also: García de Valdeavellano 1975: 196–199; King 1981: 71–104; González, 1979: 528–532.

most reasonable and prudent conclusion is to think that Argimundus was a Catholic. The fact that in spite of holding such a prominent position in Reccared's court, Argimundus is not expressly mentioned among the *Gothorum seniores* who renounced Arianism in the 3rd Council, is thus a further indication that he was probably a Catholic.³⁴ This suspicion will have, as we will see below, some importance in determining the possible origin of the *dux*.

Thus, having discarded the religious option, we must turn our investigations elsewhere to look for possible motivations that explain the actions of Argimundus; and for this we must know the background to the events.

³⁴ Among the noblemen who renounced Arianism, only five (Gusinus, Fonsa, Afrila, Aila, Ella) are mentioned by their names, followed by the generic '*omnes seniores Gothorum subscripserunt*' (Ramiro y Tejada 1850: 227; Vives 1963: 136–138).

The Scene of the Rebellion

Apart from omitting the possible motivations that could lead the *dux* to rebel against the king, John of Biclaro is also silent about the name of the province governed by Argimundus, or even where the conspiracy took place: whether it was in Toledo itself or in the unnamed province he administered. It seems tacitly accepted that it was a palace plot, of the style we have already seen, starring the widow Queen Goiswinth. Although not explicitly cited, this interpretation is based on the fact that Argimundus belonged to the palatine nobility, and that John of Biclaro defines the conspiracy as one of the '*domesticae insidiae*' that threatened the peace and stability of Reccared's reign (*Reccaredo... still pace reigning domesticae insidiae praetenduntur*).

Theoretically, the use of '*domestica*' to refer to the conspiracy seems to suggest a palace coup rather than a genuine military rebellion. But, nevertheless, there are some indications that allow us to think that this was not the case. In fact the term should be translated as 'internal dispute (betrayal)'.³⁵ But, since John of Biclaro is our only source for knowledge of the facts, the answer to this question logically requires clarifying the true meaning the chronicler wanted to convey with this expression. At this point it may be appropriate to call attention to a similar expression used by John of Biclaro himself when judging the Hermenegild rebellion. Here the chronicler speaks of '*domestica rixa*' although, as he points out just a few lines later, the prince's rebellion had taken place in Hispalis, the capital of the province that Leovigild had given him *ad regnandum*.³⁶

We believe that the key to interpreting these locutions should be sought not so much in the geographical context in which both uprisings take place, i.e. in the palace, but in their nature of civil confrontation. And, bearing in mind the precedent of Hermenegild's rebellion, it is not unreasonable to suppose that by '*domestica insidia*' our author wants to indicate those internal disputes that can be considered as conspiracies at the highest level, namely those whose main characters were individuals linked by some kind of relation to the court, either a blood or family bond – as was the case with Goiswinth and Hermenegild – or of some other type, but of similar condition, such as the adoption by arms (*Waffensohnschaft*), or patronage (*Versippung*), or simply an oath (*sacramentum*), such as the one that united the *fideles* with the Gothic king. It would not, then, be a simple civil war between subjects divided into enemy factions, but a confrontation that would acquire a personal dimension among the suitors.

Thus, it does not seem impossible that the Argimundus rebellion took place not in the royal palace but in the same province whose government he controlled. And since we have no record from our chronicler of the name of this province, we must resort to non-literary sources, and, more specifically, to numismatic research. In this regard, several authors have drawn attention to the appearance of a series of coins from Reccared's reign, corresponding to Galician mints, with the legend VICTOR/VICTORIA. This series of *tremisses* also coincides with the appearance of hoardings of coins in Gallaecia and areas of Lusitania neighbouring this province and that correspond to the same era.

³⁵ This expression can be found in L.A. Seneca, *De benef.* VI 39 2: '*In potestatem meam recidat, gratiam meam desideret, sine me salvus, honestus, tutus esse non possit, tam miser sit, ut illi beneficii loco sit, quidquid redditur.*' *Haec dis audientibus: 'Circumveniant illum domesticae insidiae, quas ego possim solus opprimere, instet potens inimicus et gravis, peat nec inermis, creditor urgeat, accusator.'* Cf. similar phrases, such as *domesticae furiae* ('internal dissensions') or *bellum domesticum* ('civil war'): Segura 2014: 142, s.u. *domesticus -a -um*.

³⁶ Iohan. Bicl. Chron. a. 579.3.

In general, the explanation of this phenomenon has been related to the peace process of the Suevic kingdom, which would have been slower than the literary sources show.³⁷ However, some years ago, A.M. de Faria proposed that Reccared's issues with the triumphant legend should be related to the rebellion of *dux* Argimundus and not to the campaign that set out to conquer the Suevic kingdom, as Metcalf pointed out, or with the assumed expeditions of this king against the Vascones, as suggested by a somewhat confused G.C. Miles, geographically speaking:

As regards the clustering of finds in southern Gallaecia, our opinion differs from that advanced by Metcalf (1986: 317), who connected them with the conquest of the Suevic kingdom. We believe that those finds should be related to the military victories which are commemorated in some triumphal legends coins struck in Totela, Calabacia, Bergancia, Pincia, Tornio, Tude and Luco, and which are easier to relate to the repressive campaigns against an aristocratic rebellion conducted by the *dux* Argimundus (of Gallaecia?) than against the Vascones (Miles 1952: 143–144). Numismatic evidence of the military operations conducted by Reccared against that ethnic group of the north-western Peninsula are scarce or even non-existent, and the same is true as regards his campaigns in the south against the Byzantines.³⁸

Although A.M. de Faria no longer argued his proposal, it seems clear that the issue must have been related to military campaigns carried out during Reccared's reign in the Gallaecian region, and, since the scenarios of the rest of the campaigns carried out by this king are well known, it is logical to think that the said triumphant coinage had to be issued after the only usurpation whose geography is unknown to us, i.e. that of Argimundus. In any event, what these King Reccared numismatic emissions, and other factors to which we will return in more detail later, reveal is that the annexation of Gallaecia was not a process that ended with the conquest of Leovigild (Figure 3).

It is well known that the Suevic kingdom was annexed by Leovigild in AD 585, only a year before the king of the Goths died in the royal city. Visigothic chronicles coincide in stating that once the territory and the Suevic royal treasury were conquered, Gallaecia was converted by Leovigild into another province of the kingdom of Toledo.³⁹ But, once again, the concise style of the chronological genre can give a misleading idea on this. In fact the incorporation of Suevic Gallaecia into the Visigothic kingdom, far from being an easy endeavour, had to follow a tortuous path that led through various phases and which does not seem to have been completely finalised, at least until the reign of Suintila (AD 621–631).

Even before its final conquest, the Suevic kingdom had lived through a previous period of guardianship under the tutelage of the Visigoths, during which the Suevic royalty seem to have accepted the subordination of the kingdom to the court of Toledo.⁴⁰ This submission of the Suevi was achieved through a form of legal instrument very frequent in the legal practice of the Germanic monarchies: the personal bonding between monarchs. Literary sources hint that this was the mechanism used for the incorporation of Gallaecia into the orbit of Gothic kingdom. Indeed, after reading the text of

³⁷ Barbero and Vigil 1974: 114–117; Metcalf 1986: 317; Díaz 2011: 248; López Sánchez 2009: 180f.

³⁸ Faria 1988: 80f. Although it is true that G.C. Miles mistakenly assumed that most of these monetary issues were related to possible military expeditions of Reccared against the Vascones, at least on one occasion he did suggest a relationship with some campaign of this king in Gallaecia itself: Miles 1952: 130, no. 48 (Calabacia).

³⁹ Iohan. Bicl. a. 585.2: *Leovegildus rex Gallaecias vastat, Audecanem regem comprehensum regno privat, Suevorum gentem, thesaurum et patriam in sua redigit potestatem et Gothorum provinciam facit.* Isid. HG 49: *Aregiam iste cepit, Sabaria ab eo omnis deuicta est... postremum bellum Sueuis intulit regnumque eorum in iure gentis suae: nam antea gens Gothorum angustis finibus artabatur.*

⁴⁰ Greg. Tur. HF VI 43: *Patrata quoque victuria, cognovit Mironem regem contra se cum exercitu resedere. Quo circumdato, sacramenta exigit sibi in posterum fore fedilem, Et sic, datis sibi invicem muneribus, unusquisque ad propria est regressum. Sed Miro postquam in patria rediit, non multos post dies conversus ad lectulum, obit. Infirmatus enim ab aquis Hispaniae fuerat malis aeribusque incommodes. Quo defuncto, filius eius Eurichus Leuvichildi regis amicitias expedit, dataque, ut pater fecerat, sacramenta, regnum Galliciensim susceperit.*

Gregory of Tours, García Moreno suggested that King Miro (AD 570–583) would have been adopted by arms (*Waffensohnschaft*) by Leovigild after his defeat. Both the oath of fidelity (*sacramentum*) and the reciprocal delivery of gifts (*datis sibi inuicem muneribus*) support this reading, which comes to enter the purest Germanic tradition.⁴¹

The personal bond contracted by both monarchs – a link that also extended to their respective relatives – would shortly after provide King Leovigild the perfect excuse to interfere in the politics of the neighbouring kingdom. The deposition of Miro's son and successor, Eboric, by a Suevian nobleman named Audeca in AD 584 was the pretext used by the king of the Goths. The usurper made Eboric take the tonsure and ordered him to be locked up for life in a monastery. Once firmly on the throne of the Sueves, Audeca married Miro's widow – Queen Sisegutia.⁴² It is precisely at this time that the invasion of Leovigild takes place, and it ends with the conquest of the kingdom and the royal treasury. Once hostilities broke out in AD 585, the conquest was an authentic military parade, to the extent that the Suevic kingdom will succumb in a single campaign after overcoming the episodic resistance of Porto and Braga.⁴³ The severing of maritime communications with Gaul, and, above all, the defeat of the Franks by Reccared in Septimania, represent the ending of all hope for Audeca and his devotees. Once the conquest of the kingdom of the Sueves was completed, the ultimate objective that Leovigild had in store for Audeca was the one he had previously devised for his rival, Eboric: the ruler was deprived of the kingdom and, after being tonsured and ordained a priest, and therefore unable to reign, Leovigild ordered his confinement to a monastery in distant Beja.⁴⁴

Within this succession of events, we are interested in stressing that one of the reasons used to explain the usurpation of Audeca has to do with the previously mentioned information we have from Gregory of Tours that Eboric had signed an oath of fidelity to Leovigild.⁴⁵ It seems clear that it was the renewal of the *Waffensohnschaft* signed before between Leovigild and Miro (*ut pater fecerat*). However, the alliance with the Visigothic king made Eboric lose the loyalty of an important sector of the nobility, contrary to the understanding (rather submission) with the Goths. Thus it should not have been difficult for the usurper to exploit this feeling of discomfort, and benefit from it for his plans of rebellion. Sueves and Goths were, at that time, bitter enemies. Apart from the ethnic differences that might have existed between the two peoples, the religious creed was a determining factor within that mutual antagonism, since, while the Suevi had embraced the Catholic faith three decades earlier, the Goths continued to profess Arianism.

It was in this complex political environment that the Audeca uprising and Leovigild's intervention took place. The deposition of Eboric allowed for a halo of legitimacy for the campaign of King Leovigild, who, this way, could be presented as a *patronus* and upholder of the rights of the dynasty overthrown following the agreements of adoption by arms signed by Miro and Eboric. On the other hand, the split created within the Suevic aristocracy by the usurpation of the throne by Audeca also suggests that the Visigothic king had to find support in certain sectors of the Suevian aristocracy. This support logically

⁴¹ Beltrán 1989: 72; Collins 2005: 51, 58; Díaz 2011: 147; García Moreno 2008a: 155. The chronicles give a confusing reading of why Miro would have moved south, whether in support of Hermenegild or Leovigild. On this episode, see Collins 2005: 51; Díaz 2011: 147–152.

⁴² Iohan. Bicl. Chron. a. 584.2: *His diebus Audeca in Gallecia Suevorum regnum cum tyrannide assumit et Sisegutiam relictam Mironis regis in coniugium accepit. Eboricum regno priuat et monasterii monachum facit.*

⁴³ The conquest of Porto and Braga is recorded by two numismatic emissions: Miles 1952: 197f. See also Beltrán 1989: 72–74.

⁴⁴ Ioh. Chron. a. 585.5: *Audeca uero regno priuatus tondetur et honore presbiterio post regnum honoratus non dubium quod in Eborico regis filio rege suo fecerat, patitur et exilio Pacensi urbe relegatur. Isid. Hisp. HG 92: Huic Eboricus filius in regnum succedit, quem adulescentem Audeca sumpta tyrannide regno priuat et monachum factum in monasterio damnat. Pro quo non diu dilata est sententia. Nam Leuuigildus Gothorum rex Suevis mox bellum inferens obtento eodem regno. Audecanem deiecit atque detonsum post regni honorem presbyteri officio mancipauit. Sic enim oportuit, ut quod ipse regi suo fecerat, rursus idem congrua uicissitudine pateretur.*

⁴⁵ See footnote 40 above. Díaz 1986–1987: 225; 2011: 138–152.

had to come mainly from those who still owed fidelity to the lineage of King Miro. Precisely, as a measure tending to get the support of that aristocratic sector that still remained faithful to the ancient dynasty, Audeca's marriage to the widowed Queen Sisegutia can be explained, and whose ultimate goal, let us not forget this, was to benefit from the solidarity of the family clan of the former king.⁴⁶ However, it is unlikely that Audeca fully achieved his purpose. Certainly, part of the Suevian nobility supported the Gothic invasion, either as a passing episode to restore the previous status quo, or to meet the demands of the new times. It is quite obvious that once the conquest took place, the services rendered to the Gothic cause by that sector of the Suevic nobility had to be rewarded by Leovigild, or by his successor (we should remember that King Leovigild died shortly after the conquest).

Regardless of the military conquest and the confiscation of the royal treasury, Gallaecia's fate did not end completely with the defeat and confinement of Audeca. In fact, John of Biclaro reports that in the same year, and shortly before the death of King Leovigild, a certain Malaric rose up in arms in Gallaecia. Once again this Malaric tried to usurp the kingdom (*tyrannidem assumens*), but, defeated by Leovigild's *duces*, he was taken prisoner and brought before the king of the Goths.⁴⁷ It is important to note here that, within the theoretical conception of John of Biclaro, the use of this expression indicates that Gallaecia was already considered another province of the Visigothic kingdom, regardless of whether Malaric's original intention had been the restoration of the Suevic kingdom (*quasi regnare uult*), which can shed light on the true character of Argimundus' *domestica insidia*. The mention of 'Leovigild's dukes' is also of interest, considering who the chronicler is, a character who never seems to leave anything to chance. First, this mention is noteworthy because it indicates that this time it was not the king himself who was directly responsible for leading the expedition against Malaric, but that it was entrusted to his military chiefs (*duces*). Leovigild was probably sick, or very weak, and the king did not find himself strong enough to lead his troops in a campaign of this magnitude. The truth is that John of Biclaro places this news in the penultimate paragraph of his chronicle, corresponding to the seventeenth year of the reign of King Leovigild (really the last one of a purely chronicle nature of that year, because a memory of Saint Leander follows it), and, then, in the first of those dedicated to the Gothic kingdom, he goes on to report the death of the king and the peaceful ascent to the throne of his son Reccared.⁴⁸ But, second, and this may be of interest for our study, by using a generic form the chronicler avoids giving the names of the dukes in charge of subduing the Malaric rebellion. In fact, the way in which John of Biclaro narrates the defeat of Malaric contrasts with other similar news in which Leovigild had not personally directed the campaign.⁴⁹

⁴⁶ On the importance of this type of marital link, see Orlandis 1962 and Valverde 2000b.

⁴⁷ Ioh. Chron. a. 585.6: *Malaricus in Gallaecia tyrannidem assumens quasi regnare uult, qui statim a ducibus Leovegildi regis oppressus comprehenditur et Leovigildo victus praesentatur*. Thompson 1985: 105; Díaz 2001: 332. On Malaric, see García Moreno 1974a: no. 95. It is interesting to underline that the expression *tyrannidem assumens* used by John of Biclaro here is the same used by the author with other conspiracies, regardless of whether these are aimed at the usurpation of the throne or a local uprising, and, therefore, cannot be used as an argument one way or another. Although it is a legal technicality that can be translated as 'usurpation', the term refers to any rebellion against the legitimately established power (see Orlandis 1959). In theory this was so, but in practice *tyrannus* was simply the man who failed in his attempt to gain power: Humphries 2008: 85–87.

⁴⁸ Iohan. Bicl. Chron. a. 586.2: *Hoc anno Leouegildus Rex diem clausit extremum et filius eius Reccaredus eum tranquillitate regni eius sumit sceptrum*.

⁴⁹ Iohan. Bicl. Chron. a. 585.4; a. 589.2; however also see a. 587.6.

Possible Suevian Origin of Argimundus

Nothing is known about the origins of Argimundus; John of Biclaro, our only source of information, provides no details on the ancestry of the *dux*. At first glance the onomastic of the nobleman suggests that he was a man of Germanic origin and not from a provincial Hispano-Roman family, but practically nothing else can be said with certainty about the *origo* of the *dux*. We support a Germanic origin based on the principle that during the 6th and 7th centuries AD every Germanic name is indicative of that origin, since there are no known cases of Hispanic-Roman individuals adopting barbarian names.⁵⁰ Quite the contrary, for the Visigothic period, the only examples we know of subjects whose names do not seem to correspond with their ethnic origin are all Goths, who adopt a Latin onomastic, in general due to a recent conversion to Catholicism or for reasons of social prestige, which at this time still maintains the Hispanic-Roman element. In this sense, the onomastic of the 6th–7th centuries contrasts with what will be common from the 9th century onwards in Asturias and Galicia, where the neo-Gothic feeling imposed the fashion of using Germanic names, first among the nobility and then, by imitation, between commoners. But even in this case, the system followed in the kingdom of Asturias differs from the principles that had driven the transmission of names in Visigothic Spain: while in the Visigothic kingdom the Germanic tradition of bithematic names was followed, one of whose components usually alludes to the *Sippe* of origin of the individual, from the 9th century AD onwards the repetition of the name of the grandfather together with the patronymic is appreciated.⁵¹

Thus, following this general principle, we may conclude that Argimundus was Germanic, and, although it is not impossible that he was simply a Gothic nobleman, there are some indications that support the idea that the rebel was of Suevian origin and even had some kind of kinship relationship with one of the branches of the Suevic royal family. Unfortunately, this is still a hypothesis in the absence of conclusive evidence, due to the fragmentary nature of our source of information. But although we can only rely on simple conjectures based on onomastic criteria, in our opinion it seems highly plausible, given the context in which the conquest of the Suevic kingdom and the subsequent uprising of Malaric occurred, that the *dux* Argimundus would have belonged to that sector of the Suevian nobility that had supported the claims of the Visigoth king and whose loyalty was subject to later recognition.

As already stated, the first indication that might confirm our hypothesis is provided by the usurper's name.⁵² Actually, the onomastic used by Gothic nobility was not something that was left to chance. Rather, after analysing the names of relatives whose family tree is known to us, even partially, we can establish that two more or less fixed rules were followed in the choice of names: the taste for alliteration or repetition of the first letter – a common rule of old Germanic poetry that allowed the retention in

⁵⁰ The onomastic criterion is not completely reliable, but it is quite certain in the case of Gothic names, at least until the 8th century AD, since the Germans accepted the superiority of Roman culture. In this sense, the reflections made by some authors in the case of the Ostrogothic Italy are completely extrapolated to Visigoth Spain: Amory 1997: 444; Ward Perkins 2007: 61–65.

⁵¹ If they are characters converted or baptised in the first generation, they usually adopt the name of Juan. There are several well-known cases in this regard (John of Biclaro himself, or Prince Hermenegild). On this subject, Thompson (1985: 75 [=1969: 59]) quotes: 'In the seventh century a Gothic name denotes a Goth; a Latin name denotes either a HispanoRoman or a Goth'. No Hispano-Roman is known of who adopted a Gothic name; it is not even a safe assumption, although it is probable, in the case of the children of Cyprianus in Ostrogothic Italy (Casiod. *Variarum* V 40 5) (see footnote 50 above). In any event, it is an exceptional case without continuity.

⁵² For this present study we are fortunate to have magnificent works on Visigothic period prosopography, most of them thanks to García Moreno (1974; 1996; 2003; 2007; 2008). Also interesting in terms of our study are the contributions of Díaz 1986–1987; Isla 1993 and Velázquez 1989: 465–565.

a mnemonic way both the lines of verse and the genealogical lines – and the choice of characteristic themes that are repeated within a certain family.⁵³

Although there seems to be no established norm, in general, at least one of the elements of a subject's name usually makes reference, either by alliteration or by repetition, to the *Sippe* to which the subject belonged. With this principle in mind we can see that the radical *-mundus* (<germ. **Mundō*, 'protection, hand') is a frequent theme, although not exclusive, in the onomastic of the East Germans, especially between Vandals and Gepids.⁵⁴ However, strange as it may seem, this theme is relatively rare in the Gothic onomastic of 6th–7th centuries AD, except within two very specific areas of the kingdom of Toledo: Gallaecia (and its area of influence in northern Lusitania), and Septimania (and surrounding areas of the Eastern Tarraconensis). Two peripheral regions that maintained a very strong identity in Visigothic Spain and that seem to have had a much closer connection than might appear at first glance.

In the specific case of Gallaecia, the theme *-mundus* is well attested, both in onomastic itself and in toponymy derived from Germanic anthroponyms, frequently in a cultist confusion with the word of Latin origin *munde/monte* ('mountain').⁵⁵ Although significant in number, this profusion of toponyms with a theme in *-munde* in Galicia is of a disputed chronology, generally Early Medieval, and, therefore, has only a relative value for us, especially when compared to the toponymy of the rest of the Iberian Peninsula.

Much more interesting for our purpose is to see that the same theme is present in high proportions in the royal Suevic onomastic, where it is documented in three (or four) anthroponyms: Requimund/Remismund,⁵⁶ Veremund,⁵⁷ and Theodemund.⁵⁸ To these we would have to add several more examples of the religious estate: perhaps Onemund, Bishop of Salamanca, Tructemund of Elbora, and Commund, holder of the see of Egitania, all cities close to the Gallaecia, or at some time belonging to the Suevic kingdom and the Metropolitan diocese of Bracara.⁵⁹

In contrast to the documentation of the Suevic domain, only three examples can be cited among Gothic royalty, all from outside the Iberian Peninsula: the two Turismunds – the Ostrogoth king of that name

⁵³ As is known, Germanic personal names are usually bithematic, i.e. they are usually composed of two independent lexical elements, and via a specific onomastic tradition they are frequently joined by a vowel (*Fugenvokal*), usually *a*, although sometimes it disappears: Skin 1960: 421–444; Kremer 2004: 21f.

⁵⁴ Schönfeld, 1911: 169.

⁵⁵ Charity 2003–2004: 124 (*Freitemunde* and variants), 324 (*Estremondo* and variants), and 364 (*San Jamonde* and variants). But in the Northwest this kind of place name, as a secondary element derived from a Germanic *possessor* (*Aldemunde*, *Baamonde*, *Bermún*, *Camonde*, *Castramonde*, *Gallamonde*, *Racamonde*, *Sesmonde*, etc.), is abundant and unparalleled for the rest of the Iberian Peninsula: Piel and Kremer 1976: no. 190; Riesco 2013: 120. We are aware that not all of this toponymy can be traced back to the 6th–7th centuries AD, but that a good part of it is fully medieval. But this is not an obstacle for the Germanic-type Galician onomastic to show a preference for anthroponyms with a theme *-mundus* unknown in the rest of the peninsula.

⁵⁶ It is argued whether in the case of Requimund and Remismund we are dealing with the same character or two different kings. On this issue, see Díaz (1986–1987: 221), who is inclined to think of a single monarch. It is known that Remismund was related by marriage to the Gothic King Theoderic II, with whom he was possibly also linked through a relationship of the *Waffensohnschaft* type: García Moreno 2006: 49f., n. 57.

⁵⁷ He appears cited in an inscription from San Salvador de Vairão (Portugal): Hübner 1871: 43, no. 135. Although Görres (1874) had already defended for it a chronology of the 5th century AD, and its ascription to a Suevic subject, this Portuguese inscription is later discussed by Fita (1896: 268; 1902: 493–497) and Vives (1942: 123, no. 355 and 170, no. 510), who considered it late, i.e. 10th–11th centuries AD. Today Ferreiro (1997; 1998: 49) claims its authenticity and ancient chronology.

⁵⁸ Mentioned in a list of kings of Suevi contained in a medieval document already collated by Father E. Flórez: Díaz 1986–1987: 223. It is a royal Suevic *nomina* of which we know only the names, since they belong to the so-called 'dark Suevic' period, characterised by the absence of literary references.

⁵⁹ García Moreno 1974a: nos. 475, 477, 516. Elbora is located in Vascos, near Talavera de la Reina, on the border between Lusitania and Carthaginensis, but well connected to the reference area; see Barroso *et al.* 2018.

(415-417) and the son of Theodoric I, who reigned between AD 451-453⁶⁰ – as well as a Theudemund, an Ostrogoth cited by Procopius.⁶¹ It is a well-represented element in the Gothic onomastic linked to the lineage of the Amali prior to the time of Theodoric the Great, so it appears with some frequency in the royal German onomastic from the middle of the 5th century AD, especially among the Ostrogoth and East Germans.⁶² On the other hand, it is at least significant that this same radical is completely unknown in the royal Visigothic onomastic: not one of the monarchs who occupied the throne of Toledo used it in the kingdom's two centuries of life. And it is even more significant that, curiously and in the face of this outstanding absence, the subject appears again centuries later in the onomastic region of Oviedo.

As in Gallaecia, the radical *-mundus* is also documented with some profusion in the onomastic of Septimania and its area of influence. We can mention in this regard the cases of Ansemund, Bishop of Loteba, and the nobles Argemund and Ranemund.⁶³ One Trasemund also appears as owner of a cruciform belt brooch now in the Vich Episcopal Museum, probably coming from Gerona.⁶⁴ Although after the fall of the kingdom of Toledo, but in relation to the nobility of Gothic origin, we find this same root in Count Ansemund of Nimes, who agreed in AD 752 to the delivery of the Septimanian cities to Pepin the Short.⁶⁵

As mentioned before, contrary to what we have seen for Gallaecia and Narbonensis, the theme *-mundus* is a rare radical in the Gothic onomastic of the kingdom of Toledo: out of the isolated cases of the Tolosan and Ostrogothic royalty cited above, and leaving aside an Argemund, Bishop of Oretum, only five characters with the same theme are documented in Visigothic Spain: Audemund, *comes* and *procer*; Gisclamund, *comes stabuli* and *uir inluster*; Sisemund, *comes*; Theudemund, *comes* and *uir inluster*,⁶⁶ as well as a certain Trasemund, cited on a slate found in Diego Álvaro, a village near Salamanca but belonging to Avila.⁶⁷ However, except in the latter case, bordering the area formerly dominated by the Suevi, we do not know the origin of them all, and, therefore, and taking into account the high incidence of this radical among the Galician episcopate and Suevic royalty, it should not be ruled out that some (or several) of them were originally from Gallaecia itself. We will have the opportunity to discuss this subject later, but we return now to the other component of the name of the rebel *dux*.

Although less frequent, no doubt, but similarly more common in the western area of the Iberian Peninsula, the theme *arge-/argi-* (<*germ. *Harjia*, 'army') is documented in the names of two bishops

⁶⁰ The latter is presumed a family bond with the Suevi: García Moreno 2006: 45.

⁶¹ Procop. BG III 1 36 (Schönfeld 1911: 234).

⁶² García Moreno 2007: 339; 2008: 148f. Thus, leaving aside the cases of Turismund and the Suevian kings mentioned above, the cases of the grandsons of the Vandal Geyseric, Gunthamund and Trasamund, and a descendant of Attila called Mundo, are also known. Mention may also be made of a 4th-century AD leader named Agilimund, the Gepid King Cunemund and his sister Rosemunde, the Ostrogoth Prince Gesimund, and the king of this same people Hunimund, a Vandal prince named Givamund, etc. See Schönfeld 1911: s.u.

⁶³ García Moreno 1974a: no. 552, 18, 115.

⁶⁴ Ripoll 1998: 193, 196, fig. 35.3. For the element *-mund/mund-* in medieval Catalan onomastic: Kremer 1969-1972: 180, no. 135, 283, no. 43.

⁶⁵ Chron. Moissac. AD 752: *Anno DCCLII: Ansemundus gotus Nemauso ciuitatem Magdalonam, Agatem, Biterris, Pipino regi Francorum tradidit*. See Abadal i Vinyals 1953: 42-46.

⁶⁶ García Moreno 1974a: nos. 321, 24, 66, 132, 148 (=no. 147). The latter is about the *comes* and *procer* who signs the acts of the 16th Conc. Tol. and former *spatarium*, named *numerarius* at the request of the Bishop of Merida during the reign of Wamba: *Lex edita in confirmatione concilii: ut quia praecessor noster diuae memoriae domnus Wamba rex in ipso regnandi primordio Theudemundum spatarium nostrum contra generis uel ordinis sui usum, Festi quondam incitationem Emeritensis episcopi, solius tantum regiae potestatis impulsu in eadem Emeritensem urbem numerariae officium agere instituit quod etiam unius anni excursu contra rationem noscitur peregrisse...* (Vives 1963: 517). Thompson 1985: 244f. As we will see later, both the onomastic and the connection with Wamba suggest a Suevic origin for Theudemund.

⁶⁷ Velázquez 1989: 484, no. 46. The themes *-mundus* and *-mirus* of the royal Suevic onomastic are also documented among the Vandal royalty (Guntamund, Trasemund), together with the most common *-reiks*. As is known, the Vandals shared a part of their history with the Suevi. About Septimania, its appearance may be explained by the close relationship with Gaul: Piel and Kremer 1976: nos. 115, 120, 275; Morlet 1971: s.u.

of Porto (Argionit and Argebert)⁶⁸ and in one of Egitania (Argesind).⁶⁹ In relation to this root, perhaps the Suevic king Ariamir (AD 559–566) should also be included.⁷⁰ Of these cases, the radical *arge-/argi-* is found again in the afore-mentioned Argemund, rebel against King Wamba in Narbonne,⁷¹ and in two Argibads – one a bishop of the latter city and another of Iliberris.⁷² In addition, this radical can also be found in three documented names on several slates in the province of Salamanca: Argefred, Argered, and Argiwinth.⁷³

The conclusion of this dance of names seems obvious to us: Argimundus carries a name whose components are well represented in the Suevic onomastic or located in the border area with the kingdom of Sueves, but which however are unusual in the Gothic onomastic. Thus, the distribution map of the onomastic supports the idea that *dux* Argimundus must have had a Suevian origin. Furthermore, if we take into account that the radical *-mundus* was usual among the royal Suevic names and practically unknown for Visigoth kings, as well as the fact that the *dux* was a member of the *Officium Palatinum*, it is highly probable that Argimundus belonged to King Miro's lineage and that he held the high position of *dux prouinciae Gallaeciae* during the reign of Leovigild or Reccared, perhaps as a reward for having been part of that sector of the nobility that supported Leovigild in his campaign to subjugate the Suevic kingdom. Moreover, we do not think it far-fetched to believe that Argimundus was one of the dukes who stifled the Malaric revolt, and whose names John of Biclaro preferred to keep in the dark. And this suspicion about the Suevian origin of Argimundus becomes even stronger if we bear in mind that, in spite of being a prominent member of the *Aula Regia*, he is not among the Gothic nobles who renounced Arianism at the 3rd Council of Toledo. As noted above, this circumstance leads us to think that he was a Catholic.⁷⁴

Indeed, if all the facts described here are considered one by one, both those that are certain (i.e. *dux prouinciae*, member of the *cubiculum*, Gallaecian numismatic mints, treasures of coins in Gallaecia and bordering areas, not entirely pacified province) and those that are hypothetical (i.e. Suevic origin of Argimundus, a devotee of Leovigild, perhaps related to the dethroned dynasty), it seems feasible to conclude that it must have been also in Gallaecia where Argimundus rose in rebellion against Reccared. Certainly all the data presented here seems to support this hypothesis. But, if this were the case, in a first analysis it is not well understood what reasons might lead John of Biclaro to hide this important record.

Logically it is not easy to answer this question because it falls fully within the subjective motivations of the author, motivations we cannot delve into other than hypothetically. However, from our point of view it can be reasonably assumed that only the interested vision of John of Biclaro about the historical moment that the Visigothic kingdom was experiencing would allow us to explain why the chronicler omitted the location of the rebellion. As we know, Biclaro's interest – a proud Goth who had just praised Leovigild's military policy despite the king's Arianism – revolved around a single idea: to highlight the irrevocable political, territorial, and religious unity of the Visigothic kingdom of Toledo

⁶⁸ García Moreno 1974a: Argiovitus, no. 422 and Argebertus, no. 423.

⁶⁹ García Moreno 1974a: no. 483.

⁷⁰ Thompson (1980: 86) assumes that Ariamir is the same Theodomir mentioned by Saint Isidore (HG 91) as author, along with Martin of Dume, of the conversion of the Sueves.

⁷¹ García Moreno 1974a: no. 18.

⁷² García Moreno 1974a: nos. 529 and 223, respectively.

⁷³ Velázquez 1986: 470.

⁷⁴ The noblemen who renounced Arianism at the 3rd Council of Toledo were not simple *gardingi* or *fideles regis*, but senior officials of the Palatine Office: the acts called them *Gothorum seniores*, just like the nobles who signed the 7th Council, indicating that they were *uiri illustres (comites and duces)*: Thompson 1985: 288–290.

achieved by Leovigild and Reccared. Undoubtedly, one more usurper was not going to ruin the dreams and achievements of an entire generation.⁷⁵

The omission and distortion of historical events is more than evident in the chronicle of John of Biclaro in the case of news relating to the Suevian kingdom. Thus, for example, the chronicler completely ignores highlights of Suevian history such as the figure of Saint Martin of Braga, the Catholicism of the Sueves, and the creation of Arian bishoprics in Gallaecia by Leovigild after the conquest of AD 585. Therefore, quite rightly, P. Díaz opposes the alleged fidelity and objectivity declared by Biclaro himself – ‘the value of the ignored, of the not mentioned, of the selection of events’.⁷⁶ However, there is a detail in the same chronicle by John of Biclaro, to which we have alluded before, which seems revealing in terms of understanding the chain of events, in our view: the close parallelism between the usurpation of Argimundus and the revolt attempt, which, practically a century later, *dux* Paulus will launch against King Wamba in Septimania – another outlying region of the kingdom of Toledo, and, like Gallaecia, with a strong influence. It is worthwhile, therefore, to digress a little on the matter.

⁷⁵ And the same that has been said for John of Biclaro can also be said for Saint Isidore, who, immediately after noting the conquest of the Suevic kingdom, points out Leovigild ‘*sed offuscauit in eo error impietatis gloriam tantae uirtutis*’ (HG 49). It must be borne in mind that Spanish historiography begins with John of Biclaro and that his whole narrative (as after Isidore) will be mediated by that interest, and, therefore, oriented towards the concrete objective of exalting the kingdom of the Goths as legitimate owners of Spain: Galán 2000; Teillet 1984: 440.

⁷⁶ Ferreiro 1986; 1987; Díaz 2011: 138–143.

Argimundus and Paulus: Parallel Lives of Two Usurpers in Visigothic Spain

Having in mind the silence of our source and to understand better how the events could have developed, it may be appropriate to analyse the conspiracy of Argimundus in relation to another famous rebellion that occurred during the reign of Wamba, with which it presents several points in common.

The rebellion of *dux* Paulus is undoubtedly the best known of the many uprisings that occurred during the period of the Visigothic kingdom.⁷⁷ As will be recalled, in AD 673, shortly after his anointing as king in Toledo, Wamba had to face a major military rebellion in Septimania led by *comes* Ildericus. The uprising found support among some noblemen of the Tarraconensis province and for a moment it threatened to spread throughout the kingdom. Sending the *dux* Paulus to suppress the rebellion, while Wamba was heavily engaged against the Vascones in the north of Spain, the duke decided to join the rebels, and, put at the head of them, he was crowned king with one of the crowns that King Reccared had donated to the church of San Felix of Gerona. However, Wamba, after having subjugated the Vascones in a rapid military campaign, went to the Narbonensis to crush the rebels. After a brilliant military deployment through the Pyrenean trails, which even included naval support, Wamba achieved a complete victory over the rebels. Before the defeat, and in view of the unstoppable advance of Wamba's troops, Paulus wrote an epistle to the monarch, whom he addressed as *rex Austris*, and in which he calls himself *rex orientalis*. Despite the challenging tone in which the usurper writes his letter, from its transcript we can deduce that the rebels were having a change of mind, with the intention of reaching some kind of agreement that would achieve a possible distribution of power between the two opponents, even if this entailed the division of the kingdom.⁷⁸ In any event, as stated, Wamba wanted nothing to do with this agreement and defeated the rebels after a magnificent military campaign.⁷⁹

During the trial that followed the triumph of King Wamba, the leaders of the uprising were tried in a session of the *Aula Regia*, chaired by the monarch. All were punished with the maximum penalties the law provided for in such cases – execution and confiscation of the properties of all involved.⁸⁰ Although ultimately the rebels had their lives spared, Wamba reserved a special punishment for Paulus and his companions: the *dux*, beard and head shaved (*decaluatus*), barefoot, and crowned with a strip of black leather, was paraded on a wagon pulled by camels through the streets of Toledo exposed to the populace.

⁷⁷ Iul. Tol. HWR. See also Martínez Pizarro 2005. The bibliography on the Paulus rebellion is extensive, e.g., inter alia Thompson 1985: 249–263; Diesner 1978; Teillet 1984: 585–636; Orlandis 1987: 236–243; García Moreno 1989: 170–176; Velázquez 1989; Larrea 1996: 136–140; Isla 2010: 25–44; Riess 2013: 189–220. For the conspirators, see García Moreno 1974a: no. 111 (Paulus), 18 (Argemundus); 117 (Ranosind); 79 (Hildigisius); 560 (Ranimir); 555 (Gumild); 84 (Ilderic).

⁷⁸ Paul. Epist. *In nomine Domini Flavius Paulus unctus rex orientalis Wambani regi austro*. It must not be understood that the rebellion was originally conceived as an attempt to make the province of Septimania independent, but that the letter was a desperate attempt made by the usurper Paulus with a view to reaching an agreement with King Wamba in the face of the more than foreseeable defeat of the rebels: Thompson 1985: 252; Orlandis 1987: 240.

⁷⁹ Iul. Tol. HWR 11–24.

⁸⁰ Iul. Tol. HWR 27; *Iudicium*, 7; Petit 2009: 6–9; Arce 2011: 154–157.

Behind Paulus, in a train of similar carriages, came the members of his former court, humiliated in rags and tattered habits,⁸¹ and exposed to the mockery of the Toledo crowd.⁸²

It is not difficult to notice the close similarity between the story of Paulus's rebellion and the unfortunate end of the uprising led by *dux* Argimundus a century earlier. The punishment is practically identical in both cases and it is not difficult to see in it a parody of the ancient Roman triumphs. Its public and exemplary character is very far from the expedited summary trials with which the simple palatial conspiracies used to be resolved, at least in the times before the 4th Council of Toledo, whose canon 75 determines the procedure to follow in cases affecting the great dignitaries of the kingdom. Actually, this point seems important when it comes to assessing the conspiracy of Argimundus, since, in clear contrast with the limited information John of Biclaro provides about the motivations and place of the conspiracy, he does describe in detail the punishment suffered by the *dux*, a highly unusual instance in his chronicle, as he usually limits himself to succinctly pointing out the historical news of the conspiracies and the consequent punishment of the guilty. In fact, the tragic end of Argimundus, exposed to the wrath of the populace of the royal town, is convincing proof that his rebellion should not be considered as a simple palace coup but as a genuine uprising which, like Paulus's, took place in one of the provinces of the kingdom. A significant rebellion that made it necessary to mount a military campaign against it and ultimately the triumphal parading of the defeated ringleaders which served as a lesson to the rebels as well as a warning to future would-be conspirators.⁸³

One can also mention other possible parallels in relation to both uprisings. In this sense we must call attention to Biclaro's reference to Reccared as *orthodoxus rex* ('Orthodox King'), and to the conspiracy of Argimundus as *impiam machinatione* ('Impious Plot'), and compare this to the situation presented by Julian of Toledo between Wamba *religiosus princeps* ('Sacred King') and Paulus *tyrannus* ('Usurper') and *rex perditionis* ('King of Doom').⁸⁴ That the attempted usurpation was considered a 'sacrilegious (impious) conspiracy' indicates not only the consecrated character of Reccared, but also emphasises the rupture of the sacred bond which necessarily – in the case of a member of the *Aula Regia* – joined the rebel with the king. Obviously, it is impossible to know what the link between Argimundus and Reccared was, i.e. an oath of fidelity, such as those that took place later in Visigothic Spain, or any other type common in the Germanic legal tradition (*Waffensohnschaft*, *Versippung*). However, as a member of the *Aula Regia*, and taking into account the afore-mentioned expression used by John of Biclaro, it seems that such a link actually existed and that it should adopt characteristics of *sacramentum*.

On the other hand, as has already been said, there are also some indications that could corroborate the fact that the *dux* Argimundus was a member of the Suevic nobility who had joined the Visigoth side. Earlier we have speculated that the onomastic suggests that he was a member or devotee of the former royal dynasty displaced by Audeca, which would reinforce the idea that Argimundus maintained some kind of personal relationship with Reccared in the light of what was seen previously in relation to Miro and Eboric and Leovigild. Even, as already indicated, it is plausible that Argimundus was one of the dukes in charge of subduing the Malaric rebellion in AD 586. It may certainly be strange

⁸¹ McCormick (1990: 307, n. 44) notes at this point that Gregory of Tours (HF V 38) reports that Prince Hermenegild, after his surrender, was also forced to take off his royal clothes and be dressed *ueste uile*. Barroso *et al.* 2008: 492.

⁸² Iul. Tol. HW 30: *Etenim quarto fere ab urbe regia miliario Paulus princeps tyrannidis uel ceteri incentores seditionum eius, decaluatis capitibus, abradis barbis pedibusque nudatis, subsqualentibus ueste uel habitu induti, camelorum uehiculis imponuntur. Rex ipse perditionis praeibat in capite, omni confusionis ignominia dignus et picea ex coreis laurea coronatus. Sequebatur deinde hunc regem suum longa deductione ordo suorum dispositus ministrorum, eisdem omnes quibus relatum est uehiculis insedentes eisdemque inlusionibus acti, hinc inde adstantibus populis, urbem intrantes.*

⁸³ These parades also had another added message: remembering the triumphal pomps of ancient Rome, the king wore a halo of prestige and power before his subjects: McCormick 1990: 393.

⁸⁴ Iul Tol. HWR: 9–11, 20 (where the opposition is made explicit), 22, 27, 30.



Figure 3. Map of the monetary finds of tremisses minted by Reccared. The triangles indicate coinage with a triumphal-type legend during the reign of Reccared (Emerita has not been included) (according to Faria 1988): 1) Totela; 2) Calabacia; 3) Bergancia; 4) Pincia; 5) Tornium; 6) Tude; 7) Luco.

that John of Biclaro is limited to saying that such dukes were Dukes of Leovigild, without giving any additional information, unlike what was seen with Claudius of Lusitania and the rebellion of Granista and Wildigern in Narbonne (see footnote 8). If true, it is very possible that Argimundus was in charge of the government of the province with an express mandate to pacify it, because we know that, apart from his *cubicularius* position, he also held that of *dux provinciae* and that the rebellion took place at the beginning of Reccared's reign, shortly after the 3rd Council meeting (AD 589). In this sense, and although unfortunately it is once again impossible to determine this extreme, Argimundus' intention might not have been the usurpation of the Toledo throne but the restoration of the Suevic kingdom, the territory from where the duke should have had his major support (although both options might occur consecutively, as we have seen in the case of Paulus), hence the omission by John of Biclaro of the name of the location where the uprising took place. If all these indications are true, the *modus operandi* followed by Argimundus in Gallaecia and *dux* Paulus in Septimania would be practically identical. The only certainty is that at the time of the rebellion it should have cantoned an important part of the

Visigoth army in Gallaecia, since only in this way can it be explained why Segga, the main leader of the conspiracy of AD 587, was sent to this province after being convicted.⁸⁵

As we have already said, this interpretation of the events finds its archaeological support in the distribution of treasures in the southern part of Gallaecia and the appearance of coin issues with triumphant legends dated in the reign of Reccared, phenomena that led A.M. de Faria to relate them to a military campaign carried out by the king over the territory of the former Suevic kingdom on the occasion of the uprising of *dux* Argimundus.⁸⁶ In fact, all this is better understood if we consider that the VICTOR/VICTORIA legends of the *tremisses* coined by King Reccared are the triumphant reverse of the *pompa triumphalis* parody with which Argimundus and his clique were presented to the citizens of the *regia urbs*. Actually, this triumphant-legend coinage must be associated not only with issues related to war propaganda and the needs of the campaign, but also to the celebrations that took place in the cities where the money was issued after the military triumph.⁸⁷

Obviously, this recreation of the facts supports a critical reading of the sources of the moment, as well as the idea that they transmit from a peaceful integration of the Suevic kingdom into the structures of the Visigothic kingdom of Toledo. It does not seem, however, that such integration was as peaceful and orderly as our chronicles claim, and, on the contrary, everything points to the fact that the incorporation of Gallaecia became a serious matter of state whose solution required several stages:

- A first phase of blocking the Suevic territorial expansion that ends with the submission and conquest of the kingdom of Sueves (AD 573–585).
- A second phase of conquest with Leovigild, which would correspond to the period between AD 585 (conquest of the Suevic kingdom) and AD 589 (3rd Council of Toledo), of relative military success and resounding religious failure due to the conversion of the Goths after the death of the king.
- A third phase of military submission that would last from the reign of Reccared (AD 586–601) to at least those of Sisebut (AD 612–621) and Suinthila (AD 621–631). It is possible that during this phase family ties were strengthened between Suevic and Gothic nobles.
- A fourth and final phase of provincial reorganisation carried out in the reigns of Reccesvinth (AD 653–672) and Wamba (AD 672–680), in which, in addition to diminishing the former Suevic territorial domain, the occupation of military offices was carried out by the Gothic aristocracy linked by family ties with the court of Toledo.

⁸⁵ Beltrán 1989: 74. With this decision King Reccared imitated his father's dealings with Hermenegild, who, as will be recalled, was first sent to Valentia and then to Tarraco following in the footsteps of the Visigoth army in his demonstration of strength against Byzantines and Franks: Iohan. Bicl Chron. a. 584.3 and 585.3.

⁸⁶ Faria 1988. The currencies in question correspond to a series of Reccared mints associated with various seals of the Lusitania and Gallaecia, with the legend VICTOR/VECTOR, VICTORIA: EMERITA VICTOR, TOTELA VECTOR (Tutela, near Viseo), BERGANCIA VICTOR (Brigantium, Braganza), CALABACIA VICTOR (Calabor, Zamora), PINCIA VECTOR (Pincia, Viana de Bollo, Orense), TORNIO VICTORIA (Torroño, San Pedro de Burgeyra, Tuy), and VICTORIA IN TUDE (Tuy). Miles 1952: nos. 33, 38, 45, 48, 69, 74, 75. The minting of Merida (Miles 1952: no. 93) has been related to the conspiracy of Segga: McCormick 1986: 304, 318. Above all, this issue, and in relation to the Gallaecia, what López Sánchez (2009: 180f.) states is interesting, although this author assumes that these broadcasts were related to campaigns against the Ruccones and not strictly with the submission of the old kingdom of Sueves.

⁸⁷ McCormick 1990: 302–323.

Gallaecia during the Visigothic Kingdom of Toledo: From Submission to Conquest

As John of Biclaro describes in a laconic expression, the old kingdom and the royal treasury of the Suevi were incorporated into the realm of Leovigild. Gallaecia thus became a province of the Visigothic kingdom of Toledo.⁸⁸ Although the existence of the Suevic kingdom had existed with complete independence for a century and a half, it is important to underline – due to the importance it will have in the subsequent justification of the Visigothic conquest – the fact that the settlement of the Sueves over Gallaecia and part of Lusitania had never been officially recognised by the Empire’s authorities. This marked a substantial difference with respect to what had happened with the Goths, whose dominion over Hispania was based on a *foedus* theoretically signed between the Gothic king and the Emperor. Quite conversely, the Suevic settlement had been carried out by events on the ground and could only be reached thanks to a peace agreement signed between provincials and Barbarians and partially ratified later by the imperial authority.⁸⁹ As we say, this point deserves to be emphasised because when, following the conquests of Leovigild and the conversion of Reccared, a true Hispano-Gothic nationalist historiography emerges, the old *Sueuorum regnum* – like other peninsular territories, e.g. Byzantine *Spania*, the Orospeña region, etc. – will be seen as an historical anomaly whose position could be none other than reintegration within the body of the Gothic nation. In the eyes of chroniclers such as John of Biclaro or Isidore of Seville, for whom Gothic rule over the whole of Hispania was based on the legitimacy granted by the *foedus* with the Empire, the conquest of the Suevic kingdom carried out by King Leovigild was more than justified as the ancient Roman province was being restored to its original limits, which, following the nuptial simile used by Saint Isidore in his famous *Laus Hispaniae*, had been given as a dowry to the Goths by Rome itself:

‘Of all lands which stretch from the West to India, you are the most beautiful, O Spain, sacred and ever-blessed mother of leaders and of nations. By right you are now queen of all the provinces, from whom not only the West but also the East obtains its light. You are the glory and ornament of the world, the most illustrious part of the earth, in which the glorious fecundity of the Getic people rejoices much and abundantly flourishes... Thus rightly did golden Rome, the head of nations, once desire you, and although the same Romulaean virtue, first victorious, betrothed you to itself, at last, nevertheless, the most flourishing nation of the Goths after many victories in the world eagerly captured and loved you, and enjoys you up to the present amid royal insignia and abundant wealth, secure in the felicity of empire.’⁹⁰

Omnium terrarum, quaequae sunt ab occiduo usque ad Indos, pulcherrima es, o sacra semperque felix principum gentiumque mater Spania: iure tu nunc omnium regina provinciarum, a qua non occasus tantum, sed etiam oriens lumina mutuat: tu decus atque ornamentum orbis, inlustrior portio terrae, in qua gaudet multum ac largiter floret... iure itaque te iam pridem aurea Roma caput gentium concupivit et licet te sibimet eadem Romulea virtus primum victrix desponderit, denuo tamen Gothorum florentissima gens post multiples in orbe victorias certatim rapuit et amavit, fruiturque hactenus inter regias infulas et opes largas imperii felicitate securo. Geticae gentis gloriosa fecunditas. (Isid. Hisp. De laude Spaniae).

⁸⁸ Iohan. Biclaro. Chron. a. 585.2: *Leouegildus rex Gallaecias uastat... Sueuorum gentem, thesaurum et patriam in suam redigit potestatem et Gothorum prouinciam facit.*

⁸⁹ Hydat. Chron. 248: *Aunonenses pacem cum rege faciunt Sueuorum, que et Lusitaniae et conuentus Asturicensis quaedam loca praedantes inuadunt.* 251: *Lusidius per Remismundem cum suis hominibus Sueuis ad imperatorem in legatione dirigitur;* Gibert 1956: 29–36. The Aunonenses are related to Aunone, one of the parishes belonging to the diocese of Tuy. On this episode, see Quiroga and Lovelle 1995–1996: 435f.

⁹⁰ Donini and Ford 1970: 1f.

On the other hand, the influence of the tremendously negative and catastrophic vision of the Suevic settlement presented by Hydatius on later Visigothic historiography must also be taken into account. This historiographic tradition, represented by writers like John of Biclaro and Isidore of Seville, put forward a negative vision that undoubtedly influenced the impossibility of a rebirth of Suevic sovereignty. From this legitimistic perspective, with the succession of military conquests made by Leovigild, the Goths would simply have restored Hispania to its genuine territorial limits. Hence expressions such as those used in John of Biclaro (Chron. A. 569.4: *et province Gothorum quae iam pro rebellione diuersorum fuerat diminuta, mirabiliter ad pristinos reuocat terms*), or Isidore to summarise the reign of King Leovigild (HG 50: *Spania magna ex parte potitus: nam antea gens Gothorum angustis finibus artabatur*), or the full territorial restitution of Suintila (HG 62: *totius Spaniae intra oceani fretum monarchiam regni primus idem potitus, quod nulli retro principum est conlatum*). As mentioned earlier, this Hispano-Gothic nationalist sentiment reaches its culmination in the celebrated *De laude Spaniae*, with which, as one of the leitmotifs of his work, Saint Isidore began his chronicle.⁹¹

All this is accurate from a legalistic view of the problem, and evidently it was true with regard to the political theory that emanated from the Visigothic royal chancery, which justified the political strategy of the kings of Toledo. In practice, however, things had to happen in a very different way as the conquest of Gallaecia was not a simple military takeover. At least this can be deduced from an analysis of the historical and archaeological data. In fact, the news of the usurpation of Malaric must be combined with other facts that provide an image more in line with reality, such as the scattered finds of currency concealments in southern Gallaecia and the typology of some of the *tremisses* with triumphant legends coined in different mints of Gallaecia and northern Lusitania, as well as some isolated literary references of campaigns against the Astures and Ruccones. Joining all this evidence, the image of a complete pacification of the ancient Suevic kingdom, which contemporary chronicles reflect, seems to crumble completely. Numismatics also confirms the existence of military campaigns in the region during the reigns of Leovigild (BRACARA, PORTOCALÉ), Reccared I (CALABACIA, PINCIA, TORNIO, BERGANCIA), Witteric (TUDE),⁹² Sisebut (LVCVS), and Suintila (LVCVS), i.e. throughout the first third of the 7th century AD.⁹³ As for the reign of King Sisenand (AD 631–636), we have no further data on new triumphant coinage in the area (Figure 4).

From the literary references to which we alluded before it can be deduced that, prior to the conquest of the Suevic kingdom, Leovigild's political-military strategy was oriented towards achieving territorial isolation of the Suevi and preventing the support of the Merovingian and Byzantine armies.⁹⁴ It was originally possible that this strategy was imposed more by circumstances than as a plan decided beforehand, since the first movement in this complicated game was forced by Miro and not by Leovigild (or at least this is reflected in Biclaro's chronicle, which is, we repeat, our only source of the events). Indeed, John of Biclaro reports that in AD 572 the Suevic king moved a war against the Ruccones.⁹⁵ It is important

⁹¹ On the identification of the old province of Hispania with the *Gothorum regnum* and its importance in the birth of the idea of Spain: Maravall 1954; Teillet: 1984; García Moreno 2005; Martin 2003; Bronisch 2006; Besga 2007b; del Castillo and Montenegro 2009. On the providentialism of Hydatius, see Bodelón 1996.

⁹² Known for a single coin with the legend TVDE GLORIA and preserved in the Bode Museum in Berlin: Pliego 2012: 85, fig. 12; 96, 100. It is necessary to take into account the connection in the Visigothic period of the phenomenon of currency with military activity, which, although it does not explain all production, must not be completely ruled out: Gil Farrés 1955; Barbero and Vigil 1974: 114–117; García Moreno 1974b: 63f.; López Sánchez 2009. For a critical stance, see Metcalf 1988: 19f.; Isla 2010: 101f.

⁹³ Miles 1952: 125–146; López Sánchez 2009: 181; Pliego 2012: 78.

⁹⁴ The fact that the conversion of the Suevi to Catholicism, by the evangelising action of Saint Martin of Dume, was supported by the influence of the Merovingians and Byzantines, i.e. the enemy powers of the Visigothic kingdom, deserves to be emphasised. Saint Martin himself was of Eastern origin and the cult of Saint Martin of Tours seems to have had a great influence over the conversion of the Suevi to Catholicism. In addition, the sea route from Bordeaux to Galicia via the Cantabrian coast remained uninterrupted at this time: García Moreno 1990: 304.

⁹⁵ Iohan. Bicl. Chron. a. 572.3: *Miro Sueuorum rex bellum contra Runcones mouet*.

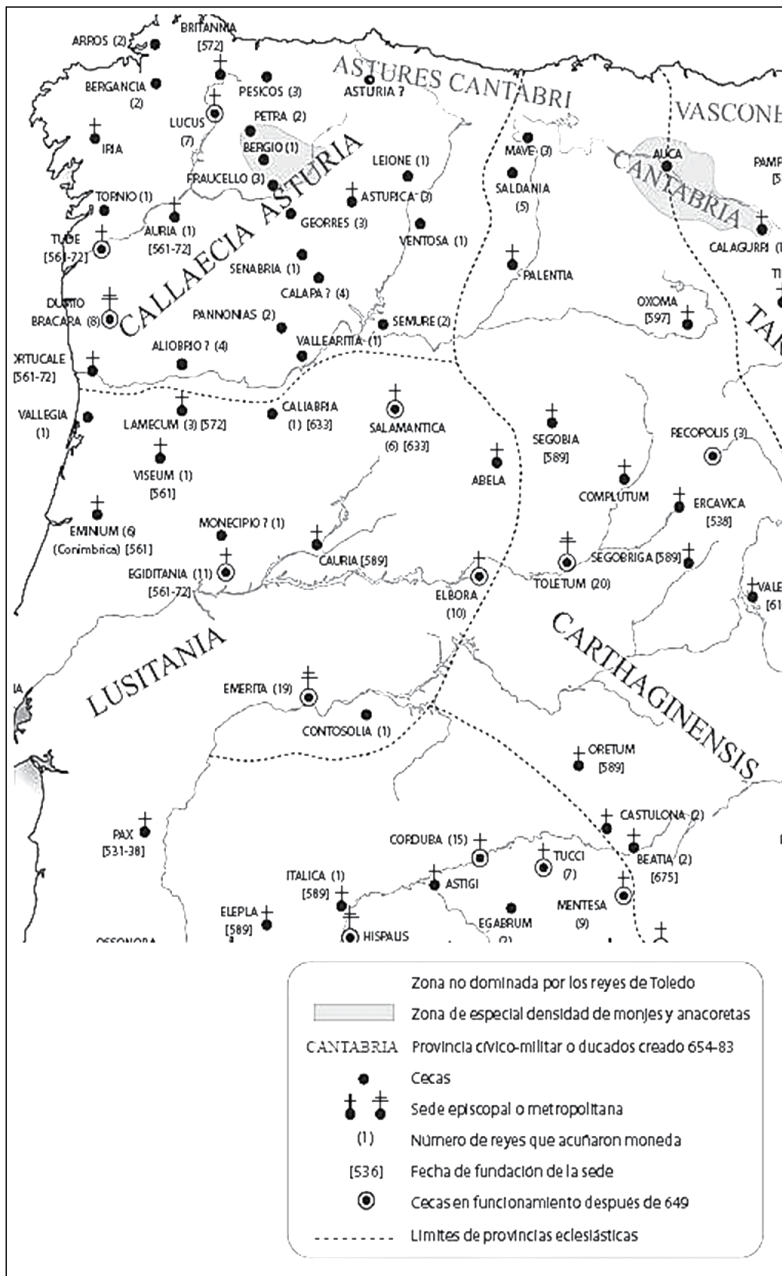


Figure 4. Mints and Bishoprics of Gallaecia and northern Lusitania

inhabited the central region of Asturias, in a zone that ran from the coast of Gijón to the interior, east of the course of the Sella.⁹⁹ This is based on criteria linked to similarity of names and phonetic evolution (confusion of the liquid consonants *l* and *r*, a very common and widespread phenomenon in the peninsula, and passing from a consonant to an approximant). However, the actual situation of the territory of the Ruccones remains unknown, because, as we will see below, the scarce data we do have seem to be contradictory.

to analyse the location of the territory of these mysterious Ruccones as it has the greatest interest for our study.

The situation of the territory occupied by the people of the Ruccones has been the subject of discussion and controversy in past times that have not yet been settled. This is mainly due to the confusion the problem has with the Basque-Cantabrian dispute, and, to a large extent, to the prestige of Father Flórez, who for a long time chose to identify this town with the Basques and Aragonese (i.e. Roncaleses).⁹⁶ Similar opinions were also supported by various authors, such as F. Dahn and L. Schmidt, who came to place the Ruccones/Runcones in Cantabria, or C. Torres, who took them to the lands of La Rioja or Roncesvalles.⁹⁷ Solana Sáinz, meanwhile, located them around the city of Arunci (Pliny NH 3 14) or Arucci (Itin. Ant. 427.2; Rav. 4 45 317; Ptol. 2 4 11), within a context of expansion from the Suevic kingdom to the southern lands.⁹⁸ Today, however, most authors prefer to identify the Ruccones/Runcones of the Visigothic writers with the Luggoni, a people that

⁹⁶ Flórez 1786: 204–206; Cortés y López 1836: 311.

⁹⁷ Dahn 577; Schmidt 1910: 230; Torres 1959: 181–185; Thompson 1985: 186.

⁹⁸ Solana 1985: 109f.

⁹⁹ Alarcos 1962; Diego Santos 1979a; 1979b; Arnau 1988; García Moreno 2008b: 55f.



Figure 5. Oviedo. Museo Arqueológico de Asturias. Epigraph from the Roman era alluding to the [Cohors/Ala] Asturum et Luggonum (photo: Jordá, after García Bellido 1961).

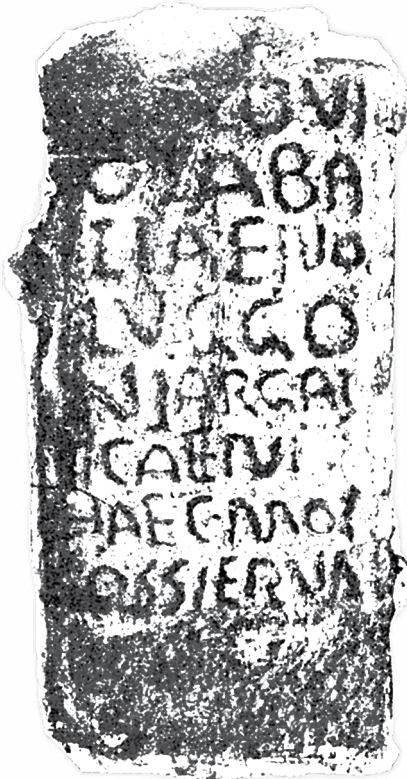


Figure 6. Grases (Villaviciosa, Asturias). Inscription dedicated to (...) OVIO TABALIENO. (Photo: Diego Santos, after González and Illorum and the Luggonum ciutas, B) León. Museo Arqueológico (according Marco- 2009)

The Greek geographer Ptolemy quotes the Luggones as Λούγγονες/Λούγονες and grants them the city of Παιλοντιον/Πελόντιον (2 6 32), generally identified with Beloncio, in the *concejo* or district of Piloña (Asturias). In the same way, we know that in the central area of Asturias there was the city of Lucus Asturum, also mentioned by Ptolemy (2 6 29), and that in this area of the Principado there are also documented two place names apparently associated with this town (Lugones and Lugo de Llanera).¹⁰⁰ Apart from these geographical and topographic data there are two old inscriptions that have also been placed in relation to the afore-mentioned peoples. The first is of unknown origin and is currently preserved in the Archaeological Museum of Oviedo. This inscription mentions Astures and Lugonnes as differentiated *populus*: ASTURU (M) ET / LUGGONU (M).¹⁰¹ The reference to Luggones not as a simple *gens*, but as a *populus* of similar rank to Astures, but differentiated from them, has made scholars think of a people of great internal cohesion, which would explain the subsequent mentions of John of Biclaro and Saint Isidore in relation to the Ruccones (Figure 5).¹⁰²

The second inscription comes from the parish church of Grases (Villaviciosa, Asturias) and is dedicated to an indigenous divinity (Tabalieno) by the *Arganticaeni*, an ethnonym that would correspond to a Luggoni *gens*: [...] OVI/O TABALIENO/LUGGONI NI ARGAN/TICAENI/HAEC MON/POSSIERUNT.¹⁰³ The Tabalieno epithet that appears accompanying the theonym should be a topographical indication similar to others known in relation to assimilated indigenous or Roman deities, i.e. Evendutonio, Barciaeco or Candamius, although in this case no concrete proposals are known of the exact place to which it refers (Figure 6).¹⁰⁴

¹⁰⁰ Alarcos 1962: 31, who also points out the possibility of Peloncio=Beluenzu, in the foothills of the Sierra del Sueve; Diego Santos 1979a: 319f.; Arnau 1988: 137–141.

¹⁰¹ Diego Santos 1959: 163, no. 62.

¹⁰² Arnau 1988: 140.

¹⁰³ Diego Santos 1959: 45 No. 11; González and Marco 2009: 66–68; Santos Yanguas 2014: 241.

¹⁰⁴ Alarcos 1962: 33f. This author ventures, without much conviction, the site of Tavalles (San Emeterio de Bimenes).

In spite of all the interpretations and the records gathered here, the problem of the identification of the territory and ethnicity of the Luggones is far from being completely solved, as they all contradict other, more reliable, data. A. García y Bellido, when studying the *termini augustalis* ('milestones') of the *Cohors III Gallorum*, concluded that the Luggones cited by Ptolemy could not in any case be reduced to the *Luggoni* of Asturias as the first belonged to the Astures *augustani* while the second would be *transmontani*.¹⁰⁵ For this reason, García Moreno assumed that the Luggones would have extended their domains beyond the Cantabrian mountain range, following transhumance cattle routes towards the region of La Bañeza, and that they were in a process of ethnogenesis when they were attacked by King Miro.¹⁰⁶ Although this solution could perfectly well be applied to the Visigothic period, however, in our opinion, it is far from being entirely satisfactory as the description of the Greek geographer logically refers to his time and is otherwise coincident with the *termini augustalis* of the *Cohors III Gallorum* (Figures 7-8).



Figure 7. *Terminus Augustalis* of the *Cohors III Gallorum* and the *Luggonum ciuitas*. León. Museo Arqueológico (after García and Bellido, 1963).



Figure 8. *Terminus Augustalis* between *Cohors III Gallorum* and *Ciuitas Beduniensium*. León. Museo Arqueológico (after García and Bellido, 1963).

Thus, from the records provided by Ptolemy and the *termini augustalis* of *Cohors III Gallorum*, García y Bellido deduced that the Luggones should be located in the vicinity of Βεδουνία/Bedunia (2 6 30). The Antonine Itinerary (439 7) places Bedunia twenty miles from Asturica Augusta, on the road to

¹⁰⁵ García Bellido 1961: 159f.; 1963: 20–22; Albertos 1975: 46. Olivares (2010: 122) tries to find a solution by proposing a massive displacement of the northern population by the Romans after the conquest.

¹⁰⁶ García Moreno 2008b: 56.

Caesaraugusta, while the so-called *Itinerario de Barro* (III 1) places it just seven miles south of this city and on the road that goes thence to Salmantica. Comparing these data with the *termini augustalis*, García y Bellido proposed that Bedunia should be confined to an area around Riego de la Vega (León), within the territory of the Astures *augustani*.¹⁰⁷ As regards the *ciuitas Luggones*, the other city cited in the *terminus*, the author nevertheless showed his perplexity, since it was impossible to place it in the Astures *transmontani*, thus he noted that Pelontion (2 6 29) should also be sought somewhere south of Asturica Augusta.¹⁰⁸ Undoubtedly this Pelontion must be identified with the *Palentina ciuitas* cited by Hydatius as one of the cities sacked by the Goths of Theodoric II in AD 457.¹⁰⁹ The context of the appointment of Hydatius proves undoubtedly that this city was in eastern Gallaecia, south of the Cantabrian mountain range, and not far from Asturica and *Coviacense castrum* (currently Valencia de Don Juan). And following the most probable itinerary made by Theodoric's troops before their return to Gaul, we can speculate that *ciuitas Palentina* of Hydatius and Pelontion of Ptolemy should be somewhere near La Bañeza, probably Palacios de Valduerna, a place name that could get linked with Palantia.¹¹⁰ According to this reading, after the battle at the Órbigo River, the Goths of Theodoric would have been directed south from Asturica to Palantia, and from this point east to Coyanza, reaching later their return route to Gaul. If we accept the identifications of Bedunia with Riego de la Vega and Pelontion with Palacios de Valduerna, or with a place close to this village, it seems logical to assume that the unknown *ciuitas Luggonum* should be translated, by phonetic derivation, to Luyego de Somoza, in the limits of the region of La Maragatería with El Bierzo, not far from the mythical Mount Teleno and the gold deposits of the Duerna basin.¹¹¹

In view of these assumptions, we must reconsider the duplications of the places on either side of the Cantabrian mountain range, as we believe it to be a distorted image of the indigenous reality associated with the administrative changes in operation during the Roman conquest. In our opinion, and as with its Astures neighbours, the classical Luggones had to occupy a wide geographical space that would be located on both sides of the Cantabrian mountain range, west of Asturias, i.e. they would inhabit the entire territory from Bierzo-Maragatería to the coast of Gijón-Villaviciosa. This puts them at a level with the Astures, and hence they appear cited in the Museum of Oviedo inscription as a *populus* with the same rank, probably within a context that alluded to a body of auxiliary troops composed entirely by Astures and Luggones.¹¹² Like their neighbours, the Luggones would have been divided by the Roman administration into *augustani* and *transmontani*, depending on their situation on either side of the Cantabrian mountain range.

Accepting, then, this premise, we think that the Arganticaeni in the Grases epigraph makes reference not to the Luggones *transmontani*, but specifically to an *augustani gens* of this *populus*. In fact, we believe that the name of the Arganticaeni *gens* is related to the current village of Arganza<**Argantia* (located c. 5 km

¹⁰⁷ García Bellido 1961: 159f.; 1963: 20–22.

¹⁰⁸ García Bellido 1961: 160; 1963: 22.

¹⁰⁹ Hydat. Chron. 186: *Palentina civitas simili quo Asturica, per Gothos perit exitio. Unum Coviacense castrum tricesimo de Asturica milliario a Gothis diutino certamine fatigatum, auxilio Dei, hostibus et obsistit et praevallet: quam plurimis ex eorum manu interfectis, reliqui revertuntur ad Gallias.*

¹¹⁰ For this type of place name, we assume that it does not correspond to the material reality of the habitat (e.g. Palacio de San Pedro, Soria), an evolution from Palantia by cultism: Barroso and Morín 2014: 30. Similar toponyms are cited in the *Parrochiale Suevum*: Palantucio (Bracarense, PS I. 27); Palentiaca (Portucalense, PS II. 25). Other place names in the area refer to the same origin: Pantiñobre (<* Palantino+briga), Palantenses (ethnonym CC), Palantico (teonymous, dat. CC). It is believed that they all derive from the root **pals* ('rock', 'boulder') or *pala* ('guardian'), although Leite de Vasconcelos supposed a medieval origin from *palatium*> port. *paço*, gal. *pazo*. Moralejo Álvarez prefers, for his part, the term *palatio* ('pen') of pre-Roman origin (Búa 2007: 21–23).

¹¹¹ García Bellido 1962: 18–20. The relationship of this place name to the cult of Lug had already been raised by García Martínez (1992: 16f.). Nearby was found the famous inscription dedicated to Zeus Serapios of Quintanilla de Somoza.

¹¹² García Bellido 1961: 145; 1963: 21.



Figure 9. Madrid, Museo Arqueológico Nacional. Silver plate with MARTI/TILENO inscription. Quintana del Marco (La Bañeza, León) (photo: MAN/Raúl Fernández Ruiz).

north of Cacabelos, province of León), from a normal derivation of the consonant group *nt'c* to *z*. This reduction certainly fits better than Argandenes (Piloña, Asturias), a toponym proposed by Alarcos Llorach.¹¹³ In our opinion, the place name would derive from IE **arg-* 'white', 'bright' (cf. AI *arget* 'silver') and logically refers to its richness of gold. This same root would carry another Asturian community documented in the area if we accept as valid the interpretation of an epigraph found in Cacabelos, where some *Argaeli* different from its uxamenses homonyms are alluded to.¹¹⁴ In this case, if the equation Arganticaeni=inhabitants of **Argantia*/Arganza is accepted, the best candidate for the topographical milestone referred to by the strange epithet Tabalieno would be none other than Mount Teleno, an important elevation located c. 40 km south of Arganza, and whose altitude (2183 m) would make it an imposing visual reference, in addition to a true natural *trifinium*, for the regions of Bierzo, Maragatería, and Cabrera.¹¹⁵ Mount Teleno had, from remotest antiquity, an outstanding sacred character for the inhabitants of the surrounding regions, as evidenced by numerous Bronze Age petroglyphs found in the surrounding area. And that character remained intact even with the arrival of the Romans in the area. A silver foil found in Quintana del Marco (León) with a votive inscription dedicated to *Marti Tilenno* demonstrates that an indigenous divinity assimilated to the god Mars was worshipped on that mountain (Figure 9).

The very fact of the dedication of Quintana del Marco is truly significant, as it is the only testimony of this kind in all of Europe that links the god Mars with a great mountain.¹¹⁶

Unfortunately, the deity to whom the Arganticaeni dedicated their monument is unknown – the Quintana del Marco inscription does not retain its initial letters – although it is very likely that it was Lug (*Lucouio*/*Lugouio*), one of the main gods of the Celtic pantheon, or Jupiter himself (*Iouio*).¹¹⁷ Between Celts, Lug appears generally to be well associated with Mercury, according to the traditional *interpretatio* made by Caesar (BG 6 17), or Apollo, a god with whom Lug presents numerous analogies, but never, as far as we know, to Mars.¹¹⁸ However, when assessing the Quintana del Marco inscription, two facts must be kept in mind: on the one hand the 'indigenous Mars' (*Cosus*, *Bandua*) did not have a very defined character, but, in view of its functional plurality, appears associated to several gods, and very uniquely to Jupiter and Mars.¹¹⁹ On the other hand, it should be borne in mind that, in its character as a wolf god and

¹¹³ Alarcos Llorach (1962: 33) supposed a reduction of the consonant group *nt'c* to *d* instead of the most usual one, i.e. *z*, as seen, e.g. with Bragança<Brigantia. The relation of place names between the Bierzo and the western part of Asturias, with repetitions of many of them on both sides of the Cantabrian mountain range (Bodelón 1986), reinforces the idea of an ethnic and cultural community between both zones, surely reinforced throughout history due to the existence of livestock links.

¹¹⁴ González and Ramírez 2010. Interestingly, c. 12 km north of Arganza there is a population called Berlanga del Bierzo, a place name that is repeated (with almost the same distance) for Berlanga de Duero and Osma, the former Uxama Argaela.

¹¹⁵ We assume for this a hypothetical evolution of the Tabalieno>**Talieno*>Teleno, with the logical loss of the intervocalic *b* and a reduction of the *ie>e* group. Less likely, but also possible, there could be a Tabaliano>**Tablieno*>Teleno evolution, due to syncope and *bl>l*, a phenomenon common to Spanish and Portuguese (Torreblanca 1990: 322), and which should also have occurred in the Leonese language.

¹¹⁶ Olivares 2002: 106. The local indigenous divinity assimilated to the warrior god of the Roman pantheon was *Cosus*, a deity for whom many votive inscriptions are preserved in the region of Bierzo: Olivares 2002: 67f., 157–160.

¹¹⁷ Olivares 2002: 99f.

¹¹⁸ Olivares 2002: 99f.

¹¹⁹ López Monteagudo 1989.

underworld deity, Mars was considered in ancient times as a god assimilable with Apollo and, therefore, it is not impossible that at times it might also be assimilated with Lug among the Celtic populations in the early Roman phase.¹²⁰ There is even a simpler and, therefore, more likely possibility: that mount Teleno was considered a kind of abode of the gods, rather in the style of Graeco-Roman Olympus, and that not only Cosus/Mars was worshiped on it, but also the main divinities of the indigenous pantheon. In this sense, it might be of interest to comment on a highly illustrative passage from the life of Saint Valerius of Bierzo.

Indeed, it is known that the eremite erected his oratory '*inter Asturiensis urbis et castris petrensis confinio*'. Castro Petrensis is of uncertain location, although some authors place it around Manzanedo de Valdueza, corresponding to some point around the so-called Portillo de Pedroso.¹²¹ In any event, it seems clear that this *Petrensis castrum* should be identified with the *Petra* mint that coined for Kings Reccared I, Suinthila, Chintila, and Chindaswinth, and which the numismatics usually reduce to Piedrahita.¹²² According to the biography of the saint, the hermitage of Valerius at a place called Ebronanto, the property of the nobleman Riccimirus, a place that in turn was close to a certain hill where pagan cults had been celebrated in the past.¹²³ Although many passages of the monk's autobiography spoke of the model lives of the Holy Fathers of the Desert, and, therefore, are to be treated with some caution, this location as referenced, in particular, might be credible, as the name of the site where Valerius decided to erect his church has sacred overtones in Celtic culture. The first component of the name derives from celt. *eburo* ('yew') and the second can be translated from celt. *nanto* ('valley', 'river').¹²⁴

From this evidence (the location between Castro Petrensis and Astorga, i.e. the eastern part of the Gallaecia, and the mountain sacred to the pagans and related to the yew) we must place the hermitage of Valerius at some elevation in the Sierra del Teleno and therefore close to Luyego, a toponym we have already seen related to the Luggones and the cult of the pan-celtic god Lug. Actually, we believe that the *Castrum Petrensis* should be reduced to the Castro de la Corona de Corporales, also known as Castro de Pedrero (a name preserved in the Barrio de Pedrosa, located at the foot of the *castrum*), just 5 km southwest of Mount Teleno.¹²⁵ The Ebronanto site remains unknown, although its location could be postulated in El Llagarelo, on La Bajada de los Eros, an elevation located between Teleno and Teso Candaneo, where the remains of two old east-facing constructions can still be seen.¹²⁶ Specifically, a rectangular in plan building (11 m x 5.5 m) and another construction 13.5 m long are recognised, superimposed on one of the sources of the Llano de los Eros spring. The latter seems to have an attached structure. On the other hand, this interpretation would oblige us in turn to place in this area the famous

¹²⁰ For Apollo and Lug's relationship with wolves, see Olivares 2002: 207f.

¹²¹ Udaondo 1997: 228f.; Balboa 2003: 139–141. Some authors, e.g. Mañanes and Frighetto, take it further west, in Castropetre (Oencia), but as Balboa points out the texts suggest a more eastern point, closer to Astorga.

¹²² Miles 1952: 140; 328f., nos. 298–299 and 347, no. 342. We rely on the discovery in Villar de los Barrios (Ponferrada) of a Reccared I *tremis* and the parallel it shows with the Castro Ventosa mint: Barral 1975; Pliego 2012: 77, 87.

¹²³ Val. Ord. Querim. 4 3–4: *...et in supra memorato Petrensis Castro predio quae nuncupatur Ebronanto...* For Riccimirus: García Moreno 1974a: no. 124; Orlandis 1997: 157–159; Frighetto 1998: 466f. For a lucid analysis of Valerius' work and personality in relation to the 'Desert Fathers', see Collins 1986.

¹²⁴ Pensado 1983: 58f. It is worth remembering that Mons Medullius, one of the most resonant centres of the resistance of the Cantabrians and Asturians against Rome, ended with a collective and ritual suicide from yew poisoning: L.A. Florus, Epit. II 33: *Postremo fuit Medulli montis obsidio, quem perpetua quindecim milium fossa comprehensum undique simul adeunte Romano postquam extrema barbari uident, certatim igne, ferro [inter epulas] uenenoque, quod ibi uulgo ex arboribus taxeis exprimitur, praecepere mortem, seque pars maior a captiuitate, quae morte grauior ad id tempus indomitis uidebatur, uindicauerunt.*

¹²⁵ At the foot of the *castrum* of La Corona de Corporales, a former pre-Roman site with an enduring chronology at least until AD 100/120, and related to the exploitation of gold: Fernández-Posse and Sánchez Palencia 1988: 323; Esparza 2011: 13, 27.

¹²⁶ This last site would have maintained the place name from *Eburo* > *Euro* > *Ero* (cf. Pensado 1983: 58f.). The suffix *-nanto* (celt. 'Valley' or 'river') is appropriate for this place due to the abundance of water courses, since it is one of the seven streams that make up the headwaters of the Rubias stream, the main collector for the River Ería.

mons Medullius of the Cantabrian wars.¹²⁷ As already mentioned, this whole area was considered sacred from at least the Bronze Age. It should be remembered, on the other hand, that not far from Mount Teleno is the afore-mentioned Teso Candaneo, an oronym reminiscent of Jupiter Candamio venerated by Asturian peoples.¹²⁸

Returning again to our subject, it seems clear that we must identify the Ruccones/Runcones of the Visigothic literary sources with the Luggones/Lungones that inhabited the El Bierzo area in pre-Roman times. The region of El Bierzo is well defined by several mountainous systems (Sierras de los Ancares, Las Omañas, la Cabrera, Montes de León) and enjoyed a privileged strategic situation that controls access to Galicia from the Castilian-Leonese plateau, hence the allusions that these people appear precisely within the context of the campaigns of dominance over Gallaecia. In addition, the mountainous image of the country coincides with the character that Saint Isidore gives us of the land of the Ruccones (HG 61). That hilly and wild character would also be justified from the literary point of view, since it would also have been the scene of one of the most famous episodes of the Cantabrian wars. Note, in addition, how curiously the same sources retain the duality of names that reflect the variants of Ptolemy: Ruccones/Runcones and Luggones/Lungones.

Apart from the strategic position in relation to controlling the border between the Visigothic and the Suevic kingdoms, there was another important factor that undoubtedly made the El Bierzo region a very desirable target: the abundance of gold. The mining wealth of the region, widely exploited in its time by the Romans, was still standing in the 6th – 7th centuries AD. This can be deduced from the large amount of monetary mints documented in Gallaecia and northern Lusitania (especially in proportion to the rest of the peninsular), which is difficult to explain by other reasons.

Once the home of the Ruccones has been located, we can return to the historical account and try to give coherence to the news transmitted by John of Biclaro and Isidore of Seville in terms of understanding how the events might have developed.

Undoubtedly, Miro's movement against the Ruccones was interpreted by Leovigild as a provocation and served as *casus belli* for a military expedition into the northwest. At least this seems to follow from the narrative of the events formulated by John of Biclaro. However it is possible that the events did not really happen in that order and that Miro's campaign was actually motivated by a previous Leovigild manoeuvre in the Asturica region, as El Bierzo was inside the territory theoretically controlled by the Sueves. We will see that this possibility is not without its appeal. In any event, one year after the attack undertaken by Miro against the Ruccones, Leovigild was forced to mobilise his troops to defend the kingdom's borders from a possible Suevic attack. For this reason Leovigild led his armies towards the Sabaria region, south of El Bierzo, with the clear intention of threatening two key cities of the Suevian domain – Bracara (Braga) and Porto. In the course of this new campaign, King Leovigild devastated the Sabaria region and subdued its inhabitants (Sappi). From this moment on, Sabaria became a new province of the Visigothic kingdom.¹²⁹ The location of the Sabaria as being in the lands fed by the Sabor river, north of Bragança, and Sanabria, south of the Sierra de la Cabrera, is practically unanimous among historians, not only because of the phonetic similarity with the toponym and the ethnonym,

¹²⁷ The situation of the famous *mons Medullius* is controversial and remains open to debate. Schulten (1920: 35f.; 1943: 145–148) placed it on the mountain of San Julián, near Tuy (Pontevedra). On the other hand, Bodelón (1987) and Fernández Vázquez (2003), put it a little further to the east, around the Sierra de La Lastra, in line with the etymology of the place name of Las Médulas. R. Syme had already assumed that it was somewhere in El Bierzo, an opinion not shared, however, by Fernández Ochoa, who places it on the upper reaches of the River Miño. See the discussion in Méndez 2001: 91–93.

¹²⁸ On this divinity: González 1956b; Santos Yanguas 2014: 241f. Teso Candanedo is 1712 m high and is located c. 4 km south of the Teleno, both mountains being clear visual references of the landscape.

¹²⁹ Iohan. Bicl. Chron. a. 573.5: *Leovegildus rex Sabariam ingressus Sappos uastat et prouinciam ipsam in suam redigit dicionem.*



Figure 10. San Millán de la Cogolla (La Rioja). Ark of San Millán. Emilianus prophesies the fall of Cantabria.

but also by the data provided by the itineraries. This toponym is reduced to the *mansio Sabarim* of the Antonine Itinerary and Ravennate.¹³⁰ It is a mountainous region inhabited by an ethnic group whom the literary sources call Sappi, living perhaps in a situation of practical autonomy with respect to the Suevic kingdom. The strategic importance of this border territory is based on the fact that it poses a clear threat on the Via XVIII (*Vía Nova*) and, therefore, against Bracara itself.

After the submission of Sabaria, the news becomes somewhat disconcerting. In AD 574, and somewhat surprisingly, Leovigild decides to leave this theatre of war and embark on an expedition against Cantabria (Figure 10). We do not know for sure what purpose this sudden change in objectives served. In principle, Leovigild's decision may be inconsistent with the story we have been proposing, and, in fact, it has served to strengthen in our investigation the idea that the territory of the Ruccones was located in Asturian lands, so that the campaign against the Ruccones was a continuation of the one carried out against the Cantabrians. In reality, as we will see below, we believe that the performance of the Visigothic monarch is part of a long-range strategy that is fully consistent with his decision to subdue the Suevic kingdom.¹³¹

It is already significant that after Miro's campaign against the Ruccones – an action that posed a clear threat to the Visigothic border – Leovigild did not decide to directly attack the Suevic king but was content to invade Sabaria, a territory located south of the Sierra de la Cabrera. It seems clear that Leovigild preferred to opt for a strategy of establishing a defensive line with a view to protecting Lusitania, while trying to reduce the small independent power nuclei that surrounded the Suevian

¹³⁰ Itin Ant. 434; Raven IV 45 6; Thompson 1985: 77f.; Díaz 1983: 85; García Moreno 1989: 117. See also García Moreno 2008b: 56–58, where the author rejects Solana's (1985: 110) claim to equate it with the *mansio ad Lippos*, north of the current Béjar (Salamanca). As we have seen before with the Ruccones, Solana errs in locating the scenarios of the Leovigild campaigns, which is located far to the south, and fits a policy aimed at curbing the Suevic advance towards Mérida.

¹³¹ We should remember here that this way of acting is not at all unusual and has its perfect parallel in the campaign carried out by Leovigild against the Vascones during the Hermenegild rebellion, a campaign considered as surprising by many researchers: Barroso *et al.* 2013.

kingdom one by one.¹³² In this way the Visigothic monarch managed to isolate Miro from possible allies while reducing his resources. In addition, as we have said, the region had a certain strategic interest as it controlled communications between Asturica and Bracara through the Via Nova. In other words, it is very possible that King Leovigild wanted to avoid at all costs a direct confrontation with the Sueves, since this could only cause more losses than gains, and he opted accordingly for a war of attrition with more limited objectives, but which, in the long run, meant a considerable loss of Suevian power. In this sense, Leovigild had an advantage over his enemies, since, unlike them, the royal treasury, guarded in Toledo, was not in any danger, allowing him a wide margin of action on the ground. In fact, throughout the numerous military campaigns he undertook during his reign Leovigild demonstrated great tactical intelligence, always repeating the same *modus operandi*: avoid direct attack and opt for successive conquests of places until the final strategic objective was achieved.¹³³

In this context of war of attrition and blockade, Leovigild's campaign over Cantabria can be explained by several reasons: either because the Cantabrians would have risen against the Goths, taking advantage of Miro's action on the Ruccones (even encouraged by the Sueves or Merovingians),¹³⁴ or that, aware of the danger posed by leaving an enemy behind him when attacking Gallaecia from Palentia, Leovigild would have finally chosen to reduce them before forcing obedience. This could also be interpreted as a warning against any attempted Merovingian attack, while, in this way, the expedition on Cantabria would have served as a distraction campaign that allowed threatening the Suevian rule over Asturica without raising excessive suspicions. Because what is clearly evident is that, once Cantabria submitted and its capital Amaya taken, the Goths had their hands free to finally begin their final manoeuvres against Gallaecia.¹³⁵

Thus, in AD 575, i.e. the year after his triumphant expedition over Cantabria, Leovigild began a new campaign in the Aregenses mountains. Again John of Biclaro informs that the king submitted the region to the Visigothic realm. The chronicler also reports that in the course of this campaign Leovigild made a certain *Aspidius* captive, a principal figure in the area (*senior loci*), along with his wife and children.¹³⁶ We know nothing more about this subject, which will not reappear in any other document of the period. We do not even know with any certitude his origin, although, due to his onomastic, he was possibly a great Hispano-Roman aristocrat who had achieved some control of the territory thanks to his personal prestige. Subjects like this are common in the chronicle of Hydatius, where they appear characterised as patrons of the Gallaecian cities once the *curiae* and collegiate power organisations inherited from the imperial era have disappeared. These are high-ranking individuals who somehow represent the Roman

¹³² The main places involved in this border strategy would be Asturica (on the Suevic part), and the Palantia-Emerita and Lisboa-Emerita axes (on the Visigoth part). On the Suevic-Gothic *limes*: García Moreno 1987: 334–336.

¹³³ We must keep in mind that the main issue in the survival of the barbarian kingdoms was the custody of the royal treasury. Once the treasury was lost the kingdom would unfailingly fall apart, hence the kings carried the royal treasure with them on their campaigns (cf. the cases of Amalaric in Greg. Tur. HF III 10 and Achila in Isid. Hisp. HG 45). This structural political weakness explains the relative weakness of Barbarian kingdoms and the speed with which they collapsed in the event of a military disaster, as the collapse of the Gothic kingdom in AD 711 perfectly shows. However, the stability achieved by Leovigild, thanks, first, to the collaboration of his brother Liuva, and his son Reccared, later, allowed him to successfully undertake his long series of military campaigns knowing that the royal treasury was not in danger.

¹³⁴ It is well known that in AD 580 King Miro sent, as part of the rebellion of Hermenegild, ambassadors to Guntramn and Byzantium as a move against Leovigild, and that this king destroyed the ships sailing between Galicia and Gaul (Greg. Tur. VIII 35). See Thompson 1985: 78, 104f.

¹³⁵ The conquest of Gallaecia took place on two fronts: Galicia and Septimania. The first under the direction of the king himself, while the second was entrusted to his son, Prince Reccared: Thompson 1985: 104f.

¹³⁶ Iohan. Bicl. Chron. a. 575.2: *Leovegildus rex Aregenses montes ingreditur, Aspidium loci seniore cum uxore et filiis captivos ducit opesque eius et loca in suam redigit potestatem*. Isid. HG 49: *Aregiam iste cepit, Sabaria ab eo omnis deuicta est* (extended version); *Subegit Aregenses, cepit Sabariam* (short version). García Moreno 1974a: no. 20.

heritage against the *plebs*, or popular groups who have their roots deep in the pre-Roman substrate.¹³⁷ In any event, the territorial domain of this Aspidius enjoyed certain autonomy and can be related to other similar examples arising from the decomposition of the imperial administration in Hispania and the need for a certain political-social arrangement of space outside state structures. C. Martín points out that it is impossible to know if this lord owned the *loca* or simply exercised effective power over them. In addition, Martín underlines the parallelism that this news presents with the preceding entry in John's chronicle which refers to the victory of Justinian *magister militum orientis* over Cosroes.¹³⁸ For his part, P.C. Díaz interprets it that Aspidius should be a great local lord, an ally of King Miro, who would act with complete independence in his domains, although the same author does not rule out that Aspidius could have accepted the sovereignty of the King of Sueves.¹³⁹

The question then arises as to whether Leovigild's campaign in the *Aregenses montes* was part of his policy of eradicating all autonomous powers that emerged on the peninsula after the fall of the empire – an interpretation that seems to have been deduced from the chronicles despite their concise nature and the fact that it is recorded just after the campaign against the Cantabrians and their Senate – or if, on the contrary, it is related to the submission policy of the Suevic kingdom. To elucidate this question, it is necessary first to solve the problem of the exact geographical location of this campaign, since to date no convincing answer to this problem has been found.

Since the time of A. Fernández Guerra, the *Aregenses montes* have been equated with the mountains of Orense (Galicia), based on a phonetic similarity, a reading that has been handed down in most studies up to the present time.¹⁴⁰ However, against the consensus of researchers is the opinion of L. García Moreno, who, based on the identification of *transmontani* with *Ruccones*, relates these events to the campaign against the Cantabrians.¹⁴¹ This reading has its logic, not only because many authors consider as plausible the identity of the *Ruccones* with *transmontani* *Luggones*, but also because John of Biclaro has his paragraph relating the campaign in the *Aregenses montes* just after the one recording the conquest of Cantabria. On the other hand, locating the region of the *Aregenses montes* in the territory of Orense also presents a serious anomaly that makes the said identification at least problematic: all the old references to the territory, or to the see of Orense (*Auriensis ciuitas*), invariably begin with the prefix *Au-*.¹⁴²

However, in our opinion there is an option that we believe should be taken into account when determining the location of this *Aregia* (Saint Isidoro) and these *Aregenses montes* (John of Biclaro), and which would put it in line with the strategy followed by Leovigild in relation to the Suevic kingdom.

¹³⁷ A phenomenon studied in Candelas 2001. The Code of King Euric (LV VIII.3.6) distinguished two types of free men: *maiores* (*honestiores*), *loci personae* and *inferior personae* (Thompson 1985: 158–160). LV IX.2.9 includes among these *maiores loci personae* the *duces*, *comites* and *gardingi*, although the law deals with the military ranks with greater precision was necessary. Thompson assumed that wealth was not enough in itself to be considered in this category, but that it was necessary to be *dux*, *comes* or *gardingus*. In a technical sense, a *maior persona* was the one who had a certain level of income (equal to or greater than 10,000 *solidi*) plus an honorary position: Thompson 1985: 291. Other laws (LV VIII.5.6, X.1.6 and X.3.5) speak of *senior loci* in reference to the local judges, landowners, and, simply, to the elders: King 1981: 208 n. 165; Orlandis 1987: 205.

¹³⁸ Martín 2003: 111. This parallel with the victory over the Persian king has its importance in the face of an assessment of the exaltation ideology of the reign of Leovigild that underlies the *Biclarensis* chronicle. The undefined term is based on LV VI.1.1.

¹³⁹ Díaz 1986–1987: 226; 2011: 203.

¹⁴⁰ Father M. Macías (1906: 78), following the Portuguese scholar Gomes de Lima Bezerra, proposed a relationship with the place name San Miguel de Auregos (Portugal), c. 25 km from Tuy; Fernández Guerra 1890: 325 (in Sierra Segundodera and Peña Trevinca); Thompson 1985: 78; García Moreno 1974a: 35 n. 2; 1989: 117f.; Torres 1977: 247; Díaz 1983: 84; 2011: 125; Collins 2005: 51.

¹⁴¹ García Moreno 1989: 116f.; 2008b: 72–74. Diego Santos 1979b: 26 had assumed the same location. As Díaz (2011: 190 n. 213) emphasises, this reduction presents more problems than it solves.

¹⁴² *Auregensium loca* (Hydat. 202); *Aurea/Auriensis* (Parroq. Suevo. IX 1–2), *Aurese* (coins) and *Auriensis* (councils). See García Moreno 2008b: 72, n. 162.

In principle we agree that, as García Moreno defends, the name that Visigothic chroniclers give to this territory makes any identification with the mountains of Orense/*Auria* impossible. But, as we have seen before, there is another identification that would allow this space to be located within the framework of the northwestern campaigns, in the border area, with the territory inhabited by the Ruccones: the Sierra de la Cabrera.¹⁴³ Taking into account the root *ar(e)g-* (present in Bercian place names close to this area, e.g. Arganza or Argenteiro, and the ethnonyms *Arganticaeni* and *Argali*), we can speculate about the origin of the place name *Aregia* as an allusion to the wealth of gold deposits that existed on the north slope of the mountain range of the Cabrera and in the Aquilian mountains. In fact, we think that the place name *Aregia* would have been preserved in the name *Eria*, a river that rises on the Teleno mountain and separates the foothills of the Sierra de la Cabrera and those of the Teleno, and whose name would ultimately derive from the riches offered by the precious metal.¹⁴⁴ Furthermore, while it is true that the events appear after the reference to the Cantabria campaign, it is no less true that it should be understood in relation to the following entries (the invasion of Gallaecia and King Miro's peace petition), and a campaign in the area of Asturias would not have posed a danger as immediate as to propose a ceasefire in conditions as humiliating as those accepted by the king of Sueves.

If our suggestion were to be true, and everything indicates that this is the case, Leovigild's campaign should be located in the Cabrera region, a region north of Sabaria (the valley of Sabor-Sanabria) and south of the domain of the Ruccones (El Bierzo), a territory that, in antiquity, had been the home of the Cabruagenigos, an ethnic group that would have given its name to the mountain range and Cabrera river. And, indeed, we know that in AD 576 the Visigothic king violated the borders with the Suevic kingdom, entering Gallaecia and ready to face the threat of King Miro.¹⁴⁵

Once the theatre of operations is set we can intuit how the campaign went. Thus it is very possible, although it is not said, that the Visigothic army moved in the direction of the very heart of the Suevian kingdom, through the existing corridor between the Sierras de Cabrera and Teleno which leads to *forum Gigurrorum* (El Barco de Valdeorras), i.e. going up the valleys of the *Ería* and Cabrera rivers to reach the *via XVIII (Via Nova)*. This would be the campaign against *Aregia* and the *Aregense* people. It is probable that, simultaneously, a second column was directed towards *castrum Bergidum* (Cacabelos). To our knowledge, the first part of the *Biclaensis* chronicle quote (*in Gallaecia Sueuorum fines conturbat*) must be understood in the sense that Leovigild would have entered the Bierzo lands formerly occupied by King Miro, understanding *Gallaecia fines* as the Ruccones domain (Figure 11).

This interpretation of the events is based, as we have just said, on two hypotheses: the identification of the *Aregenses* mountains with the region of La Cabrera, and the realities imposed by the terrain and the roads/paths of the time. The latter go through the areas of the Asturica-Lucus road, which crosses the Bierzo region, and the natural way that forms the Valdería or *Ería* valley (the natural corridor

¹⁴³ In reality the region of La Cabrera is the mountainous area south of El Bierzo and separated from it by the Aquilian mountains. However, both regions form practically the same geographical unit, well defined by large mountain ranges.

¹⁴⁴ We think of an evolution of the name with a loss of the intervocalic sound occlusive and reduction of the vowel group *-ei->-i-* in the form: *Aregia>*Areia>Aria>Ería*. Both the loss of the intervocalic *-g-* and the *gi* group with the semi-consonant *i* are documented features in the popular Latin of the Leonese area (i.e. *arientio<argento, reliosis<religiosis*): Menéndez Pidal 1979: 66. The intermediate form *Aria* is documented in texts from the first half of the 12th century AD compiled in the *Tumbo Viejo* of San Pedro de Montes: *'...in locum predictum villa que vocitant Tructas, discurrente fluvio nuncupatus Aria, subtus castello Cabrera...'*; *'...unam jugariam de bona hereditate in villa que vocitant Morales de Re, circa flumes de Aria...'* See Quintana 1971: 253, 321. The change of the *a-* to *e-* is possibly due to a confusion about the origin of the hydronym with the word *'era'* (*eiria* in Cabreirean dialect). For the gold wealth of the area: Matías 2006. The site could be identified with the mint of VALLEGIA if the reading suggested by P. Beltrán as VALLERIA is accepted. A single issue of Reccared is known in the Hispanic Society of America, HSA 16064. See Miles 1952: 145, Pl. VI 20. Miles considers the Beltrán reading to be perfectly viable, but rejects any identification with the mint of Vallearitia.

¹⁴⁵ Iohan. Bicl. Chron. a. 576. 3: *Leouegildus rex in Gallaecia Sueuorum fines conturbat et a rege Mirone per legatos rogatus pacem eis pro paruo tempore tribuit.*

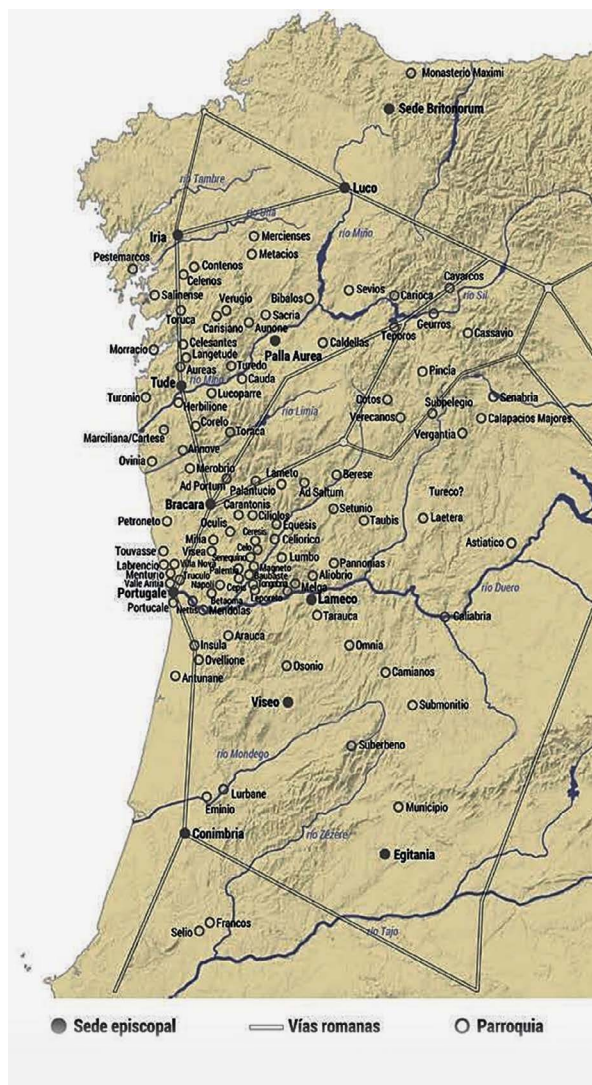


Figure 11. Ecclesiastical structure of Gallaecia in the second half of the 6th century AD from the *Parrochiale Sueuum* (after J. López Quiroga and M. Rodríguez Lovelle 1995–1996)

between Sierra de la Cabrera, the Teleno mountain range, and the Aquilian mountains), the route controlled by Aurese/Orense. However, García Moreno rejects this was the route followed by Leovigild, because for that it would have been necessary to conquer Asturica beforehand, something that literary sources, and especially the chronicle of Juan de Biclara, are completely silent about.¹⁴⁶

Certainly the absence of a reference to the conquest of Asturica is a serious inconvenience for the historical reconstruction here defended. But the silence of the sources can be interpreted in various ways. That King Leovigild did not subjugate Asturica by arms is incontestable, as the *Biclarenis* does not refer it, or otherwise he would have reported it without a doubt. But that *ex silentio* argument does not invalidate the *a fortiori* argument that only a patent threat would have succeeded in initiating a request for peace by King Miro, and even more so when this peace meant the recognition of humiliating conditions for the Suevic king, who in the practice became the vassal of Leovigild. And in our opinion this would only be feasible in two possible scenarios: an internal revolt (of which there is no record), or that the war went to the very heart of the Suevic realm and threatened to bring down the entire kingdom. In this sense, a campaign in distant Cantabria posed no serious threat to the Suevic power centres, not even to Lucus, far removed from that theatre of operations, and much less so for the cities of Bracara or Porto – main strongholds of Suevic power.

In summary, the logic of events imposes a Visigothic military deployment that goes from the important city of Palentia to the west, in fact the same route that we have seen the Theodoric II armies used in their confrontation with the Sueves a century earlier, culminating in the Visigothic occupation of El Bierzo and eastern Gallaecia (Sabaria and Aregia, i.e. Sanabria and La Cabrera). It is possible that, either because of the impossibility of taking Asturica by arms, or considering it unnecessary, the Visigothic king chose to bypass the city to take the direction to Pelontion (near La Bañeza, perhaps Palacios de Valduerna), while continuing his march from this point towards the interior of Gallaecia.¹⁴⁷

¹⁴⁶ García Moreno 2008b: 72, n. 169.

¹⁴⁷ Both options are possible, as we have already seen how the troops of Theodoric II were unable to take the Castro Coviacense, which did not prevent the return of the Gothic army to Gaul.

To carry out the campaign, Leovigild had to include the garrison he had left in Sabaria after the conquest of the region two years earlier (perhaps less, given the way John of Biclaro calculate the years), which could join the bulk of the army by way of Castrocontrigo (<castrum Guntherici), a strategic centre that controlled access to the La Cabrera region. From this place the Gothic army was able to advance in two columns to the west, once the barrier of the Aregense mountains was overcome, and the northwest, going into Bergidum (Cacabelos). In this way, Leovigild expedited his advance into Aureense and Lucus and would have been in an excellent position to give the final *coup de grâce* to the Suevic kingdom. With his main centres of power threatened (in the south, with the conquest of Sabaria, from where the Visigoths controlled Chaves and the via Nova to Bracara, and in the east, with the conquest of Aregia and Rucconia, which meant a serious risk for Aureense and Lucus), and aware of what was coming, King Miro wisely chose to seek a truce, even in clearly humiliating conditions. From this moment on the Suevic kingdom made its existence subject to the will of Leovigild, until its subsequent conquest and annexation almost ten years later.

It seems clear that peace with King Miro must have occurred at the cost of some territorial loss of the Suevian domain. In fact, we think from this time until the final Visigoth conquest, the Suevic kingdom must have lost a considerable part of the province of Asturia, which would then pass to the Goths. In this way, the Suevian kingdom would have been virtually reduced to the so-called 'Maritime Gallaecia'. According to this, the new frontier would be fixed along the Courel and Ancares mountains. i.e. the limits of present-day Galicia, keeping the regions of Porto and Bracara to the south, and Lucus to the north as central nuclei. This interpretation is based mainly on two facts: the first would be the victorious military campaigns carried out by Leovigild in the lands of Sabaria and Aregia, which concluded with the conquest of both territories; a series of land conquests that logically Leovigild would refuse to return to the king of Suevi.

The second argument is that at the 3rd Council of Toledo Asturica was not represented by an Arian bishop (only Talasius signed up to the Catholic side), which contrasts with what we know happened in other Gallaecian episcopal sees. The well-known absence of an Arian bishop for the see of Astorga is undoubtedly a singular situation with regard to the rest of the Galician dioceses, and in our opinion it could explain why Asturica would have been under the power of the Visigoths at a date before the final conquest of the kingdom of Suevi (AD 585) and after the celebration of the 2nd Council of Bracara (AD 572), in which the see was represented by its bishop, Polimius, as another see of the Suevic Church, hence Asturica did not have a military garrison of importance that required the presence of an Arian bishop.¹⁴⁸

On the other hand, there is no record of any campaign against Asturica during the reigns of Leovigild and Reccared, or after them. It seems to confirm that the delivery of the city to the Goths must have been a peaceful one. In fact, we will have to wait until the reign of Suinthila (AD 621–631) to have some new archaeological data from Astorga. We know that with this king came coin issues with the legend *Astorica*.¹⁴⁹ This can be argued against, however, as there are also two other series of *tremisses* coined in the *Asturie* mint corresponding to the reigns of Reccared I (one piece) and Chindaswinth (two pieces), traditionally considered as Astorga's own, but in reality they seem to refer to another unidentified

¹⁴⁸ The abjuration of Arianism was signed by the following bishops: Ugnas (Barcinona), Ubiligiscló (Valentia), Murila (Palentia), Sunila (Viseo), Gardingus (Tude), Bechila (Lucus), Argiovitus (Portucale), and Froisclus (Dertosa): Ramiro y Tejada 1850: 226f., 252–255; Vives 1963: 136–138. In some cases the Arian sees correspond to important places of the Gothic military machine (thus, i.e., Palentia, Valentia, or Barcinona), and in the case of Gallaecia the presence of Arian prelates must also be explained within the context of military occupation after the conquest of the Suevian kingdom. See Beltrán 1989, where he criticises the traditional theory that links the presence of Arian prelates with an alleged policy of Arianisation of the Suevians devised by Leovigild.

¹⁴⁹ Miles 1952: 296, no. 239.

locality that has been located somewhere between the northern León and Asturias.¹⁵⁰ In our opinion, the *Asturie* mint could be associated with the Ravennate's *mansio* of *Lucus Asturum*, traditionally identified with Lugo de Llanera, c. 10 km north of Oviedo, or even better with Oviedo itself, which would be its historical replacement, according to its strategic situation within the road network of the interior of Asturias, thus explaining the relevance of this city since the mid 8th century.¹⁵¹ It is known that in late imperial times many cities and population centres were renamed according to the ancient ethnic group that inhabited these regions, and, in our case being a population of the Asturians, nothing could be more normal than that it should receive the eponymous name¹⁵² In any case, both issues of currency must be related to the delicate situation experienced by the territories of the Ruccones and Astures during the first third of the 7th century AD that made an important military action necessary during the reign of Sisebut. This situation could last until beyond the middle of the 7th century if the relationship between mobile money mints and military campaigns in the northern peninsular zone is accepted.¹⁵³

In another vein, one aspect that should be noted is the possibility that, analogous to what we have posed for the case of Victoriaco in relation to the Vascones, King Leovigild will make a real military occupation of the whole country, reusing some of the ancient Roman camps (*castra*) located in that area. This policy would be part of a strategy to control the various routes into the Visigothic kingdom.¹⁵⁴ The existence of strong military assets in this region since Roman times would explain the ease with which the conquest of the Suevian kingdom was carried out and the speed with which the usurpation of Malaric was resolved. And certainly this occupation had to continue at least well into the 7th century AD, taking into account the campaigns carried out in the region by King Suinthila. In this way the claim of Fructuosus's brother-in-law over the lands occupied by the monks of Compludo (see below) could be better understood: actually, Visenand would only be demanding properties – the old *prata* or 'meadows' – that had legally belonged to the Roman cohorts settled there and which would now be reintegrated into the Gothic army's properties.

After the conquest of the Suevian kingdom by Leovigild and the rebellions of Malaric (AD 585) and Argimundus (AD 589/590), information about the affairs of Gallaecia are rare. As regards the Ruccones, we have no more news of them until the reign of Sisebut, when *dux* Suinthila leads a new military expedition in the area.¹⁵⁵ This manoeuvre is a sign that the situation in Gallaecia was not as stable as

¹⁵⁰ Thus: Miles 1952: 126; 231, no. 102, 344, no. 333 a–b; Mateu 1979; Díaz 2004: 371; Williams 2005: 1275. As different mints: Canto *et al.* 2002: 65f.; Vico 2006: 49f.; Correa 2006: 226f. (which provides strong linguistic arguments); Pliego 2009: 134f., 140, 144. Some authors assume that it may be a territorial mint in relation to the Duchy of Asturia: Mañanes 1997: 377; Sánchez Badiola 2010: 41.

¹⁵¹ It would be located on the Asturian road to *Lucus Augusti* that crosses the centre of the Principado: Rav. Cosm. IV 42; Ptol Geogr. II 6 28–37. González 1956a; Escortell 1986–1987.

¹⁵² In Gaul, the cases best known are Lutetia/Paris (*ad Parisios*), Agedicum/Sens (*ad Senones*), and Caesaromagus/Beauvais (*ad Bellovacus*): Lot 1927: 136. In the case of inland Gallaecia the phenomenon is not exactly the same due mainly to the small urban entity of the settlements in this region, but in a way it could be compared with the maintenance of ethnonyms in the toponymy of the Valdeorras <Giorres < Forum Gigurrorum, Cabrera < Cabruagenii, Valduerna < uallis + *Orna < Orniacii. Without reaching the extreme of the authors' exaggerated proposal, Barbero and Vigil (1974: 157, n. 80) are of interest. On the origins of Oviedo, see García-Sampedro 2009, from which it is worth extracting his conclusions (p. 178): 'The investigations conclude with the possibility of identifying the remains appearing in the territory of Lugo de Llanera as belonging to a *vicus viarii*, understanding this as an agglomeration composed of separate constructions or forming small groups that constitute, in turn, an associated centre, but internally dispersed. The remains found in Llanera have similarities with the *vici* documented in important points of the main Roman routes. Therefore it is appropriate to think of the functionality of *Lucus Asturum* as a true crossroads of the centre of the region. Functionality that would be transferred to Oviedo later, at the time when its location began to be considered more attractive, in what is currently the municipality of Oviedo'.

¹⁵³ Isid. HG 61: *Astures enim rebellantes misso (Sisebutus) exercitu (per duces Richilanem) in dicionem suam reduxit. Ruccones montibus arduis undique consaeptos per duces deuicit.* HG 62: *iste (Suinthila) sub rege Sisebuto... Ruccones superauit.*

¹⁵⁴ Barroso *et al.* 2013.

¹⁵⁵ See note 153 above.

literary sources seem to reflect. That the Suinthila campaign was accompanied by another directed by *dux* Rechila on the Astures, confirms not only the neighbourhoods of both parties, but the instability in which the region lives at least until the first third of the 7th century AD. G.C. Miles rightly proposed that these campaigns would be reflected in the coinage of the Lucas mint with the legend LVCVS VICTOR applied during the reigns of Sisebut and Suinthila.¹⁵⁶ For his part, F. Diego Santos also assumes that the monetary emissions of BERGIO and PESICOS would be related to both military expeditions.¹⁵⁷

The campaign ordered by King Suinthila is the last of which we have news in the northwestern area. We must assume that from that moment the Visigothic military units in that region would be strengthened, it being at this time that the submission of the duchy became completely effective. In fact, from that moment the history of Gothic Gallaecia will take very different paths, although there is no doubt that the Visigoth occupation of the northwest peninsular conferred on this space a strong martial imprint that explains the existence of a powerful military aristocracy whose true historical importance will emerge from the second half of the 7th century.

¹⁵⁶ Miles 1952: 137.

¹⁵⁷ Diego Santos 1979: 28.

The Rise of the Duchy of Gallaecia: Resurgence of Local Aristocracies and Struggling for Real Power

Certainly the province of Gallaecia seems to have kept its identity undamaged in 7th century AD thanks to its peculiar geographical situation within the Iberian Peninsula.¹⁵⁸ Indeed, Gallaecia was able to initiate a specific development that made it a somewhat special province within the political structures of the Visigothic kingdom of Toledo thanks to its geographical isolation and its past as an independent state under the Sueves.¹⁵⁹ In a way, that was logical, as we say, partly because of the lack of communications imposed by the geography, but even more so because before the Visigoth conquest the Suevian kingdom had developed its own personality, consolidated from the formation of an independent political entity, the *Suevorum regnum*, which had all the specific and characteristic elements that make up a state: a stable monarchical institution, a *regia sedes* (Bracara) that served as a manifestation of its political power, a political and ecclesiastical administration (with its particular organisation in dioceses and Metropolitan sees, and with their national councils as an institutional expression), as well as a royal treasury. As said previously, somehow the specific character of Gallaecia was maintained even after incorporation into the Visigothic kingdom, at least until well into the 7th century AD, when an important restructuring of the diocesan organisation of the Galician-Lusitanian territory took place, and even later, as we will have occasion to examine along these lines, through the occupation of all areas of power of the Toledan kingdom by the potent Gallaecian aristocracy.¹⁶⁰

Respect for the old political order after the annexation of the Suevic kingdom emerges in the first place from some isolated literary testimonies, i.e. the decree that Pope Gregory I dedicates to Reccared after learning of the conversion of the Goths, designating him as *rex Gothorum atque Sueuorum*, or the way in which the Visigothic literary sources present the conversion of AD 589 as something that would have affected equally Goths and Sueves, although for this reason the reality of the historical events must be distorted.¹⁶¹ That Gallaecia's singularity was evident even in the late period is evidenced by two legal provisions – the famous Wamba military law; and Erwig's edict on taxes added to the acts of the 13th Council – where Gallia and Gallaecia are still referred to as singular parts of the Visigothic kingdom of Toledo, distinct from the rest of the provinces of Spain.¹⁶²

Much of the success of this unique political and social reality of Gallaecia was due to the important role played by the religious factor. The conversion of the Suevi to Catholicism, realised c. AD 550 by the efforts of Saint Martin of Dume, had contributed to the elimination of the barriers that formerly separated the Hispano-Romans and Barbarians settled in Gallaecia. At the same time, the conversion would have served to increase the divide that separated Sueves from their Visigoth neighbours and further establish the national identity of the Gallaecian population. In this sense, decades before the Gothic kingdom began its own process of ethnic integration, the Suevian kingdom was already well advanced and merged between provincials and Barbarians.¹⁶³

¹⁵⁸ Díaz 2001: 329–333.

¹⁵⁹ On the personality of the former Suevian kingdom in Visigothic Spain, see Díaz 2008: 419f.; 2011: 329–333.

¹⁶⁰ Although it did affect its diocesan structure with the elimination of the Metropolitan dignity of Lucus: Beltrán 1989: 75f.

¹⁶¹ Greg. Epist. IX 229 (=CCL 140A, 805): *Gloriosissimo atque praecellentissimo filio Reccaredo regi Gothorum atque Sueuorum Gregorius seruus seruorum Dei; III Conc. Tol. Prólogo: Nec enim sola Gothorum conuersio ad cumulum nostrae mercedis accessit, quin imneo et Sueuorum gentis infinita multitudo quam praesidio caelesti nostro regno subiecimus...* On the biased view of the facts transmitted by Visigothic literary sources, see Ferreiro 1986; 1987; Beltrán 1989: 76.

¹⁶² L.V. IX.2.8: *Nam et si quilibet infra fines Spanie, Gallie, Gallecie uel in cunctis prouinciis...*; Con. Tol. XIII (AD 683) *Edictum de tributis relaxatis: ...in prouinciam Galliae uel Gallaeciae atque in omnes prouincias Hispaniae...* See also Besga 2007b: 14–16.

¹⁶³ Thompson 1980; García Moreno 1990: 304f.; Orlandis 1990; Arias 2007.

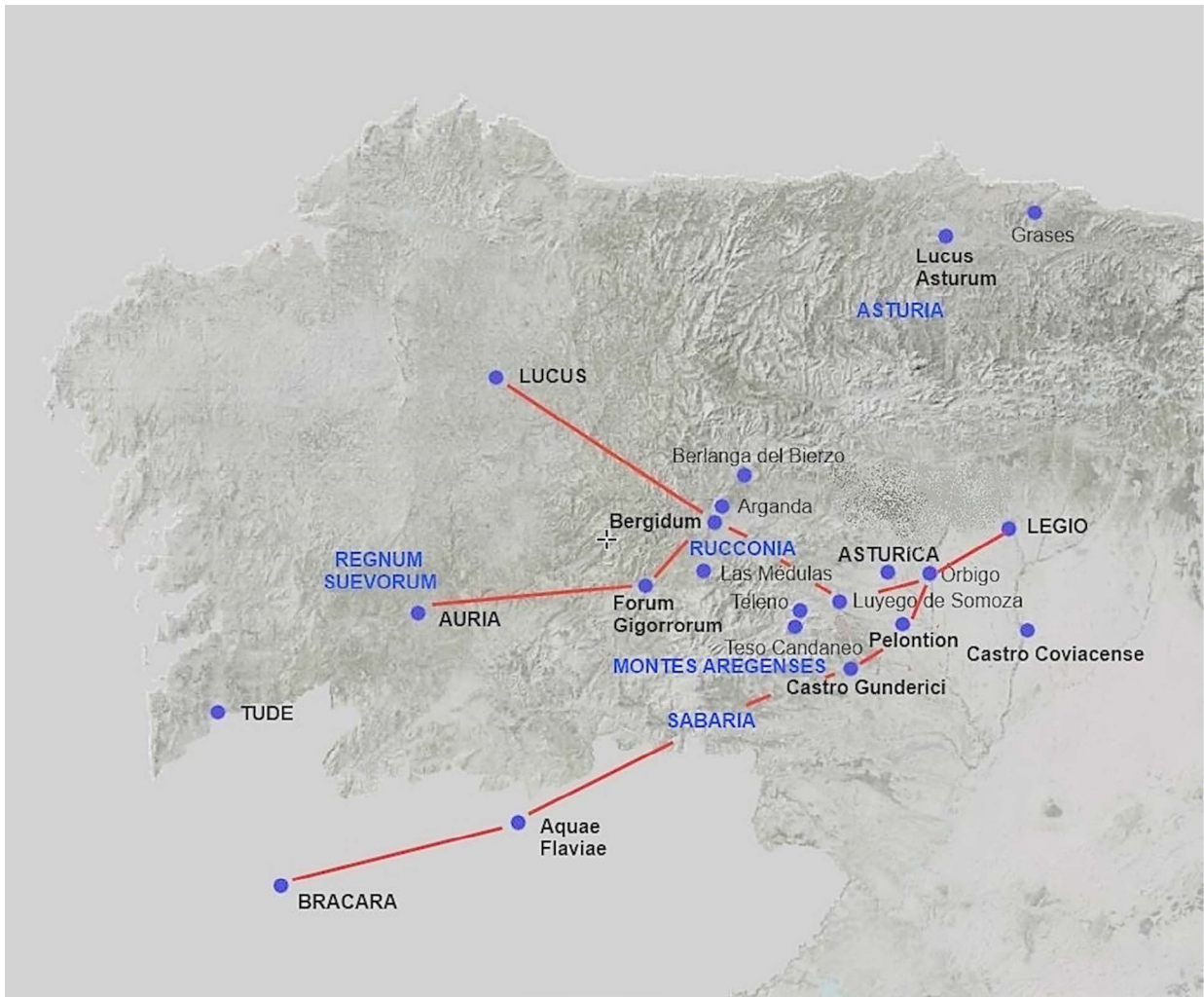


Figure 12. Main communication routes in Gallaecia

Indeed, the fact that the conversion to Catholicism by the Suevian kingdom occurred three decades before its incorporation into the kingdom of Toledo favoured the consolidation of an original ecclesiastical organisation in Gallaecia, as well as the development of distinctive rites and liturgical uses partly different from those used in the rest of the peninsula. Also, a few decades before the Gothic conquest, towards the middle of the 6th century AD, the Suevian Church was already immersed in an important process of reorganisation that would crystallise in a council held in Lucus in AD 569. At that synod it was agreed that two new dioceses should be created, Egiditania and Lamego, segregating them from Conimbriga and Viseo respectively. Later, at a vague date between the Council of Lucus and the year AD 625, another new see, Caliabria, was created, separate from Viseo.¹⁶⁴ Just three years after the celebration of the synod of Lucus, following the meeting of the 2nd Council of Bracara (AD 572), presided over by Saint Martin of Dume, wholesale reorganisation of the diocesan structure of the kingdom took place. This new arrangement of

¹⁶⁴ García Moreno 1989: 264; 2006; Díaz 2011: 236. Witteric (AD 603–610) minted coin in Caliabria: Miles 1952: 114, no. 141; Mateu 1979. Bishop Seruus Dei appears in position no. XXX as *ecclesia Calabriensis episcopus* in the acts of 4th Conc. Tol. (AD 633); Vives 1963: 223. About the bishops of this episcopal, see García Moreno 1974a: 452–455.

the episcopal sees will be reflected in the so-called *Parrochiale Suevum* or *Diuisio Theoderici*, a document of great importance for the study of the ecclesiastical geography of ancient Gallaecia (Figure 11).¹⁶⁵

As stated in the prologue of the *Parrochiale*, the new ecclesiastical system emanating from the synod of Bracara goes back to a mandate made by King Theodomir to the bishops of the kingdom at the Council of Lucus. The letter that opens the document indicates that the monarch ordered the prelates gathered there that, due to the expansion of the dioceses of the province of Gallaecia, and that it was impossible for the bishops to visit them at least once a year, they should proceed to create new dioceses with their respective parishes. Likewise, the king decreed the promotion of Lucus to the rank of Metropolitan bishopric, a condition that equated that see, once one of the two centres of the Roman administration in the province, with Bracara, the former capital of the *conuentus* that bears his name and the royal city of the Suevian monarchy.¹⁶⁶

Beyond an independent ecclesiastical structure, and favoured by the existence of an autonomous and sovereign political power, the Suevic Church began to elaborate its own liturgy, a process that nevertheless must have been frustrated by the Visigothic conquest. However we can find some traces of it in several conciliar canons after annexation. Thus, for example, when the 3rd Council of Toledo prescribes as a rule that in all the churches of Spania, Galia, and Gallaecia the profession of faith is recited (*ut per omnes ecclesias Spaniae, Galliae uel Gallaeciae... symbolum fidei recitetur*) for the sake of liturgical unification, the council recognised the peculiarity of the ancient Galician rite alone.¹⁶⁷ The 4th Council of Toledo (AD 633), the synod presided over by Saint Isidore, and of special relevance as regards the unification of the liturgical uses of the Gothic kingdom, also prescribes the abandonment of the singular form of tonsure that used in Gallaecian rites, and that in the rest of Spain it was considered indicative of heretics.¹⁶⁸ In the same way, the Gallaecian monastic structure itself, in the form of an abbey pact, as can be seen from the reading of the *Regula Communis* and the *Pactum*, had well-defined characters that singled it out with respect to the rest of Gothic monasticism.¹⁶⁹

It is not so strange, therefore, to conclude that a territory which for three long decades had made great progress in favour of the political and religious integration of its people, geographically isolated, in addition, to the rest of the peninsula, would have developed a much defined personality. In fact, all the factors just mentioned made Gallaecia a region with a strong identity within the kingdom of Toledo. Somehow that singular personality – that ‘*hecho diferencial*’ or ‘*differential element*’ as it is known in modern political

¹⁶⁵ David 1947; Novo 1999–2000; Gouveia: 2007a; 2007b; Sánchez Pardo 2014a.

¹⁶⁶ Parr. Sueuum: Theodomirus princeps idem Sueuorum concilium in ciuitate Luco fieri praecepit ad confirmadam fidem catholicam uel pro diuersis Ecclesiae causis. Postquam peregerunt quicquid se concilio ingerebat direxit idem rex epistolam suam ad episcopos qui ibi erant congregati continentem haec: ‘Cupio, Sanctissimi Patres, ut prouida utilitate decernatis in prouincia regni nostri, quia in tota Gallaeciae regione spaciosae satis diocesis a paucis episcopos tenentur, ita ut alinquantae ecclesiae per singulos annos uix possint a suo episcopo uisitari. Insuper tanta prouinciae unus tantummodo metropolitanus episcopus praeest ut de extremis quibusque parrochiis longum sit singulis annis ad concilium conuenire’ Dum hanc epistolam episcopi legerunt, elegerunt in sinodo ut sedes Lucensis esset metropolitana sicut et Bracara, quia ibi erat terminus de confinitimis episcopis, et quia ad ipsum locum Lucensem grandis semper erat conuencio Sueuorum... On this text and the problems it poses: David 1947: 68ff.; Díaz y Díaz, 1993: 27ff.; Novo 1997–1998.

¹⁶⁷ III Conc. Tol. C. 2 (Vives 1963: 125). It is the only mention for Gallaecia in the acts of the council, where only Spania and Gallia Narbonensis are reflected (*in ciuitatem regiam Toletanam ab episcopis totius Spanias uel Galliae; omnes Spaniarum et Galliae ecclesiae...; per omnem Spaniam siue Galliam...*) or only Spania (*episcopos omnes Spaniae*): Vives 1963: 107, 124, 130, 133. In any event, the tendency was towards standardisation, creating some discomfort for other metropolitan bishoprics: Beltrán 1989: 75f., and n. 46.

¹⁶⁸ IV Conc. Tol. c. 41: *Omnes clerici uel lectores sicut leuitae et sacerdotes detonso superius toto capite inferius solam circuli coronam relinquunt, non sicut hucusque in Gallaeciae partibus facere lectores uidentur, qui prolixis ut laici comis in solo capitis apice modicum circum tondunt, ritus enim iste in Hispaniis haereticorum fuit...;* Vives 1963: 206; Thompson 1985: 55. It must be understood, of course, because the general context, that the heretics referred to in that canon are Arians, not Priscillianists.

¹⁶⁹ Campos 1971. See also Orlandis 1986: 223f. On the importance of monasteries as a mechanism of social transformation in Gallaecia during the 6th–7th centuries AD, see Díaz 2001.

terminology – is recognised even in an author such as John of Biclaro, always interested in glorifying the exploits of the Goths and extolling the process of unification of the kingdom carried out by King Leovigild and his son Reccared, when he recounts that *totius Hispaniae, Galliae et Gallaeciae... episcoporum* met at the synod of conversion.¹⁷⁰

Nevertheless, how this identity was managed within the structures of the Visigothic kingdom is difficult to specify. Undoubtedly, the most striking transformations were operated at the territorial level and translated into significant territorial losses both at ecclesiastical and political levels. However, this change in the territorial structure of Gallaecia was not the immediate result of the conquest, but a consequence of a time-delayed process that will only be fully consolidated in the mid 7th century AD, when the bishops gather at the Council of Mérida of AD 666 – in the reign of Recceswinth (AD 649–672) – decided that several sees of the former Suevic kingdom, but belonging to the province of Lusitania, will again depend on Mérida.¹⁷¹

Indeed, the most remarkable transformation occurred with the decrease of the four Suevian dioceses located south of the Douro (Egitania, Viseu, Coimbra, Lamego), which would from then on depend on the Lusitanian metropolitan see, restoring again the limits of the former Roman administrative division.¹⁷² The territorial segregation of the dioceses south of the Douro in favour of Mérida determined a new ecclesiastical organisation of Gallaecia, already under Visigothic power, that is reflected mainly in the downgrading of the see of Lucus of its Metropolitan rank. Within this process, the loss of Lucus' Metropolitan status was clearly logical, as all the sees incorporated into the ecclesiastical province of Lusitania had belonged to Bracara while the Suevian kingdom subsisted, so, with the loss of the aforementioned dioceses, the Metropolitan see of Bracara had seen its ecclesiastical jurisdiction drastically reduced. At the same time the existence of only one Metropolitan for each province was more suited to the new territorial and ecclesiastical administration which the Visigoths had inherited from Rome.¹⁷³ Thus, regardless of the conquest, and contrary to what we have seen for Lucus, Bracara was able to maintain its status as a Metropolitan see over the dioceses of Gallaecia during the entire Visigothic period, despite even having held the title of royal city during the Suevi realm. In a way, this came to normalise the Gallaecian ecclesiastical division, since Bracara was assisted by historical rights that were hardly debatable from a religious point of view, and, in addition, the see had the prestige of the saintly memory of Martin of Dume,

¹⁷⁰ Iohan. Biclaro. a. 590.1: *Sancta synodus episcoporum totius Hispaniae, Galliae et Gallaeciae in urbe Toletana praecepto principis Reccaredi congregatur episcoporum numero LXXII...* Here again lies the author's intention to increase the glory of the conversion of Reccared by extending it to the *Sueuorum gens*, a statement that we know to be uncertain.

¹⁷¹ Conc. Emer. c. 8: *...suggerente sanctae memoriae sanctissimo uiro Orontio episcopo, animum eius (Recceswinthus) ad pietatem mouerit, ut terminus huius prouinciae Lusitaniae cum suis episcopis eorumque parrochis iuxta priorum cannonum sententias ad nomen prouinciae et metropolitanam hanc sedem reduceret et restauraret* (Vives 1963: 330–332). Bishop Sclua of Egitania had made a claim before his Salamanca counterpart in relation to a territorial dispute that was also favourably handled by the synod. It should be noted that the Bishop of Egitania also emphasises the subordination of its see to Mérida, when signing the council acts as *Igiditanae ciuitatis [ecclesiae] episcopus pertinens ad metropolim Emeritensem haec instituta cum archiepiscopo meo Proficio a nobis definita suscripsi*. (Vives 1963: 343).

¹⁷² García Moreno 1989: 264. I Conc. Brac. (AD 561) shows a division in eight dioceses for the Suevian kingdom. The II Conc. Brac. (AD 572) already establishes twelve (thirteen counting the abbey-bishopric of Dume, together with Bracara): the five Lucus suffrages (Iria, Tude, Orense, Astorga, Britonia), and the remaining seven of Bracara (Dumio, Porto, Idanha, Coimbra, Viseo, Lamego, Calibria).

¹⁷³ Lucus is cited in the Council of AD 569 as the Metropolitan see of the Lucensis district (*ex Lucensi sinodo*), as opposed to Bracara, which would be from the homonymous province: Con. Brac. I (AD 561): *Quum Gallaeciae prouinciae episcopi, ...ex praecepto praefati gloriosissimi Ariamiri regis in metropolitana eiusdem prouinciae Bracarensis ecclesia conuenissent...* (Vives 1963: 65); Con. Brac. II (AD 572): *Quum Gallaeciae prouinciae episcopi tam ex Bracarensi quam ex Lucensi sínodo cum suis metropolitanis praeceptione praefati regis (Miro) simul in metropolitana Bracarensi ecclesia conuenissent...* (Vives 1963: 78). Attached to the acts of this council, together with a compilation of chapters of the councils of the Eastern Fathers gathered by Bishop Martin, there is a normative relationship for the organisation of the province of Lucus (Vives 1963: 85–106). On Lucus in the Suevian Church, see Beltrán 1989; Díaz 2004: 374; Fernández Conde 2000: 155–167.



Figure 13. Coins of Egica/Tvde and Egica-Witiza/Lvco (Pliego 2012).

a true apostle of the Sueves and the man responsible for their conversion to Catholicism (Figure 14).¹⁷⁴

Accepting, then, initially the provincial limits established by the former Roman administrative division, and, as had happened with the rest of the provinces, Gallaecia also was constituted as a Duchy during the 7th century AD. Although there is no really explicit mention of the Duchy of Gallaecia in the literary sources of this period, its existence has been reasonably assumed from two episodes that focused on the life of Saint Fructuosus. The first is a report in which the saint's father appears, acting in Bierzo as *dux exercitus Hispaniae*.¹⁷⁵ This detail is related to another, according to which a brother-in-law of Fructuosus, one Visinand, asked the king for part of the lands of the monastery of Compludo *pro exercenda publica expeditione*. According to all indications, Fructuosus' father would have received as a concession from the king part of the lands that the

royal treasury owned in El Bierzo, and, following a customary process at that time, Fructuosus would have wanted to take possession of this grant, contrary to public interest.¹⁷⁶

The second testimony is another passage from *Vita Fructuosi*, transmitted exclusively in the so-called *O Manuscript* and dated by his discoverer between AD 650 and AD 654, in which the existence of one Dogilanus, *dux Lucensis* – responsible for preventing the march of the saint to France – is quoted.¹⁷⁷ It is necessary to note that although from an ecclesiastical point of view Bracara always maintained primacy over the rest of the Gallaecian episcopal sees, some data seem to corroborate that, at least from a political perspective, the Visigoth kings had some interest in giving priority to other centres of power (Lucus, Tude) in opposition to the old metropolis. Predictably the reason for the loss of Bracara's political importance in the Visigothic period derives from the fact that the city had been the royal seat of the Suevian monarchy, and, therefore, remembered too much the existence of a state independent of Gothic power, a situation that could only involve legitimation problems. For this reason Toledan kings had to judge as being more prudent a transfer of the centre of political power in the duchy to a city that had no relationship with the former Suevic kingship, and thus did not fuel possible notions of independence among the local nobility.¹⁷⁸ It is possible that Lucus' choice over other Gallaecian cities was due, among other reasons we will look at

¹⁷⁴ Although the figure of Saint Martin is totally absent in the work of John of Biclaro for political reasons (Ferreiro 1986; Beltrán 1989), Saint Isidore deemed it more appropriate to include him in the catalogue of illustrious men of the Church of his time, due both to the importance of the saint in relation to the conversion of the Sueves, as well as for the important role Martin developed in the organisation of the Suevian Church: Isid. *Hisp. Vir. Illustr. 22: ...ex Orientis partibus nauigans Gallicia uenit, ibique conuersis ab arriana impietate ad fidem catholicam sueuorum populis regulam fidei et sanctae religionis constituit, ecclesias informauit, monasteria condidit, copiosaque praecepta piae institutionis composuit*. For the Suevian Church and the work of Martin of Dume, see Sotomayor 1979: 390–400; Thompson 1980.

¹⁷⁵ *Vita Fruct. 1: Hic uero beatus ex clarissima regali progenie exortus, sublimissimi culminis, atque ducis exercitus Hispaniae proles, dum adhuc puerulus sub parentibus degeret, contigit ut quodam tempore pater eius eum secuns habens inter montium conuallia Bergendensis territorii, gregum suarum requireret rationes: pater autem suus greges describebat et pastorum rationes discutiebat*. On this passage see Barbero and Vigil 1974: 123–130; García Moreno 1974a: no. 42.

¹⁷⁶ *Vita Fruct. 3. Sánchez Albornoz 1947: 352ff.; Barbero and Vigil 1974: 81f.; King 1981: 81; García Moreno 1974a: no. 176; 1974b: 110f.; Frighetto 2014: 41f.* The identification of this nobleman depends on whether the authorship of the saint is accepted for *Vers. Fruct. 1*. See Díaz y Díaz 1951b: 141; 1967: 44f.

¹⁷⁷ *Vita Fruct. 17*. On this passage, see Díaz y Díaz 1951a.

¹⁷⁸ Gibert 1956; Ewig 1963: 32.



Figure 14. Braga, D. Diogo de Sousa Museum. Sarcophagus of San Martín de Dumio (López Quiroga and Martínez Tejera 2017)



Figure 15. Tude. 1. High Imperial occupation area; 2. Supposed location of the Late Antique Episcopal Church (Church of San Bartolomé de Rebordanes); 3. Late Antique Necropolis; 4. Burials from the end of the 6th century; 5. Early medieval fortification and medieval cathedral. (Sánchez Ramos, 2014).

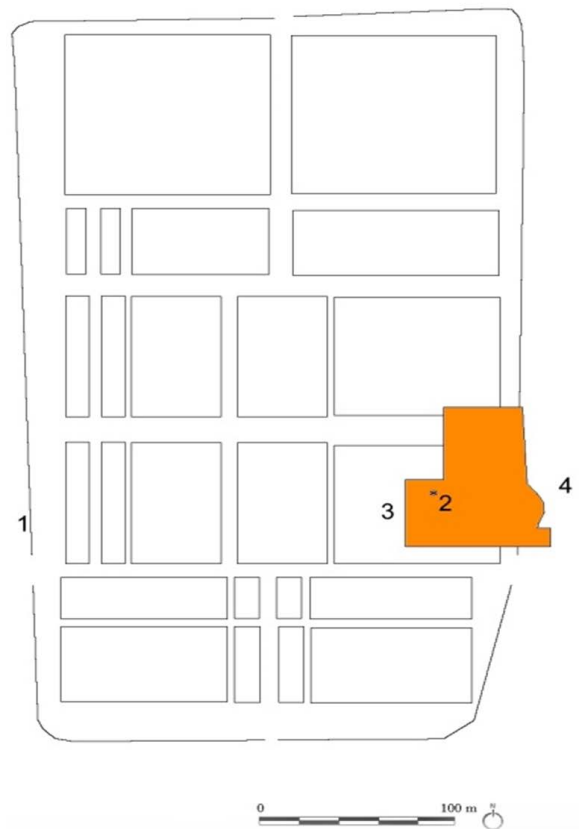


Figure 16. Lucus Augusti (from González and Carreño 2007). 1) High Imperial urban perimeter; 2) Lower Imperial wall; 3) High Imperial domus; 4) Late Antique burials (Sánchez Ramos, 2014)

later, to his former Metropolitan status, which would not cease to be an historical compensation for the previous degradation caused by the Visigothic conquest (Figure 16).

The term *dux* deserves a separate comment as it helps make possible an understanding of the territorial administration mechanism of the kingdom, as well, partly, as the structural weakness of the political regime of the Visigoths. As is known, until the reign of Chindaswinth, following the Roman conception of sovereignty, *duces* had been mere military leaders in charge of leading the army in military campaigns; it was this king who augmented the powers of *duces* by adding civil prerogatives (fiscal and judicial) to the existing military ones. Since the conquest of Hispania, and, as has been said, the kings of Toledo having adopted the former Roman provincial divisions, a tendency to empower provincial dukes as officers of the kingdom was maintained by the Visigothic political administration, while at the same time trying to affirm the superiority of the king over them by means of diverse instruments and legal formulas.¹⁷⁹ From Chindaswinth, and until the end of the Visigothic kingdom, we find *duces* constituting a true *Ordo* with a well-defined personality, in which the highest aristocracy of the kingdom would be framed with a special degree that distinguished them from the rest of the nobility (*illustri, primates*).¹⁸⁰ Indeed this *Ordo* will leave the nobles, both those in charge of advising the sovereign in affairs of government of the kingdom (officers of the *Aula Regia* or *Officium Palatinum*), as rectors of the territorial government (*duces prouinciae*). In the specific case of the *duces prouinciae*, from the 7th century AD they gathered the old military attributions with the prerogatives of the territorial government that in the old Visigothic administration of Roman tradition had fallen on the figure of the *iudex*. In this way, from the mid 7th century AD onwards, the delivery of provinces *ad regnandum* became a common practice in Visigothic kingdom. This issue contributed decisively to the feudalisation of Visigothic society, and, with it, to the disintegration of the sovereignty and political fragmentation of the kingdom, which will ultimately be a determining factor in the success of the Arab invasion and the total collapse of Visigoth Spain in 711.¹⁸¹

As regards the Gothic Gallaecia, L.A. García Moreno assumed that the capital of the new duchy would have been based in Lucus, which is where the *dux* Dogilanus exercised his authority.¹⁸² According to this author, between the 8th Council of Toledo (AD 653), which six *duces* attended, and the 13th (AD 683), at which eight were represented, two more duchys were created which joined the traditional six of the late imperial division.¹⁸³ These two new duchys would have been created to the detriment of the former Gallaecia province and their creation would have had a dual practical purpose: to reduce the jurisdictional range of the *dux prouinciae* and reduce the military power of the dukes. In any event, the division of Gallaecia into three dukedoms (Gallaecia, Asturia, Cantabria) would have taken place shortly after the meeting of the 8th Council of Toledo, in line with the redefinition of the ecclesiastical boundaries of Gallaecia and Lusitania carried out by the Council of Mérida of AD 666.

Apart from the arguments cited by García Moreno, Lucus had several titles which placed the provincial capital there. First, the prestige of having already been the Roman capital of the homonymous

¹⁷⁹ LV II.1.24 (Chind). García Moreno 1974b: 119–155; Barbero and Vigil 1974: 123–126; Orlandis 1987: 202–205.

¹⁸⁰ *Viri inlustribus officii palatini*: XII Conc. Tol. (Vives 1963: 402f.); XIII Conc. Tol. (Vives 1963: 434f.); XV Conc. Tol. (Vives 1963: 474); XVI Conc. Tol. (Vives 1963: 521).

¹⁸¹ Gibert 1956: 42–45. For the Visigoth administration, see Sánchez Albornoz 1946a; García Moreno 1974b; Barbero and Vigil 1974: 123–130; King 1981: 72–76, 94f., 99–102; Thompson 1985: 287–290; Orlandis 1987: 199–201.

¹⁸² Vita Fruct. 17. García Moreno 1974a: no. 42; 1974b: 138–148; Novo 1999–2000: 223–225.

¹⁸³ The duchys that emerged from the division of the former province of Gallaecia were Asturia, with its capital in Astorga, and Cantabria, based in Amaya. The first is mentioned as *prouincia Asturiensis* in a work by Valerius of Bierzo (Val. *Ordo Querimonie* I), while the second is based on the appearance of a certain Petrus, *dux* of Cantabria and father of the future King Alfonso I, in the first chronicles of the Reconquest (Chron. Adef. Rot. 2; Alb. XV 3). On this, see García Moreno 1974b: 138–147; Orlandis 1987: 202–205; Novo 1999–2000: 228f.

conuentus (or legal convent) must be mentioned.¹⁸⁴ Recall that at first the Gothic kings assumed the former territorial organisation of the Late Empire and in that sense Lucus had a political-administrative tradition that certainly favoured it clearly. To this should also be added the fact that already during the Suevic kingdom it had been extolled as one of the two Metropolitan sees of the Gallaecian Church. Both accounts suggest that the city was equipped with an appropriate infrastructure, as well as an administrative corps suitable for the government of the surrounding territory. But, in addition to all these circumstances, and as can be deduced from the itinerary followed by the Arabs in the conquest of the northern part of the Iberian Peninsula, Lucus still had to keep the old Late Imperial walled enclosure in good condition in the 8th century, which made it a city well equipped for the maintenance of a military garrison. In this way Lucus would have retained its former military importance intact until very late, as otherwise it cannot be understood why it should have been one of Muza's targets, along with Amaya and Asturica.¹⁸⁵

However, there are reasons that provoke a suspicion that in the last days of the Visigothic kingdom of Toledo the provincial capital resided not in Lucus, but Tude.¹⁸⁶ Thus, a reference from the *Chronicle of Albelda* states that Witiza resided for a time in this city while his father, Egica, was still alive, and that he would have acted as a co-regent there.¹⁸⁷ The *Chronicle of Alfonso III* goes even further and assumes that it was an assignment made by his father, who would have wanted to make a distribution of power so that *pater teneret regnum Gotorum et filiis sueurom* ('the father holds the kingdom of the Goths and the son that of the Sueves').¹⁸⁸ Although the text raises many historiographical problems,¹⁸⁹ the information merits credence as it is confirmed by various independent sources after the fall of the Visigoth kingdom of Toledo and by the numismatic data. Thus, for example, the *Chronicle of 754*, the literary source closest to the events, confirms that Egica shared the throne with his son in AD 698.¹⁹⁰ Some codices of the *Chronica regum Visigothorum* also attest to this association.¹⁹¹ The coins minted in this period confirm again the testimony of the *Ovetense*: on the one hand, currency is issued with an image of the co-regency of Egica and Witiza, in the style of those of Chindaswinth and Recceswinth, according to the model coined by the court of Byzantium.¹⁹² It is a type of coinage dedicated to dynastic propaganda with the legend IN DEI NOMINE EGICA REX (obverse) and WITIZZA REX-REGES (reverse), and which presents both monarchs.

¹⁸⁴ Prestige that explains that in some texts (Hist. Sil. 33: *...apud Lucensem Patriciam ciuitatem...*) the city is listed as Patricia. Rightly, García Moreno (1974b: 118–127) assumes that the Gothic *duces Prouinciae* bore the title of *patricii* as the high military commanders of Byzantium and hence the name of the city.

¹⁸⁵ *Ajbar Machmûa* (ed. Lafuente Alcántara 1867: 192f.). Note that the author speaks of Muza conquering the 'castles of Viseu and Lugo'. It is quite possible that at the time of deploying their military contingents the Visigothic kings would have taken into account the enormous possibilities offered by the ancient walled cities of the Roman era: Barroso *et al.* 2013.

¹⁸⁶ Torres López 1985: 133; Barbero 1992: 48; Díaz 2008: 419f.

¹⁸⁷ Chron. Alb. 32–33: *Uuitizza rg. an. X. Iste in uita patris in Tudense hurbe Gallicie resedit*. The passage in question does not appear in all the manuscripts and is immersed in the controversy over the origin of Pelayo: Gil *et al.* 1985: 243; Novo 1999–2000: 228f.

¹⁸⁸ Chron. Adef. 4 Rot.: *quem rex in uita sua in regno participem fecit et eum in Tudensem ciuitatem auitare precepit, ut pater teneret regnum Gotorum et filiis sueuorum*. Seb. *Filium suum Uuitizzane in regno sibi socium fecit eumque in ciuitatem Tudensem prouincia Gallecie habitare precepit, ut pater teneret regnum Gotorum et filius Sueuorum*.

¹⁸⁹ On the consequences that can be derived from this, see Isla 1993: 20f.

¹⁹⁰ Chron. Muz. 58: *Huius tempore, in era DCCXXXVI... Egika in consortio regni Wittizanem filium sibi heredem Gothorum regnum retentant. Hic patris succedens in solio...* The actual date of association is set a few years earlier, from 15 November AD 694, to 15 November AD 695: García Moreno 1989: 188; Montenegro and del Castillo 2002. On the succession of Egica: Frighetto 2005; 2011; Bronisch, 2011.

¹⁹¹ Chron. reg. Visig. (Cod. E2 y V2): *Egiga cum filio suo Witizane reg. ann. XXIII. Agila reg. ann. III. Ardo reg. ann. VII. Et fuerunt reges Gotorum, qui regnauerunt XL*. These are codices that do not reflect Rodrigo's succession.

¹⁹² Specifically coinage from Justin I, Heraclius and Constant II: Grierson 1999: 25f. In the Visigothic coinage of co-regents the reverse is occupied by the name of the city on a cruciform monogram: Heiss 1872: 12f., 132–134; Mateu 1946: 22f.; Miles 1952: 408, 413, 420–429. As an exceptional testimony, the type first appears in a Lucus mint from Chindaswinth's reign: Heiss 1872: 33.



Figure 17. Tremis of Egica and Wittiza (c. 694-702/703).
Mint of Valentiaa (Valencia de don Juan).

holding a processional cross, the symbol of royal sovereignty in Visigoth Spain.¹⁹³ This type is exclusive to the co-regency of the second half of the 7th century AD (Figure 17).¹⁹⁴

On the other hand, it should be stressed that Tude was, along with Lucus and Bracara, the only Galician city that issued currency after the reign of Chindaswinth.¹⁹⁵ Additionally, the detailed study of the *Parrochiale Sueuum* confirms the relevant role played by Tude within the Gallaecian ecclesiastical organisation, being in fact by far the most powerful and important city.¹⁹⁶

Witiza's association with the throne raises new problems in relation to the role assumed by Gallaecia within the kingdom of Toledo. It is known that shortly before the celebration of the 16th Council of Toledo, meeting in the *urbs regia* in May AD 693, there was an uprising against Egica by an important sector of the nobility. López Sánchez has speculated, based on the onomastic of the noblemen involved in the conspiracy (Liuvigoto, Frogellus, Teudemirus, Luvilana, Tecla), that some of them were Suevi and supporters of a Witiza invested as king in Galicia. According to this hypothesis, the subsequent association to the throne in his father's life was due more to an imposition of that faction than to the personal desire of the king. In this context the minting of coins with the image of the two monarchs would have served to publicly seal the agreement between father and son, given the propaganda value that the currency had in ancient times. Or, said in the words of the afore-mentioned historian: '*En todo caso, los tipos monetarios de Égica y Witiza no muestran una entente cordiale entre padre e hijo, sino una imagen de compromiso entre dos facciones nobiliarias opuestas*' ('In any event, the monetary types of Égica and Witiza do not show an entente cordiale between father and son, but an image of compromise between two opposing noble factions').¹⁹⁷

Although the passage that attests the list of conspirators is certainly ambiguous, as can be deduced from the reading of the acts of the 16th Council, we believe, on the contrary, that the interpretation of the facts is diametrically opposed to the one defended by López Sánchez.¹⁹⁸ As J. Gil already demonstrated, the grammatical construction indicates that it was indeed the conspirators, and not the victims of the plot who are referred.¹⁹⁹ Furthermore, the logic indicates that they were effectively the conspirators, as otherwise we cannot explain the fact that, being important figures of the kingdom, none of them appear among the co-signees of the council acts. This is an aspect that had already been flagged up at the

¹⁹³ On the cross as a sovereign emblem in Visigothic Spain, see Barroso and Morín 2004: 22–27; Barroso *et al.* 2008: 498–501.

¹⁹⁴ Miles 1952: 53, 348, 406; Mateu 1971: 147, 157f.; Pliego 2012: 91f. It corresponds to the type VI of Heiss (1872), exclusive to the Chindaswinth–Recceswinth and Egica–Witiza co-reigns. Cf. Barroso *et al.* 2008: 493, 498–501.

¹⁹⁵ Díaz 2008: 420. Recceswinth minted currency in Bracara and Tude; of Wamba, only one Tude coin is known: Pliego 2012: 74–77, fig. 6, 91.

¹⁹⁶ Sánchez Pardo 2014a: 467.

¹⁹⁷ López Sánchez 2009: 177f.

¹⁹⁸ In fact, the afore-mentioned noblemen appear in the bibliography either as victims or as accomplices of the conspiracy. There are numerous authors who consider them victims of the conspiracy, see Thompson 1985: 278f.; García Moreno 1974a: no. 152 (Theodomirus) and no. 145 (Key); Petit 2009: 19f.

¹⁹⁹ Gil 1978: 130–132. Collins 2005: 107.

time by Thompson.²⁰⁰ Likewise, the numismatic type to which the author refers had already been used during the co-reign of Chindaswinth and Recceswinth, and, therefore, it must be thought that it was a formula coined to prepare the elevation to the throne of the reigning monarch's son before the eyes of his subjects, since, of course, real power was not hereditary in Visigoth Spain. Finally, and except for the case of Theodomirus, there is no reason to think that the rest of the names on the list of conspirators were from Gallaecia.

Actually, the facts had to happen quite differently. In our point of view, it was Egica's decision to choose his son Witiza as a co-regent that sparked the uprising by Suniefredus and Sisbert in AD 693, or, as seems more likely, two years earlier, if we consider J. Orlandis's interpretation that the 3rd Council of Zaragoza would have met in this city directly because Egica had had to flee Toledo.²⁰¹

Suniefredus' uprising would have frustrated Egica's plans, forcing him to delay his son's association until the insurrection had been completely subdued and the king regained control of the *regia urbs*. King Egica's stay in Zaragoza can be explained as part of a strategy aimed at preventing the rebels from having the support of the nobility and the powerful army stationed in Narbonensis, cradle of almost all the revolts of the Visigoth period. At the time this happened, Witiza must have remained regent in Gallaecia. We know in this regard that during the reign of King Egica *tremisses* were coined in Bracara and Lucus with the legend V(I)CT(O)R.²⁰² McCormick drew attention to the important change observed in the typology of Egica's coins by moving the VICTOR legend from the back to the front, becoming part of the real title.²⁰³ As we have seen in the case of coins minted by Reccared, these types of triumphal issues are often associated with military campaigns. For this reason, and because of Gallaecia's own military importance, it is logical that King Egica had chosen to leave the government of a crucial province in the Visigoth military scheme in his son's hands, while he tried to regain control of Toledo from Zaragoza. Although the association with the throne of a member of the royal family was a mechanism already known in the Roman Empire, it is undoubtedly an anomalous situation, although there are prominent precedents for such a practice in the history of the Visigoth kingdom of Toledo.²⁰⁴ The first is that of Liuva, who, in the second year of his reign, decided to share the kingdom with his brother Leovigild and ensure the transition after Athanagild's death.²⁰⁵ Years later, in very different circumstances, it will be Leovigild himself who decides to share the throne with his sons Hermenegild and Reccared.²⁰⁶ Suinthila also associated his son Ricimirus with the throne, which led to the rise of Sisenand in Septimania in 631.²⁰⁷

As already noted, greater similarities would highlight the case of Egica and Witiza with the association of Chindaswinth and Recceswinth, aimed at ensuring succession to the throne in a peaceful manner, and which probably motivated the rebellion by Froya. But even here it would be necessary to introduce nuances: in the case of Recceswinth it was a true succession by co-opting, motivated by the advanced age of Chindaswinth, while the association of Witiza presents some peculiar features that lead us to

²⁰⁰ Thompson 1985: 278, n. 121.

²⁰¹ Orlandis 1987: 259; García López 1996: 466. For the importance of the queens in the succession to the throne and, specifically, the role of Cixilo, see Orlandis 1957–1958: 109–135; Valverde 2003: 396–406; Isla 2004: 415f.

²⁰² Miles 1952: 396, no. 437 (tipo E), 404, no. 453a–b.

²⁰³ McCormick 1986: 319.

²⁰⁴ Barbero and Vigil 1982: 190–193, and especially García Moreno 2008. Although the immediate model for associations to the throne seems to have been Constantinople, the practice dates from the times of the Roman Empire, see Frighetto 2005. For its reflection in numismatics: de Francisco 2009: 144–170.

²⁰⁵ Iohan. Bicl. Chron. a. 569.4: *...Leouuigildus germanus Livvani regis superstite fratre in regnum citerioris Hispaniae constituitur...*

²⁰⁶ Iohan. Bicl. Chron. a. 579.2: *Leuuegildus rex Hermenegildo filio suo... et prouinciae partem ad regnandum tribuit. Isid. Hisp. HG 48: Aera DCV. Liuuu Narbonae Gothis praeficitur regnans annis tribus. qui secundo anno postquam adeptus est principatus Leuuegildum fratrem non solum successorem, sed et participem regni sibi constituit Spaniaequae administrationi praefecit, ipse Gallie regno contentus.*

²⁰⁷ Isid. Hisp. HG 65: *Huius filius Ricimirus in consortio regni adsumptus pari cum patre solio conlaetatur...*

think that it would be a true partition of the kingdom in order to ensure control of Gallaecia, in a similar style to Liuva's reign in Septimania, at a time of political and military crisis. In any event, once Suniefredus was removed, Egica was finally able to associate Witiza as a true co-regent, which would have happened between November AD 694 and November AD 695.²⁰⁸ The measure would be complemented by the appointment of Felix of Sevilla as Metropolitan of the royal see in substitution of the deposed Bishop Sisbert.²⁰⁹ This almost repeats, point by point, what had happened four decades earlier, during the election of Recceswinth as successor to the throne – an election that had previously been requested from Chindaswinth by Bishop Braulius of Zaragoza and Count Celsus – and which resulted in the Froya uprising.²¹⁰

As the acts of the 16th Council refer, Suniefred's conspiracy was supported by the widow of the former monarch and a significant number of the palatine nobility devoted to Erwig's cause. It was thanks to the support of these nobles, some of whom are explicitly cited in the acts of the synod, that Suniefredus was able to gain control of Toledo – explaining why the rebel could mint currency in the royal city.²¹¹ The fact that Suniefredus managed to control the *regia urbs*, as well as the chronology of the events, are elements that lead one to think that the rebel would probably have been anointed as king by the metropolitan Sisbert, who in this way would have joined his destiny to that of the usurper. In this sense, Bishop Sisbert constituted a fundamental component of the rebellion of the *dux* Suniefredus, because by sacralising the rebel through the rite of anointing he granted legitimacy to the usurpation.²¹² Similarly, this would explain why Zaragoza was the city chosen by Egica for a gathering of the national council, something that could only happen if the king had been expelled from the royal city.

In fact, there is a whole series of indications that make it possible to suspect that the Council of Zaragoza of AD 691 had a national and not merely provincial character: it was summoned by the king; general matters were discussed; and even decisions of previous national councils were rectified (e.g. regarding the widow queen, where the provisions of the AD 683 Council were clearly contravened). Thompson himself had missed the issues discussed at that synod, but considered that the council would have been held far from Toledo, because a general synod presided by Bishop Julian would not have accepted the king's proposal regarding the awkward issue of the new status

²⁰⁸ Del Castillo and Montenegro 2002.

²⁰⁹ A first, the election of bishops *per sacra regalia* was an exceptional procedure. In the Council of Barcelona of AD 599 its use appears mentioned as a reality, being subsequently something habitual. From AD 681 the Metropolitan of the Carthaginians is constituted in primacy within the Church of Spain, mediating the election of bishops. However, here we are faced with a completely exceptional situation, one that is not about the election but about the dismissal of a bishop – no less than the Toledo metropolitan himself. See Orlandis 1987: 221–223.

²¹⁰ Braul. Epist. 37: *Suggerendum gloriosissimo domino nostro Chindasuintho regi, Braulio et Eutropio episcopi seruuli uestri, cum presbyteris, diaconibus et omnibus a Deo sibi creditis, nec non et Celsus seruus uester cum territoriis a clementia uestra sibi commissis... ut quia compendiosius nihil nec quieti uestrae, nec casibus nostris prospicimus, in uita tua, et te beneualente seruuum tuum dominum Recesuintum, dominum nobis et regem deposicimus, ut cuius aetatis est et beligerare et bellorum sudore sufferre, auxiliante superna gratia, et noster possit esse dominus et defensor, et serenitatis uestrae esse contemptus talis filii et tanti patris filio debitus profectus.* (PL 80 684). Lynch 1938: 81, 142; Barlow 1969: 83–85. In fact, it is the procedure one might call habitual at the time ('throne by occupation' as King calls it, 1981: 43f.), as shown by the associations of Ricimirus (cf. Isid. Hisp. HG 65) and Recceswinth in AD 649, and the corresponding uprisings of Sisenand (AD 631) and Froya (c. AD 651) (Taio, Praef. Sententiae). On the conspiracy of Sisbert: Miles 1952: 37f.; Thompson 1985: 276–280; García Moreno 1989: 183; Collins 2005: 107.

²¹¹ Miles 1952: 405, no. 454. Surely this Suniefredus is the same person who signs the acts of XIII Con. Tol. (AD 683) as *comes scanciarum et dux*: Vives 1963: 434f. Identical positions held by his rival Egica: Thompson 1985: 431, n. 122.

²¹² Pace García Moreno 1974a: no. 142 (Suniefredus) and no. 252 (Sisibertus). This author does not believe that both rebellions have to be identified, but it is difficult to argue that a bishop, however metropolitan, had ambitions for the crown for himself while legally incapacitated due to his ordination. We recall the recent case of the tonsured Wamba and the provisions on the matter in Canon 2 of XII Council (AD 681). It is worth remembering that the royal anointing was instituted in the context of a rebellion, either that of Hermenegild, or Sisenand. See Barroso and Morín 2004: 32–35, with bibliography.

that the widow queen should adopt after the death of the king.²¹³ However, Julian is unlikely to have been alive at that date, since it is assumed that he died in AD 690, i.e. a year before the Council of Zaragoza meeting, which would invalidate the main figure involved in the hypothetical opposition to the project of Egica, and, incidentally, the argument of the British historian.²¹⁴ For the rest, the fear of the opposition of part of the Hispanic Church cannot be considered something new, since it had occurred before on the occasion of other councils (i.e. the 8th Council of Toledo, convened by Recceswinth), and does not fully justify the meeting of a national council outside the royal city. Only an exceptional situation can explain the celebration of a synod of this nature outside Toledo, and, taking into account the date it took place, the logical thing is to think of a relationship with the rebellion of Suniefredus. This interpretation of the facts is undoubtedly consistent with historical events and also has great credibility if we take into account the hypothesis defended by A.P. Bronisch that Wittiza would not have been a son of Cixilo, but from a previous marriage of the king (or could hardly have been of an age to govern), and that the famous Canon 5 of the Council of Zaragoza of AD 691 was not addressed to Leuwigoto (i.e. the widow of King Erwig), as always supposed, but with a view to Cixilo, avoiding at all costs that once Egica died the queen could pose a potential risk to the enthronement of Wittiza.²¹⁵

Contrary to what has been happening with the references in the Asturian chronicles on the reign of Wittiza in Tude, which have had extensive treatment in the literature, we believe that it has barely been explored, or not sufficiently enough in other data from the Visigoth period that feature as protagonists other members of the family of Egica and Wittiza, and whose common denominator is the great importance that seems to have been gained by the Duchy of Gallaecia and Northern Lusitania throughout the last third of the 7th century.

The first detail of interest is that in AD 675, i.e. practically a century after the synod presided over by Saint Martin of Dume, a new council met in Bracara, the third and last of the Bracarian synods. There is a point here we believe should be highlighted in relation to this conciliar meeting – the fact that this synod is held precisely during the reign of Wamba, a king who had probably previously held an important position in Gallaecia, surely that of *dux prouvinciae*.²¹⁶ Another fact that draws our attention to this Galician synod is that Bishop Genitivus of Tude signed the acts *below* the Metropolitan, while the prelate of Lucus, Rectogenes, signed penultimately. Perhaps this was due to the importance of the see that Genitivus occupied, or perhaps it is simply a coincidence, as there were to be no more conciliar meetings in Braga until medieval times, and, therefore, it is impossible to know if the order denotes the greater pre-eminence and prestige of the see of Tude, or whether Genitivus was accorded greater respect because of his seniority over the rest of the prelates.²¹⁷

Of more interest still is a series of reports revealing the connection of the Gothic kings of the second half of the 7th century AD to the Duchy of Gallaecia and the Lusitanian lands located between the Tagus and the Douro (i.e. the lands torn from the former Suevian territorial nucleus). First, it highlights a story transmitted by Julian of Toledo that reports the death of King Recceswinth. According to the bishop of Toledo, the king died surrounded by his *fideles* in his *uillula* of Gérticos, a

²¹³ Thompson 1985: 277: 'This was a remarkable decision for a provincial synod to take, especially as it directly repealed part of canon four of the plenary Thirteenth Council' (=1969: 243).

²¹⁴ González 1996: 20f.

²¹⁵ III Conc. Caesar. (AD 691) c. 5 (Vives 1963: 479). For this, see: Bronisch 2011: 59–61.

²¹⁶ We identify, of course, the monarch with the *uir inluster* in charge of presenting the testament of St Martin of Braga at the 10th Council of Toledo: García Moreno 1974a: no. 162. See footnote 221 below.

²¹⁷ III Conc. Brac. (AD 675) (Vives 1963: 378).

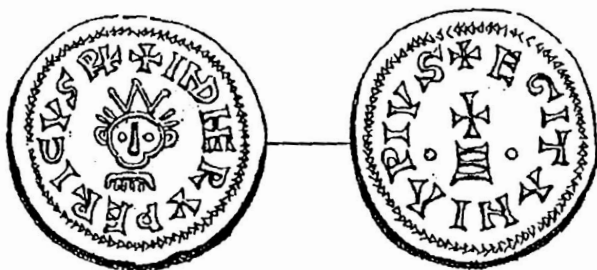


Figure 18. Tremis of Rodrigo (710-711) from the mint of Egítania (Heiss 1872).

and La Pesga), as well as diverse sculptural and architectural material of great quality around Santibáñez de Béjar, La Tala, and Salvatierra.²¹⁹ If we join the archaeological documentation with R. Menéndez Pidal's hypothesis that Bicláro – where John, the chronicler of the reigns of Leovigild and Reccared, would have professed as abbot – would be reduced by etymological argument to Béjar, we will have some idea of the antiquity and importance of the Visigoth settlement in this area.²²⁰ Geography, however, advises placing Gérticos at some point near Plasencia-Galisteo, at the confluence of the Jerte and Alagón rivers, a strategic site where two important natural roads converge, connecting the Castilian meseta with the southwest. One of these routes crosses at the port of Béjar, between the Sierras of Béjar and Peña de Francia, from the north, and that of the Jerte valley, which crosses at the port of Tornavacas from El Barco de Ávila and goes over the mountains of Béjar and Gredos. Jerte lies in the middle of the valley of the same name just 15 km from Béjar, but with poor communications to it, because between both locations is the obstacle of the Sierra of Béjar, with heights over 2000 m.

In terms of the Visigothic kingship's links with the Galician-Lusitanian area, as we have already advanced, Wamba's performance at the 10th Council of Toledo suggests that at that time (AD 656) he held a prominent position in the Gothic administration of Gallaecia, because only this can explain why this nobleman was commissioned to deliver the testament of Saint Martin, who had been the main figure of the Galician Church and advisor of the Suevian kings.²²¹ The title of *uir inluster* that the acts of that council apply to Wamba would corroborate that this important position was none other than that

²¹⁸ Iul. Tol. HWR 2–3: *Adfuit enim in diebus nostris clarissimus Wamba princeps, quem digne principari Dominus uoluit, quem sacerdotalis unctio declarauit, quem totius gentis et patriae communio elegit, quem populorum amabilitas exquisiuit, qui ante regni fastigium multorum reuelationibus celeberrime praedicatur regnaturus. Qui clarissimus uir, dum decidentis Recesuindi principis morte exequiale funus solueret et lamenta, subito una omnes in concordiam uersi, uno quodammodo, non tan animo quam oris affectu pariter prouocati, illum se delectanter habere principem clamant; illum se nec alium in Gothi principari unitis uocibus intonant et cateruatim, ne postulantibus abnueret, suis pedibus obuoluuntur... Quorum non tam precibus quam minis superatus, tandem cessit, regnumque suscipiens, ad suam omnes pacem recepit, et tamen dilato unctionis tempore usque in nono decimo die, ne citra locum sedis antiquae sacraretur in principe. Gerebantur enim ista in uillula, cui antiquitas Gerticos nomen dedit, quae fere centum uiginti milibus ab urbe regia distans in Salamanticensi territorio sita est. Ibi enim uno eodemque die, scilicet in ipsis Kalendis Septembribus, et decidentis regis uitalis terminus fuit et pro subsequenti iam dicti uiri praelectione illa quam praemisimus populi adclamatio extitit.*

²¹⁹ For these cemeteries, see Fernández de la Mora 1974; Donoso and Burdiel 1970; Río-Miranda and Iglesias 2001. On the sculptural and architectural finds: Barroso and Morín 1992; 1994.

²²⁰ Through a hypothetical Bicláro>*Bejaro>Béjar, see Menéndez Pidal 1985: xxiv; Bodelón 1992–1993: 211; Morín 2006: 184.

²²¹ X Conc. Tol. (AD 656): *ad nos in conuentu sancti concilii ex directo gloriosi nomini nostri Recesuincti regis per inluster uirum Uuanbanem testamentum gloriae memoriae Sancti Martini ecclesiae Bracarenensis episcopi, qui et Dumiense monasterium uisus et construxisse* (Vives 1963: 322).

village of unknown location but placed within the territory of Salamanca.²¹⁸ We know that part of the territory of this see was included within the Suevian kingdom, and, in any case, Salmantica was a border town throughout the 5th and 6th centuries AD. Traditionally, Gérticos has been identified with Jerte (province of Cáceres) on obvious phonetic criteria. Unsurprisingly, archaeology documents the importance in Visigoth times of the territory located around the villages of Béjar (Salamanca) and Jerte (Cáceres), among which there are three Visigoth necropolises, with materials of Danubian tradition (Galisteo, Zarza de Granadilla

of *dux Gallaeciae*, and this was one of the main reasons Wamba was elected successor of Recceswinth during the funerals that followed the passing of the king at the *uillula* of Gérticos in September AD 672. This election, made by acclamation by the faction of the nobility nearest to the deceased monarch, suggests that Wamba belonged to the king's closest entourage, being one of the *maiores palatii* cited in the literary sources of that period. The idea that Wamba held the title of *dux prouinciae* is reaffirmed if we take into account that, as García Moreno states about King Chindaswinth, almost all the kings of the 7th century AD who were not *porphirogenetas* or usurpers had previously held that dignity.²²² But, in addition, as we will see, there are clear indications that oblige us to think that they all belonged to the same family.

In the case of King Egica, we know with certainty that he belonged to the Wamba family and that, logically, his son Wittiza also belonged to that same lineage, whose name may well present an alliteration in honour of one who had been a prominent member of the family clan, and distinguished also with the royal crown.²²³ It is also possible that he was a relative of a certain Wittiza who signed at the 12th Council of Toledo (AD 681); and we might even entertain the idea that he had a relationship with a certain Wimar who subscribed to the 15th and 16th Councils, since it is a name we will see again carried by one of Pelayo's grandsons.²²⁴ Likewise, the first theme (<got. **Wi-ti* 'wisdom') is witnessed in Gallaecia in a Witimirus, first bishop of Orense, who attended the 2nd Council of Braga in AD 572, and to whom Martin of Dume dedicated his treatise *De ira*. The same theme is also present in Witteric, a king who probably traces his lineage to the Amala dynasty and whose patrimonial bases were in Egítania.²²⁵

In the same way King Roderic, who later would rise in Corduba after the death of Wittiza, also appears closely related to the Lusitanian area bordering Gallaecia, at least if we credit a story transmitted by the *Chronicle of Alfonso III*, in which, during the conquest of Viseo, the troops of King Alfonso discovered a grave bearing the epitaph of the last king of the Goths.²²⁶ The fact that Roderic appears cited as *ultimus rex Gotorum* ('last king of the Goths') in a source whose purpose was precisely to underline the continuity of the kingdom of Oviedo with respect to the Visigoth kingdom of Toledo, increases the credibility of the chronicler's testimony. It should be remembered in this regard that the only mints of Roderic's coins known come from Toledo and Egítania (Figure 18).²²⁷

There are also important reasons to lead us to think that King Pelayo was also originally from Gallaecia and that he was related to King Wittiza, and, consequently, also to the royal dynasty of Toledo and to the Gothic-Suevic nobility settled in Gallaecia.²²⁸ It is not necessary to underline that this genealogy

²²² García Moreno 1974a: no. 33.

²²³ Rot. 3: *Filiam quoque suam [Eruigii] Ciscilonem magno uiro Egicani consubirino Bambani regi in coniungio dedit. Seb. 3: Filiam suam [Eruigii] Cixilonem egregio uiro Egicani consubirino Uuambanis in coniungio dedit.* (Gil et al. 1985: 118f.).

²²⁴ About this Wittiza: Vives 1963: 402f.; Collins 2005: 106. For Wimar: Vives 1963: 474, 521. The latter anthroponym has given rise to numerous populations in the northwest of Iberian Peninsula while it is almost completely absent in the rest, so it can be included within the anthroponyms of the Suevic-Gothic type: Guímara (Portugal, León), Guimarán (Asturias), Guimaraães (Portugal), Guimara, Guimarans, Guimarás, Guimareu (Galicia), Guimará (Zamora), and several Guimarei (Galicia). Almost all are located within the ancient Suevian settlement area.

²²⁵ García Moreno 2007: 347; 2008: 154.

²²⁶ Seb. 7: *De Ruderico uero rege nulli cognita manet causa interitus eius. Rudis namque nostris temporibus quum Uiseo ciuitas et suburbana eius a nobis populata esset, in quadam baselica monumentum est inuentum, ubi desuper epitaphion sculptum sic dicit: Hic requiescit Rudericus ultimus rex Gotorum.*

²²⁷ Miles 1952: 497, no. 106c. Nine pieces come from Egítania: Pliego 2011: 332, 335f.

²²⁸ We defend here the thesis of the veracity of Asturian literary sources (logically from a critical reading), against the idea of an invention of tradition, as defended by Barbero and Vigil (1974) and which has become the usual thesis of Spanish Marxist historiography (should we say Marxist-Indigenist?). A recent example of this stance is to be found in Dacosta 2009. A blunt and accurate response to this type of interpretation, which unfortunately remains hegemonic in the Spanish academic environment, appears in Besga 2011, an article that has not had the impact it deserves in response to the theses of A. Barbero and M. Vigil.

of the founder of the kingdom of Asturias logically clashed with the attempts of the chancellery of Alfonso III to break the ties that united Oviedo's dynasty with the notorious lineage of Wittiza, and, for this reason, a new version of the events arose within the same royal chancellor's office that sought to safeguard Pelayo from such undesirable ancestors. Although we venture here on uncertain ground, it is worth dwelling a little on this interesting issue to assess the importance of the Duchy of Gallaecia in Visigoth Spain during the second half of the 7th century AD, and at the beginning of the Reconquest.

The earliest information for the origins of Pelayo (Pelagius) is a reference in the *Chronicle of Albelda* that seems to tacitly accept the *Rotense* version of the *Chronicle of Alfonso III*. According to *Albeldensis*, Pelayo was the son of Veremund, grandson (nephew?) of Roderic, great-grandson of Teudefredo and great-great-grandson of Chindaswinth or, better, of Recceswinth.²²⁹ However, the editor of the *Ad Sebastianum* version of the *Chronicle of Alfonso III* deemed it more appropriate to devise a new genealogy, according to which Pelayo would have been the son of the *dux* Fafila, killed in Tude by Wittiza himself, a version that was finally the one imposed on the official historiography of the kingdom of Oviedo and, in general, on the history of Spain.²³⁰

This new version, however, has certain fictitious overtones that makes it very suspicious: the antagonism between Pelayo and Wittiza's family would have its origin not in a political matter, but in a personal dispute: according to the editor of the *Ovetensis*, Favila would have been killed by Wittiza 'because of his wife'. However, diverting a political issue to the level of personal passions is something that has a long historiographical tradition and, without going any further, that we will also see in the Asturian chronicles of the Alfonso III cycle. In fact, it is a situation that is somewhat analogous to that which would later arise between Pelayo and Munuza, the Arab governor of Gijón, that reports the *Rotensis* (Rot. 8) but completely omits the *Ad Sebastianum*. It seems plausible, then, to consider that this Veremund (Vermud), father of Pelayo according to *Albeldensis*, remained as a *dux* of Gallaecia in Tude in the times that followed the Suniefred rebellion and that he supported some attempt at usurpation of the crown, perhaps as a consequence of the association to the throne of Wittiza. If, in addition, this Veremund was, as it seems, son of the Teudefredus *comes* and Roderic's brother, the suspicions of treason would be more than justified, since, believing the chronicle of Alfonso III, Teudefredus would have been blinded and banished from Toledo to Corduba on Egica's orders.²³¹ The punishment meted out to Teudefredus, and the subsequent uprising by Roderic in Cordoba on the death of Wittiza, strengthen the hypothesis of a new attempt at usurpation by one of the family branches of the Chindaswinth lineage and not simple suspicion on the part of Egica.

In any event, this attempt should not be confused with the usurpation of Suniefred, since Teudefred does not appear to be cited among the usurper's accomplices, and we also know that he signed the acts

²²⁹ Alb. XVa 1: (E marg. A): *Pelagius filius Ueremundi nepus Ruderici regis Toletani; R: Pelagius filius Ueremundi nepus Ruderici regis Tutelani accepit regnum era DCCLVI et regnavit annis XVIII, menses VIII, dies XVIII*. García Moreno (2011: 24f., n. 68) assumes that the use of *nepos* would be in its classic sense of 'nephew' and not 'grandson', i.e. Teudefredus would be the father of both Rudericus and Fafila/Veremund.

²³⁰ Seb. 8: *...sibique Pelagium filium quondam Faffilani ducis ex semine regio principem elegerunt; Alb. XIV 33: Uittizza rg. an.X. Iste in uita patris Tudense hurbe Gallicie resedit. Ibiqum Fafilanem ducem Pelagii patrem, quem Egica rex illuc direxerat, quadam occasione uxoris fuste in capite percussit, unde post ad mortem peruenit. Et dum idem Uittizza regnum patris accepit, Pelagium filium Fafilanis, qui postea Sarracenis cum Astures reuellauit, ob causam patris quam prediximus, ab hurbe regia expulit*. On the origins of Pelayo in the Asturian Chronicles, see J. Gil et al. 1985: 65f.

²³¹ Rot. 6: *Qui iam factus Rudericus ex patre Teodefredo est genitus. Teodefredus uero filius Cindasuindi regis fuit, qui pater in etate parbuli reliquid. Quumque tempus transisset et ad etatem perfectam uenisset, uidens eum Egica rex eligantem, recogitans in corde ne cum Gotis coniurationem faceret et eum a paterno regno expuleret, Teodefredo oculos euellere precepit. Qui a regia urbe expulsus Corduba adit habitandus, ibique sortitus est ex magno genere huxorem nomine Ricilone, et ex eis natus est filius iam ditus Rudericus*. That was one of the punishments reserved in Byzantium for the traitors of *lesa maiestas*, as seen in Ardabast rebellion against Constantine V in Ad 743: Vallejo Girvés 2003: 107.

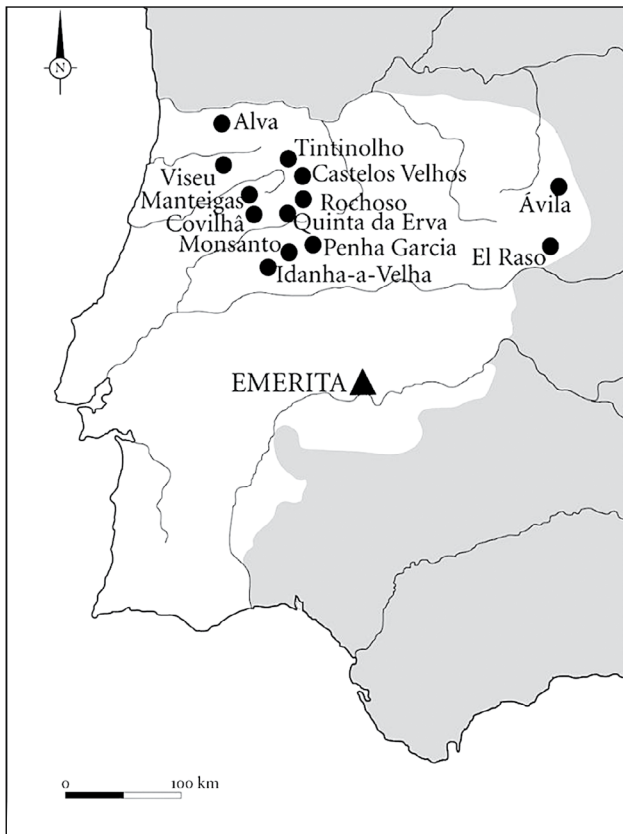


Figure 19. Coin finds in the north of Lusitania (after Martín Viso 2008).

of the 16th Council of Toledo, something that would not seem to suggest support for such a rebellion.²³² We think rather that Teudfredus had some kind of relationship with the rebel and that his attempted usurpation would have occurred a few years after the deposition of Suniefred, at least before AD 702.²³³ The hypothetical uprising of Teudfredus was perhaps endorsed by a mint of *tremisses* of Egica in Acci (Guadix) with the VICTOR legend, suggesting some kind of military campaign in the region by this monarch.²³⁴ In relation to this new sedition, it would also be necessary to include both the enactment that year of the law on fugitives in Córdoba, and the account in the Muzarabic *Chronicle* of AD 578 that in the last days of his reign Egica was ‘wandering in Spain’.²³⁵

The murder of Veremund in Gallaecia must have occurred within the context of the association to the throne of Wittiza and the rebellion of Teudfredus in Córdoba. Once the rebellion was subdued and Egica was dead (AD 702/703), it is likely that Wittiza named Teudfredus’ son, Rodrigo, *dux* of Betica, because we know that he gained status in

Córdoba after the king’s death in AD 710.²³⁶ The rehabilitation of the son of the rebel fits with what we know about the reign of Wittiza, who insisted on aiming for an agreement between the nobility – to avoid the collapse of the kingdom. Anyway, it is clear that, although they all shared the same lineage, this would be a rival family branch of Egica and Wittiza. This means that, if we want to make a coherent account of the historical facts, the real reason for the assassination of Veremund/Fafila and the blinding of Teudfredus was political rivalry and not supposed personal motivations.

²³² Teudfredus appears as *comes* signing the acts of XII Con. Tol. (AD 681) and as *uir inluster Officii Palatini* in the XVI (AD 693): Vives 1963: 521; Menéndez Pidal 1963: xlvi.

²³³ Note that both share in their onomastic the radical *-fredus* and that Suniefredus held a position of a similar category in the palace as Egica (*comes scanciarum et dux*). If, like Teudfredus, Suniefredus belonged to the Recceswinth family, the rivalry with Egica was more than justified. This would explain the character of Suniefredus’ rebellion as a *coup d’état* and the support of Erwig’s clan.

²³⁴ Miles 1952: 92ff., no. 430, who relates it to Sisbert’s rebellion. But, as said note 233 above, the Suniefredus-Sisbert rebellion must have been a true *coup d’état* and restricted exclusively to Toledo.

²³⁵ LV IX.1.21: *De mancipiis fugitiuis et de susceptione fugitiuorum. (...) data et confirmata lex in Cordoba anno feliciter sextodecimo regni nostri (=14 noviembre 702); Cron. Muz. 38 : ...Uuitiza decrepito iam patre pariter regnant. Qui et in era DCCXXXVIII supra fate cladis non ferentes per Spaniam e palatio uagitant.* See Sánchez Albornoz 1946b: 34ff.; García Moreno 1974a: no. 142. Apart from this campaign in the south, we know that in AD 694 and AD 688/690 King Egica led three expeditions against the Franks (García Moreno 1989: 186), which suggests a new civil war.

²³⁶ Chron. Muz. 43: *...Rudericus tumultuose regnum ortante senatu inuadit.* See Sánchez Albornoz 1946b; García Moreno 1992a. The use of *tumultuose* is a variation of *tyrannidem*. The locution *senatu ortante* must be understood in the context of the pro-Roman character of the city of Córdoba that manifests in legal practice (*Formulae*) and in the maintenance of the PATRICIA epithet in its monetary issues: García Moreno 1992a: 441ff. The *Rotensis Chronicle* (Chapter 6) describes Rudericus as a warrior and reports that he had a palace in Córdoba that the Arabs still called ‘Rodrigo’s Palace’ in his time: *Uir uellator fuit. Antequam regnum adipisceret, Corduba in ciuitate palatium est fabricatus, qui nunc a Caldeis Uallat Rudericus est uocitatus.*

From all that has been said so far it seems we may deduce that the new name given to Pelayo's father was the result of confusion, or, better, of an intentional invention made by the editor of the erudite version of the *Chronicle of Alfonso III*, whose motive was to hide Pelayo's family origins and his involvement with Wittiza's family. In doing this, the chronicler would only have followed a procedure that was customary in 10th century AD onomastic: granting the name of Pelayo's son to his father.²³⁷

However, there is at least one powerful reason that suggests why the real name of Pelayo's father was Veremund, as recorded in the oldest version of the *Albeldensis* chronicle, and not Favila, as later interpolated in the Royal Chancellery of Oviedo. In fact, we know from the *Chronicle of Albelda* itself that Pelayo's daughter bore the rare name of Bermesind.²³⁸ It has been assumed that the princess's name was a typographical error and that her real name was Ermesinde, as the *Rotense* version calls her, and that by cultism the initial H was added and which led to the copyist's error.²³⁹ But we believe that this explanation, although plausible, is far-fetched and unnecessary. Actually, the two elements that make up the name of Pelayo's daughter are found in the royal onomastics of Sueves and Goths, because the first element (*Ver-e-me*<got./sue. **Bere*, **baira*, germ. **berō*, **berōn* 'bear')²⁴⁰ clearly alludes to his grandfather Veremund, the father of Pelayo, and the afore-mentioned homonymous king of the Sueves, as we have seen, and the second theme (*-sinda*, *-sintha*<gót. **swinþ-s* 'strong') clearly refers to the dynasty of Chindaswinth and Recceswinth. This royal affiliation of Pelayo would explain why Bishop Oppa, 'son' (actually, brother) of Wittiza, addresses the Asturian leader as 'cousin' (*confrater*), a title that the editor of the erudite version deemed it was more prudent to replace it for the highly ambiguous term – coming from the mouths of churchmen – of 'brother' (*frater*).²⁴¹ As J.L. Moralejo states, the reason for the change introduced by the chronicler cannot be other than the intention of disguising that Pelayo was a relative of Wittiza, whom the official version, coined by the Royal Chancellery of Oviedo, made guilty of the fall of the Visigoth kingdom.²⁴² But, in addition, if it is true that both Teudfred and Veremund had tried to rebel against Egica then the desire of the chronicler would have been to avoid any suspicion of usurpation, which would have eclipsed the mythical figure of Pelayo, the restorer of the throne of the Goths. Nevertheless, what seems unquestionable at this point is that Pelayo was a member of the royal family who held power during the second half of the 7th century AD, and that this was not an invention of the editor of the *Ad Sebastianum* version of the *Chronicle of Alfonso III* (Seb. 8), who explicitly says that Pelayo was *ex semine regio* ('of royal lineage').

Now, if, as A.P. Bronisch has put forward with good arguments, Wittiza was not really Cixilo's son and, therefore, had no direct blood ties with King Erwig, the relationship between the two families would have to be explained in other ways. We believe that there are three possible options in this regard:

- Go back and trace the relationship between Wittiza and Roderic deeper, possibly Wamba-Chindaswinth. And, certainly, there are other indications that make it possible to suspect Wamba's connection with Chindaswinth's family: first, his selection by Recceswinth's *fideles regis*, i.e. the

²³⁷ Gil et al. 1985: 66, n. 47.

²³⁸ Alb. XV 3: *Adefonsus Pelagi gener rg. an. XVIII^a. Iste Petri Cantabrie ducis filius fuit. Et dum Asturias uenit, Bermisindam Pelagi filiam Pelagio precipiente accepit*; Rot. 11: *Adefonsus filius Petri Cantaborum ducies ex regni prosapiem Asturias aduenit. Filiam Pelagii nomen Ermesinda in coniugio accepit*.

²³⁹ That is the opinion of the modern editor: Gil et al. 1985: 206, n. 35, and 247, n. 236.

²⁴⁰ Schönfeld 1911: 50; Köbler 1989: 66. Perhaps the appearance of *-me-* in the first subject should be explained as a contamination in the radical **berōn* due to the name of the grandfather (Veremund). This is the opinion of the modern editor: Gil et al. 1985: 206, n. 35, and 247, n. 236.

²⁴¹ Rot. 9: *...Puto te non latere, confrater et fili, qualiter omnis Spania dudum in uno ordine sub regimine Gotorum esset ordinata et pre ceteris terris doctrina atque scientia rutilaret*; Seb. 9: *...et adpropinquans ad eum Oppa episcopus sic adloquitur dicens: Scio te non latere, frater, qualiter omnis Yspania dudum, <dum> sub uno regimine Gotorum esset constituta et omnis Yspanie exercitus in uno fuisset congregatus, Smaelitarum non ualuit sustinere impetum; quanto magis tu in isto montis foramine te defendere poteris!*

²⁴² Gil et al. 1985: 65. Pace García Moreno 2011: 24, n. 65.

most intimate liegemen of the monarch. On the other hand, his character of *uir inluster* and, almost certainly, *dux prouinciae Gallaeciae*; and, finally, the situation of the *uillula* of Gerticos in the territory of Salamanca, a location that suggests that it would be in the territories next to the ancient Suevian kingdom where the economic and patrimonial bases of Receswinth were located

- We could think of a link via marriage through Egilo, Roderic's wife, whose onomastic component is repeated in the name of King Egica.²⁴³
- Both options: a common remote ancestry and a marriage that strengthened relations between both family lines, in the style of what was done between Egica and Cixilo. This last hypothesis seems the most reliable, given the afore-mentioned precedent and the interest in keeping the throne in the hands of the Suevic-Gothic family nucleus.

As interesting as all these questions may be, we must leave here the problem of Pelayo's genealogy as it takes us far from our initial purpose. Thus, although the importance of this family relationship can help explain some shadowy areas that surround the origins of the kingdom of Asturias, what interests us now is not that issue, but the relationship that is glimpsed between the last kings of Toledo and Gallaecia, something that might enable us to understand the importance of this duchy within the political structure of the Visigoth kingdom.

And what undoubtedly follows from the reading of the literary sources from the end of the Visigoth kingdom and the beginning of the Reconquest seems to reinforce the image of a deep division of the Gothic nobility into two irreconcilable groups throughout the second half of the 7th century AD, as well as a failed attempt to overcome it through the marriage of Egica and Cixilo (or two, if we accept García Moreno's credible idea of a relationship between Egilo, Roderic's wife, and Egica). But it also seems clear that it is not a matter that concerns two rival families with economic bases in two different dukedoms of the kingdom (Lusitania and Septimania), as Menéndez Pidal and García Moreno understood,²⁴⁴ but two branches of the same family whose origins should be sought in northern Lusitania and Gallaecia. And that importance of the Duchy of Gallaecia suggests a major military presence in the region throughout the 7th century AD, because only then would it be understood that those who enjoyed a privileged status in this province engage in the dispute for the crown over such a long period of time. Of course, this interpretation also has its consequences when it comes to understanding how the reaction to the Arab invasion in the northern peninsular occurred and explains Pelayo's role in the restoration of the Visigoth kingdom in Asturias.

Gallaecia's military and political importance would also explain the appearance of family connections between documented personalities in the northwestern area of the Iberian Peninsula and prominent members of the Septiman aristocracy during the second half of the 7th century AD. This is a logical conclusion stemming from the politics of the moment, since the Duchy of Septimania was the key to defending the kingdom against the Franks. For this reason it was quite normal for its control to be in the hands of nobles linked to the court. Such is the case, for example, of Sisenand, who probably held the position of *dux* of Septimania, and who was a relative of Saint Fructuosus.²⁴⁵ As is well known,

²⁴³ García Moreno 2003: 783; 2007: 346.

²⁴⁴ Menéndez Pidal 1963: lii–lv; García Moreno 1992a: 442–453.

²⁴⁵ García Moreno 1974a: no. 133; 1975: 145ff. Note that it is possible that Fructuosus' brother-in-law was named after Visenand (Vers. Fruct. 4.1: ... *Mihique uidelicet extat unica soror, unicum sortita pignus memorabile nobis, in quo retentans pii gaudia magna uiri Visinandi potitus fruitur prapagine nomen*) and that he should hold the office of *dux Galliciae* in accordance with his intention to confiscate part of the lands of the monastery of Compludo *pro exercenda publica expeditione* (Vit. Fruct. 3: ... *iliquo uir iniquus sororis eius maritus, antiqui hostis stimulis instigatus, coram rege postratus surgens subripuit animum eius isdem pars hereditatis a sancto monasterio auferretur et illi quase pro exercenda publica expeditione conferretur...*): García Moreno 1975: no. 176.

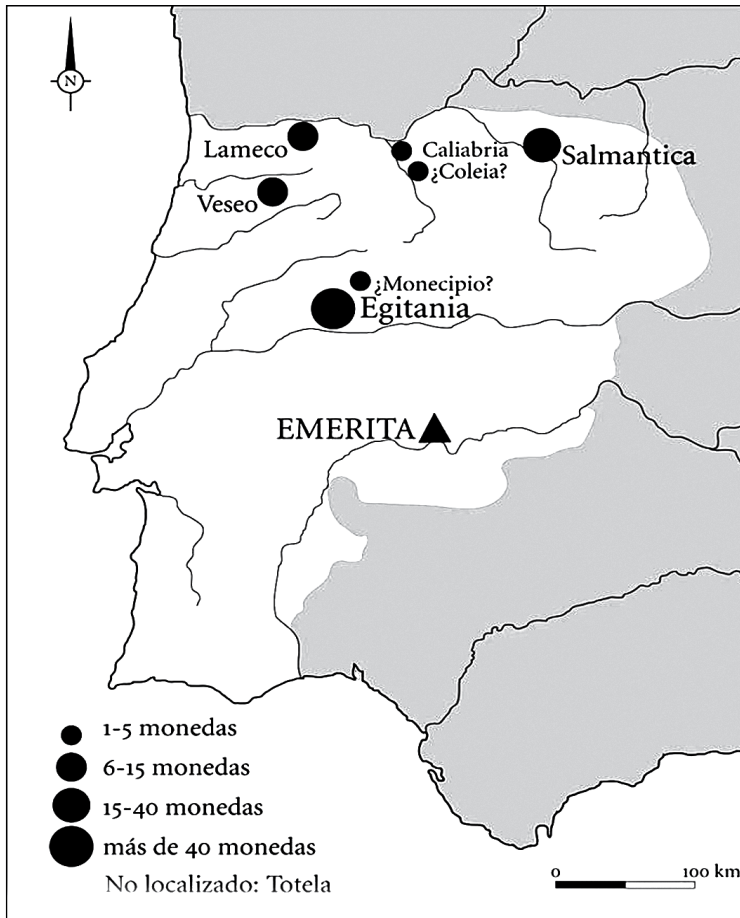


Figure 20. Visigoth mints and coins in northern Lusitania (after Martín Viso 2008).

family, whose possessions were also in El Bierzo, and, therefore, the possibility of the same thing happening to Riccimirus himself.²⁴⁸ These arguments are endorsed by the fact that Riccimirus should govern Castro Petrense as a *terra donata*, or as a kind of *stipendiis data* granted by the king, and this benefit could only be revoked because of *infidelitatis* or by *inutilitas in rebus commissis* (if it were to do with civil matters).²⁴⁹

²⁴⁶ Vit. Fruct. 2: *Hic uero beatus ex clarissima regali progenie exortus, sublimissimi culminis atque ducis exercitur Spaniae prolis.* Vers. Fruct. 4.1: *...quibus clarissimus Didacus Britio natus obtinuit leali Iustam equitate matronam... qua namque pontifex Sclua sortitus opimam rexit multifariter diuina dignatione Narbonam; sicque Beterrensem Petrus elimauerat urbem, deceat ut celicis talen conpulari falanges. Quid Sisenandum recolam gratia precipua regem, populos qui rite rexit conctosque refouit...;* Díaz y Díaz 1967; García Moreno 1974a: no. 175, 528, 537; Frighetto 2014: 40–42. Remember that another Sclua held episcopal dignity in Egítania during the 8th Council of Toledo (AD 653) and the 1st Council of Mérida (AD 666): Vives 1963: 287; 343; García Moreno 1974a: no. 481; Díaz 2011: 123f.

²⁴⁷ Frighetto 1998: 466.

²⁴⁸ Orlandis 1997: 157–159; Frighetto 1998: 466f.

²⁴⁹ Frighetto (1998: 466f.) assumes that Riccimirus was a *fidelis regis* who lent some kind of military *seruitium*. The *fideles regis* owed the king *promptum ac fidele obsequium, sincerum seruitium* (V Conc. Tol. c. 6), as well as *salutis eius custody uel uigilantia* (VI Conc. Tol. c. 12); King 1981: 78. It is possible that he was in favour of Paulus or that he had not been diligent enough in his military obligations towards the king. We know that this was the cause of the promulgation of the famous Wamba military law: L.V. IX.2.8. On the Visigothic *stipendium*: Sánchez Albornoz 1942: 157–190; 1947: passim; King 1981: 79–83; Barbero and Vigil 1982: 105–154; García Moreno 1992: 33f. The *stipendia* ceased on the death of the king who granting it, but in practice it was customary for the successor to allow them to keep them, hence the importance attached to the personal presentation of Palatine officers: King 1981: 81.

Fructuosus was the son of a *Spaniae dux* with command and property in the region of El Bierzo. We also know of other dignitaries of Septimania, such as the bishops Sclua of Narbonne and Petrus of Béziers, who also had blood ties with the saint.²⁴⁶

Something similar happens with the family of the illustrious Riccimirus, nobleman and protector of Saint Valerius of Bierzo, who had been entrusted with *Petrensis castrum*.²⁴⁷ As J. Orlandis and R. Frighetto assume, it is quite possible that the misfortunes of the Riccimirus family, which Saint Valerius would regret so much, were even indirect consequences of the purges that would have had to happen after the rebellion of Paulus in Narbonensis. Specifically, Orlandis supports his hypothesis through the historical context in which the ruin of Riccimirus' house had to develop (i.e. the rarefied political situation experienced in Spain during the reign of Wamba), and at the same time the family ties of Fructuosus'

The linkage through bonds of consanguinity that we have seen between the Galician and Narbonean nobilities could perhaps explain the remarkable presence in the onomastic of the Septimanian aristocracy of names with radicals in *-mundus* and *-mirus* that we have seen characteristic of the onomastic of the Suevic-Gothic type. Considering that Septimania was a province that was too exposed to the dangers of Frankish invasion and a cradle *par excellence* for usurpation attempts (due to the support that the usurpers received from external enemies), as well as the military power granted to the provincial *dux*, it is logical to think that the crown would try to secure the government of the province by appointing nobles closely linked to the reigning house, hence, we think, the close ties of blood that united the families of both duchys. That this trust was not always returned is obviously another story.

In fact, something similar to what has already been seen in the cases of Fructuosus and Riccimirus seems to have happened also with Wittiza. We have previously mentioned his family ties with the Duchy of Gallaecia through the kinship of this king with his predecessor Wamba, as well as his stay as regent in Tude, but there are also other indications that allow us to trace his relationship with Gallia Narbonensis. Thus, according to some versions of the *Chronica regum Visigothorum*, at the fall of the Visigothic kingdom, a figure called Achila was designated as king in the northeast of Tarraconensis.²⁵⁰ Some authors have sought to identify this man as Achila the Elier, who, according to an Arabic tradition, was the son of Wittiza. García Moreno, however, prefers not to make this identification and assumes the Egila/Ega name to be identifiable with the Oppa of the handwritten tradition and represented by the *Ajbar Maymua* and the *Fath al-Andalus*.²⁵¹ Be that as it may, this Achila/Egila who reigned in the northeast of the peninsular must in any event have belonged to the Wittiza lineage, because not only do we find repeated the *Eg-* component (<gót. *agis*, ‘sword edge’) we see represented in the name of Egica, but he was succeeded in his ephemeral kingdom by one Ardo, a noble who bears a name also documented in the onomastic heritage of the Visigoth royal family.

Indeed, according to the *Laterculus regum Visigothorum*, Ardo would have succeeded Achila II to the throne. The new king would have reigned in Septimania and northern Tarraconensis for seven years.²⁵² Unlike the case of Achila II, for which we have numismatic testimony, who can be assumed to have been *dux* of Tarraconensis or Septimania,²⁵³ there is no historical or archaeological documentation for this Ardo. The name clearly refers, by apheresis, to Ardabast, father of King Erwig, an exile from the Byzantine court at the time of Chindaswinth, who married one of the daughters of this monarch,²⁵⁴ and, if we are to believe the Gothic-Arab writer Ibn al-Qutiyya – the alleged descendant of King Wittiza through his granddaughter Sara *la Goda* (i.e. ‘the Gothic woman’) – to one of Wittiza’s son.²⁵⁵ According to this author, who represents an historiographical tradition different from that of *Ajbar Maymua* and *Fath al-Andalus*, Wittiza had three sons: Olmundo (*Alamund*), Romulus (*Rumulu*), and Artabast (*Artubas*).²⁵⁶

²⁵⁰ Lat. reg. Visig. (Par.): *Achila reg. ann. III*. García Moreno 1989: 189.

²⁵¹ García Moreno 2003: 782–784.

²⁵² Lat. reg. Visig. (Cont. Cod. C Par. 4667): *Egiga cum filio suo Witizane reg. ann. XXIII. Achila reg. ann. III. Ardo reg. ann. VII*. About this noble: Collins 2005: 140–145.

²⁵³ Achila II minted currency in Narbone, Gerunda, and Tarraco: Miles 1952: 40–42, 444–446; Mateu 1936: 238–250; 1946: 26.

²⁵⁴ Rot. 2. Menéndez Pidal 1992: 325–328; Barbero and Vigil 1982: 206f. Against Coll i Alentorn 1971–1972: 297f. On this, see Vallejo Girvés 2003: 105–112; Pliego 2013. *Pace* García Moreno, who defends the Gothic origin of the aristocrat (see footnote 251). In our opinion, the presence of an exile from the Ardabast house could explain the Byzantine course followed by Visigothic palatine art from the middle of the 7th century onwards, see: Barroso and Morín 2001: 204f, 249–263; Barroso *et al.* 2011: 56.

²⁵⁵ Ibn al-Qutiyya, T’arif iftitah al-Andalus 36–40. The tradition recorded by this author is independent and does not coincide with the story provided by other Arabic literary sources, i.e. *Ajbar Machmúa* and *Fath al-Andalus*, who grant Wittiza only two sons – Oppa and Sisbert. Actually, we do not know to what extent all this data provided by the Arab authors deserves credence, as the subject often appears entangled with the thorny issue of responsibility in the destruction of the kingdom of the Goths and the Arab legends around the conquest of al-Andalus, but it cannot be doubted that they do contain some truth. In any event, they are practically our only sources of information. For this problem, see García Moreno 2003.

²⁵⁶ Fierro 1990: 60f.; Christys 2002.

After the Arab conquest, the first of these sons, who significantly carries the radical Suevic-Gothic *-mundus*, settled in Seville. This Alamund/Olmund had also three children –two sons (one, Abbas or Oppas, would become a Metropolitan of Seville if we believe some sources) and a daughter, the famous Sara, the mother of Ibn al-Qutiyya just referred to.²⁵⁷

According to Ibn al-Qutiyya, the second son of Wittiza was called Artabas. Artabas established his residence at Córdoba, becoming the first count (*qumis*) of al-Andalus and an advisor to the Arab emirs. Al-Maqqari and Ibn al-Qutiyya relate that Artabas lived in Córdoba surrounded by royal pomp: he wore a crown and sat on a throne plated with silver and gold.²⁵⁸ Among his responsibilities was the collection of tributes from the *dhimmíes* (i.e. the subdued Christians). In general, this Artabas is reminiscent of the Byzantine exile of Armenian origin we find in the court of Chindaswinth, an opinion not shared by García Moreno, however, who postulates that the name should be Artabadus. According to this author, it would be a documented anthroponym in the Gothic onomastic and, in addition, the name bears the meaning of ‘strong in the struggle’.²⁵⁹ Regardless of its Gothic or Armenian origin, the circumstance that one of Wittiza’s descendants carried that name supports the idea that the king had family ties with Erwig’s family, and, therefore, also with Roderic.

As regards the third of Wittiza’s sons, Ibn al-Qutiyya reports that he had the Latin name of Romulus and that he was established in Toledo. A descendant of this son of Wittiza was Hafs b. Albar, ‘*qadi* (judge) of Christians’, who has been identified as the son of Alvarus of Córdoba.²⁶⁰ The name of Romulus seems like a scholarly invention, perhaps inspired by the history of Rome, since it is not documented in the onomastics of Visigoth Spain. It is a classical name alien to both Goths and Christians. Taking into account the name and the *nasab* carried by his descendant, this could well be an Alphonsus (<got. *Hildelfuns*) or Alvar(us) (alt.nor. *Hallvarðr?*), depending on the generations, although other authors have assumed other interpretations. Thus, and taking into account the Arabic transcription (*r-m-l-o*), García Moreno assumes that the name in question must have been Remila, or, following a reading advanced by Fernández y González from a handwritten variant of al-Maqqari, Requila. In any event these are well-documented names in Gothic onomastics²⁶¹

On the other hand, Wittiza is a personal name also attested in Septimania a few years after the fall of the Visigoth kingdom in a person no less important as Benedict of Aniane (c. AD 747–821), the great Benedictine reformer of the Carolingian era. Considering the name and Visigothic origin of the saint, as well as the fact that Benedict was the son of the Count of Magalona, a strategic town of Septimania, and the great trajectory of the saint in the Frankish court, it does not seem improbable that Benedict also had some kind of family ties with the Visigoth royal family.²⁶² It has already been commented how these links between prominent members of the nobility of Gallaecia and Septimania may well be explained by the interest of Toledan kings to place in the government of both provinces – which were considered key from a military point of view – dignitaries belonging to the royal family or closely linked with it. It would, therefore, be an attempt to prevent subjects outside the family lineage of the reigning house from accessing the government of two heavily militarised provinces, and which, for this reason,

²⁵⁷ García Moreno 1997a: 366.

²⁵⁸ Simonet 1903: 111f., 203.

²⁵⁹ García Moreno 2003: 786–788. An interpretation that goes against the opinion defended by Vallejo Girvés 2002: 105–112.

²⁶⁰ García Moreno 2003: 786.

²⁶¹ García Moreno 2003: 786.

²⁶² Ardo, Vita Bened. 1: *...Benedictus Abbas ex Getarum genere partibus Gotiae oriundus fuit, nobilibus natalibus ortus... Pater siquidem eius comitatum Magdalonensem quoadusque vixit tenuit et Francorum genti fidelissimus totius uiribus extitit, fortis et ingeniosus...* (Waitz 1887: 201); Chron. Moissac. AD 794: *...inter quos etiam uenerabilis ac sanctissimus Abbas Benedictus qui uocatur Vitiza, monasterii Anianensis a partibus Gotiae...* (Pertz 1826: 301). Curiously, his disciple, biographer, and successor at the monastery of Aniane, is named Ardo Smaragdo.

could constitute a serious risk to the stability of the throne. Only by accepting this premise can it be understood why Roderic should have had charge of the government of a duchy of the importance of Betica at the time of Wittiza's death.

A paradigmatic example of what we have been saying, even more significant because the measure clearly goes against ecclesiastical praxis, can be seen in the dismissal of Bishop Sisbert and the appointment of Bishop Felix of Seville as Metropolitan of Toledo, a decision that was accompanied by the promotion of Faustinus of Braga to the Sevillian see. It is evident that, as Felix's elevation to the episcopal see of Toledo was because of his personal prestige and connections with the Toledan court, Faustinus' election as bishop of a see as important as Hispalis was undoubtedly also due to his Gallaecian origins, and, therefore, should be boosted by his proximity and harmony with the ruling dynasty.²⁶³ In this same sense, we know that previously Wamba had acted in a similar way by naming the *spatarius* Theudemund as *numerarius* of the Church of Mérida, probably the same *comes* who appears among the noblemen who signed the acts of the 16th Council of Toledo.²⁶⁴ This measure is framed within the centralising policy adopted by King Wamba and well illustrated by a series of measures (creation of new bishoprics, which included a palatine bishopric in Toledo, Law IV.5.6 on *iglesias propias* or private churches, etc.) that were aimed at subjecting the Church, and the disintegrating powers of the kingdom, to real power.²⁶⁵ In this case, the *numerarius* named by Wamba has a clear Suevic-Gothic name, so if our hypothesis is accepted, he could be another member of the influential Galician who were interweaving themselves within the Toledo court.

With a certain conviction, a similar purpose can be proposed for the famous *dux* Teudemirus, governor of the province of Aurariola (Rav. Cosmogr. IV 42), i.e. the southeast border marking the ancient Byzantine domains. *Chronicle of 754* reports that this duke had to face an attempted invasion by an enemy fleet during the reign of Egica-Wittiza – an episode suggesting that he had been King Egica's trusted man.²⁶⁶ It is very possible that this Teudemirus was the same nobleman cited in the acts of the 16th Council of Toledo as one of the participants in the usurpation of Suniefred.²⁶⁷ However, only two years after the fall of the kingdom, in AD 713, Teudemirus appears again, this time signing a pact with the Arabs that would guarantee him and his people liberty and freedom of worship, as well as the government of a territory that included several important towns in the south-eastern region (*Aurariola, Laqant, Balantala, Mula, Eliocroca, Begastri, Eio*), territory that would be named after him *qura* ('district') of Tudmir (the Arab name for Teudemir). In exchange for these prerogatives, the magnate recognised the sovereignty of the Arabs over Hispania and the payments of taxes.²⁶⁸

With regard to our study directly, the relationship with Egica and Wittiza and the onomastic of the *dux* (with a theme in *-mirus* characteristic of the Suevic onomastic) could possibly support a Gallaecian origin for Teudemirus. If it is confirmed that this Teudemirus is the same nobleman who appears mentioned in the 16th Council as one of the participants in the conspiracy against Egica, one would have to conclude that later he would have been rehabilitated in his position by Wittiza, something that would not be unthinkable, as the author of the *Chronicle of 754* describes the king as a *clementissimus* man. Indeed, according to this source, Wittiza would have granted a broad amnesty that included forgiving political

²⁶³ Felix can be identified with the homonymous character who appears signing as abbot, or archpriest, the acts of 13th – 15th Councils of Toledo: Andrés Sanz *et al.* 2010: 118–120.

²⁶⁴ See footnote 66 above.

²⁶⁵ Barbero and Vigil 1982: 80–82.

²⁶⁶ Chron. Muz. 47: [***] *nomine Theudimer, qui in Spanie partes non modicas Arabum intulerat neces, et diu exageratos pacem cum eis federat habiendus. Sed et iam sub Egicam et Uuittizam Gothorum regibus in Grecis, qui equorei nabalique descenderant sua in patria, de palmam uictorie triumphauerat.* (Gil, CSM, I: 34). García Moreno 1989: 186.

²⁶⁷ García Moreno 1974a: no. 152.

²⁶⁸ García Antón 1985.

criminals (returning their clienteles and properties), compensating all the exiles, and restoring their status as members of the Palatine Office.²⁶⁹ The royal pardon granted to this nobleman could be proof that Teudemirus was a prominent member of the same family clan as Wittiza, since, as mentioned, it was logical for the kings to place in the provinces aristocrats in whom he had complete trust. And this policy needed to be followed even more strongly in those provinces which, like Auriola's, were exposed to possible enemy attacks.²⁷⁰ As we have already advanced, this could well have been the case for Roderic. Such grace measures occurred with some frequency, given the particular political situation faced by the kingdom, and the difficulty in maintaining a balance between the various factions. In this way, therefore, Erwig restored royal favours, as well as confiscated properties, to all the rebels of his predecessor's reign at the 12th Council of Toledo (AD 683). Similar measures of grace were extended by King Egica at the 13th Council.²⁷¹

The bonds between the king and his *duces* could be of the vassal or family type, although most likely they were tied at the same time, which explains the persistence of certain roots in the onomastics of this period. In fact, a significant increase of nobles it can be observed with names of a type that we have been calling 'Suevic-Gothic onomastic' since the reign of King Wamba.²⁷² Thus, while in Recceswinth's reign we do not find *uirii illustres* that bear onomastics clearly of the Suevic-Gothic type, except perhaps one Froila who signed the 8th Council of Toledo (AD 653) with 17 other officers of the *Aula Regia*, from the reign of Erwig the image changes completely. If in the 12th Council (AD 681) there are only two nobles with onomastics of the Suevic-Gothic type (Wittiza²⁷³ and Salimir), of the 14 nobles who signed the acts, just two years later, at the 13th Council (AD 683) the number rises to seven (Wademir, Argemir, Salimir, Sisimir, Trasimir, Audemund, Gisclamund) out of 26, to whom we should also add Egica, nephew of Wamba (perhaps the son of Wittiza who signs in AD 681). In the days of Egica we find five out of 17 in the 15th Council, from AD 688 (Wimar, Trasemund, Gisclamund, Suniemir, Audemund), and another four out of 16 at the 16th, from year AD 693, of which two are repeats from the previous synod (Wimar, Audemund, Sisemund, Teudemund). In total, between one third and one quarter of the members of the *Aula Regia* of the reigns of Erwig and Egica have Suevic-Gothic type onomastics, while prior to Erwig's reign the percentage barely exceeded 5% (Figure 21).²⁷⁴

²⁶⁹ Chron. Muz. 37: *Hic patris succedens in solio quamquam petulanter, clementissimus... Quin non solum eos quos pater damnauerat ad gratiam recipit temtos exilio, uerum etiam clientulus manet in restaurando. Nam quos ille graui oppreerat iugo, pristino iste reducebat in gaudio et quos ille a proprio abdicaberat solo, iste pio reformans reparabat ex dono.* (Gil, CSM, I: 29f.). García Moreno 1989: 188.

²⁷⁰ If the Chronicle of Alfonso III is to be believed, an attempted naval invasion by the Saracen fleet occurred during the time of Wamba, although, unfortunately, there is no record which part of the coast was involved – i.e. in the southeast or the Straits of Gibraltar. Seb. 3. *Illius namque tempore ducentae septuaginta naues Sarracenorum Hispaniae littus sunt adgressae: ibique omnia eorum agmina ferro sunt deleta, et clases eorum ignibus concrematae.* García Moreno (2003: 787) implies a family relationship between the *dux* and the family of Egica and Wittiza through kinship. For this important nobleman, see Barroso *et al.* 2021: 229-364.

²⁷¹ Barbero and Vigil 1982: 144-149. Ildigisius himself (the Hildigisius *gardingus* of HWR 7) signs the acts of the 12th Conc. Tol. as proof that he enjoyed the favour of the new king and the issues dealt with in Canon 3: King 1981: 77, n. 27.

²⁷² Hereinafter we use the term for a series of names that show preference for the use of theme radicals in *-mirus* and *-mundus*, not because this onomastic is really exclusively Suevic but because it occurs with greater abundance in personal names from the time of the ancient Suevic kingdom.

²⁷³ We have included both Wittiza and Wimar in this list not only because of the homonymous king, who, as we have seen, was a relative of Wamba, who would justify the presence of the first, but also because in both cases they are names carried by important Galician magnates from the time of Alfonso III: Isla 1993: 20-22.

²⁷⁴ Actually the percentages could be even higher if we consider: 1) that a noble would not be represented in the list whose onomastic does not clearly infer a Gallaecian origin (which in turn serves to calibrate the cases of those whose onomastic infers a Gallaecian origin when this was not in fact the case), and 2) that the names with the radical *-fredus* have not been included here because they would not be so exclusive to the western zone: two signatories from the 8th Council (Cumefredus, Cuniefredus), one from the 12th and 16th (Teudefredus, possibly Roderic's father) and another from the 13th (Suniefredus). The latter, however, is more doubtful as the themes *Sunie-* (<got. Sunja, 'truth') as *-fredus* (<got. Friðu, 'Peace'), especially the former, are frequent in the northeastern area: Kremer 1969-1972: 207f., no. 173. However, the relationship that can be intuited for the Septimianian and Galician nobility has already been commented.

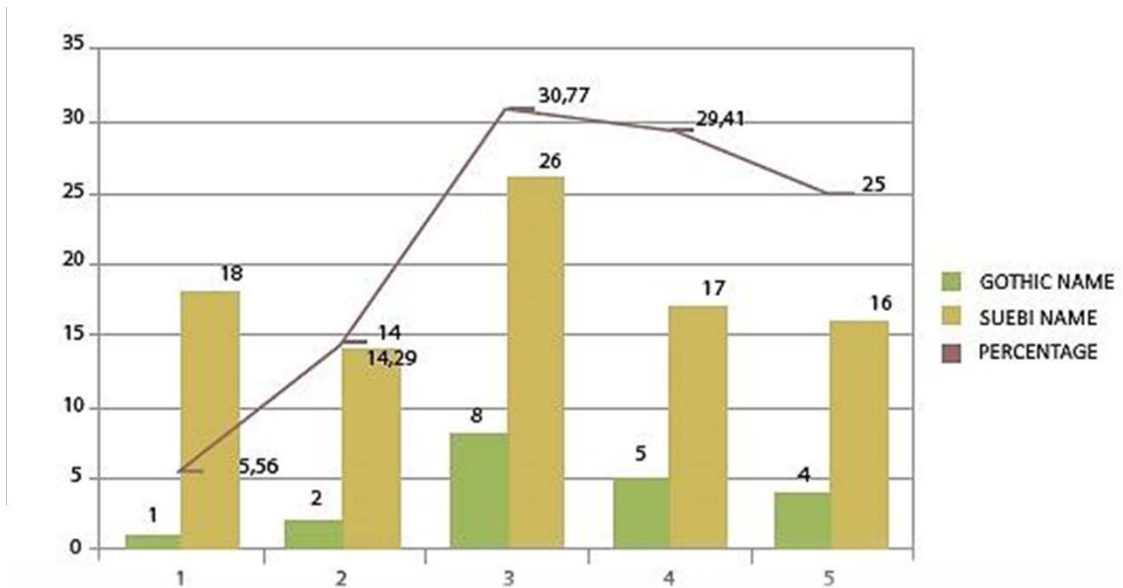


Figure 21. Suevo and Goth anthroponyms of the Aula Regia during the second half of the 7th century AD according to the signatures of the councils of Toledo.

These data seem highly significant. But what conclusion can be drawn from this rise of nobles with Suevic-Gothic type onomastics in the list of notables from the Visigoth kingdom? From our point of view, this increase could be indicative of the existence of a powerful clan of Suevic-Gothic origin within the court of Toledo, which, if not the majority, at least had enough strength and entity to impose of its members on the throne of the Goths (Chindaswinth, Recceswinth, Wamba, Egica, Wittiza and Rudericus) and to re-found the Gothic kingdom in Asturias after AD 711. This power group seems to have been established with King Chindaswinth and would be fully entrenched following the enthronement of Wamba (AD 672–680), although its beginnings can go back a few decades before, from the time of King Sisenand (AD 631–636), if we accept that the family’s relationship with Saint Fructuosus is due to its common Galician origin, or even Suinthila (AD 621–631), whose son bore a clear Suevic-Gothic name: Riccimirus.²⁷⁵ Regarding the latter, whom we know had led a remarkable campaign against the Ruccones, perhaps a policy of marital links between the Suevic and Gothic nobles that would have been developed by Reccared and his immediate successors in an attempt to assimilate the former Suevian realm within the structures of the Toledan kingdom, something along the lines of what Alfonso VI would promote centuries later between Castilian and Leon noblemen, and which would have led Suinthila to choose for his son – to whom the throne had been promised – such an explicit name. Indeed, such a name is an attempt to link the future heir of the crown with both Gothic (*Recc-*) and Suevic (*-mirus*) royalty.²⁷⁶

From all that has been said, and taking into consideration A.P. Bronisch’s hypothesis about the origins of Wittiza, we can understand the situation that preceded the catastrophe of AD 711 not so much as confrontations between two families with power bases in different territories of the Iberian Peninsula, but as part of the struggle between two factions of the *same* family who were disputing the throne throughout the second half of the 7th century AD. In this sense, we tend to joke with this question saying that rather than old version of *Falcon Crest*, it is a recreation of *I Claudius*.

²⁷⁵ Isid. Hisp. HG 65: *Huius filius Riccimirus in consortio regni adsumptus pari cum patre solio conlaetatur...*

²⁷⁶ We must not forget that the presence of the radical *Recc-* forces us to think about a familiar link between King Suinthila and King Reccared as proposed by ancient historians and taken up by García Moreno (2008: 145f.).

In this context, the marriage between Egica and Cixilo is interpreted as an agreement to resolve the hereditary issue between the families of Chindaswinth and Wamba, respective leaders of the two factions that pretended the throne. It is very possible that this agreement was encouraged by an important sector of the nobility alarmed by the situation of political crisis that plagued the kingdom of Toledo, among which must have been Bishop Julian de Toledo.²⁷⁷ However, the lack of issue from the marriage must have been noticed by part of the group around Egica and attempts were made to enthrone Wittiza without further delay, since he must have been old enough to take over the government of the kingdom. A similar procedure would then have been followed years before when Count Celsus and Bishops Braulius of Zaragoza and Eutropius (of Tarazona?) had tried to promote the succession of Chindaswinth and presumably motivated the uprising by Froya. Certainly the option for Wittiza meant a total breakdown of the agreement with Erwig's family branch, which had enabled the rise to the throne of Egica and would ultimately have been the cause of the conspiracy plotted by Suniefred and Bishop Sisbert against the king shortly before AD 693. Finally, the celebration of the 16th Council of Toledo that same year would serve Egica to settle accounts with the widow of Erwig and other nobles of her faction and ensure the peaceful succession to the throne in the person of his son Wittiza.

Somehow all this news about the leading role of Gallaecia in the last phases of the Visigothic kingdom seems to be endorsed by the archaeological research of recent years, especially through the study of a series of monetary mints that occur throughout of the 7th century AD. One thing to keep in mind is that Gallaecia monopolises almost 50% of the monetary mints of the Visigoth period. And if we also add the coinage of the mints of northern Lusitania, once dependent on the Suevic kingdom, the disproportion is even more striking with respect to the whole kingdom (Figures 19, 20). It is evident that these data are barely justified, especially if the relative geographical isolation of the province is taken into account and that, in principle, it is not a region of extraordinary agricultural wealth.²⁷⁸ The only plausible explanation to elucidate this phenomenon is that the region still maintains the exploitation of the mining of the territory. Obviously, it must have been precisely this mining wealth of the territory that was one of the motivations for the confrontation between the Sueves and Goths (Figure 23).

Actually Galicia and Asturias had been Rome's main sources of gold supply between the 1st and 3rd centuries AD. Many authors have defended that, within the context of the deep economic crisis of the Republic, mining wealth was the real cause of the outbreak of the Cantabrian wars. Anyway, after the Roman conquest, at the height of the imperial era, Gallaecia provided the treasury of Rome with more than 20,000 pounds of gold per year, with Asturias' contribution – from spectacular sites such as Las Medulas, between Bergidum and Forum Gigorrorum – being the greatest.²⁷⁹ However, traditionally it has been defended that mining operations ceased around the 3rd century AD or at the end of the Empire.²⁸⁰ But there is no doubt that these operations would have continued, albeit certainly at a lower, but still

²⁷⁷ The active participation of the Metropolitan of Toledo in the deposition of King Wamba is not fully proven, although there are many authors who suspect that Julian was somehow involved and even that he was the true inducer of it. Whatever his involvement in the plot, it seems clear that, on Erwig's death, Julian tried for an agreement between the two factions of the Gothic aristocracy. In this sense, the composition of the *Historia Wambae Regis* is explained, extolling the figure of the dethroned King Wamba and actually conceived as a true *speculum principis* destined for King Egica: García Herrero 1997: 205–207. As for this, it seems that his choice was the only possible solution, probably because Erwig's son was not old enough to assume power: Orlandis 1987: 255.

²⁷⁸ Díaz 2004; Martín Viso 2008.

²⁷⁹ Pliny, NH XXXIII: 77–78, 80. On the subject of Roman mining: García Bellido 1978: 272–276; Blázquez 1978: 311f.; Sánchez Palencia *et al.* 2006; Matías 2006.

²⁸⁰ Even at the end of the 4th century AD, Licinius Pacatus, in the panegyric of Theodosius, mentions the gold holdings in Gallaecia (28.2: *aurum quod of montium uenis aut fluminum glareis... scrutator gallaicus eruisset*), something which has occasionally been held up as proof that the Galician factories were still active: Blázquez 1978: 591; Orlandis 1988: 266f. These sorts of testimonies, however, are usually discarded as they contain a good deal of rhetoric and it is difficult to distinguish what corresponds to the reality of the moment and what to the literary topos.



Figure 22. Museo de Zamora. 7th Century gold crosses from the treasure of Villafáfila (Zamora)

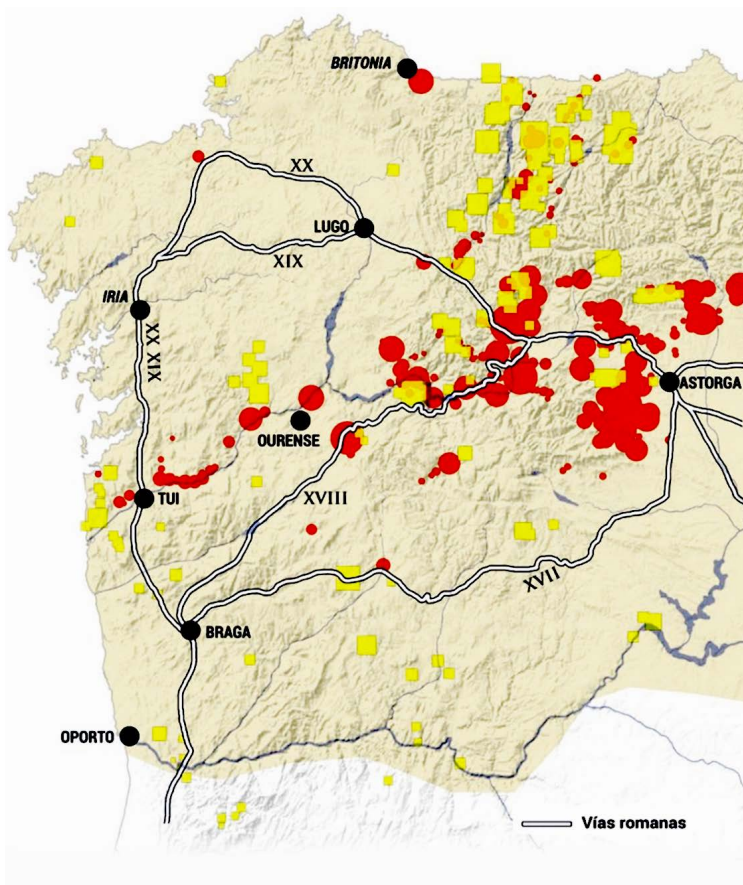


Figure 23. Distribution of gold mining in the northwest in relation to Roman roads (source: CSIC) (López Quiroga and Martínez Tejera 2017).

significant level, in the Visigothic period. Evidently, large-scale exploitation, as it was undertaken in imperial times, had to cease with the end of the Roman administration. But after the Romans it was necessary to return to the system of artisanal panning and the commissioning of some ancient Roman mines. Of course, these mining activities did not then have the industrial character of former times, partly due to the depletion of deposits caused by overexploitation in imperial times. Nevertheless, as has been said, that would present no obstacle to continuing to take advantage of small concerns that together provided small but useful amounts of precious metals. In fact attempts to reactivate the mining activities carried out in the 19th, and the first decades of 20th century show that even rudimentary systems can provide quite satisfactory results depending on the local economic conditions of the moment.²⁸¹

²⁸¹ Matías 2006: 221–223.

Thus, if in periods of protectionist or self-sufficient economic policies, such as those mentioned above, the mining outputs from the northwest of the Iberian Peninsula were attractive enough to encourage various attempts at exploitation, then the situation in the 7th century AD should have been even more so, when the economy and international trade, although much more limited, were undoubtedly much more favourable in relation to mining.²⁸² It is thought that, in the case of the gold deposits of the interior of Gallaecia, it would be enough to run only a joint operation at a rate of 5% of the levels reached in imperial times (20,000 pounds per year) to obtain a production of 1,000 pounds per year, a sum close to 60,000 *solidi*, i.e. c. 180,000 annual *tremisses*, no negligible sum for the time; and all that without taking into account the foreseeable debasement of the currency law, which would keep the nominal value intact while saving noble metal. In addition, the possibility of finding some exceptional sources to justify the necessary small investments could always be added.

Obviously this does not mean that mining activities in the Visigothic period reached imperial production levels. We should think, rather, of a series of small-scale mining operations, dragging the river courses or small extraction mines, which, due to their own artisanal character, have hardly left any traces in the archaeological record, but which together would mean a volume of production of gold and tin that was not inconsiderable. Sánchez Pardo, a scholar who has investigated the subject in detail from a new perspective, writes that:

Los lugares de minería tardoantigua y altomedieval, habitualmente de tipo vision y a visión abierta, dejan mucha menos (o ninguna) huella y por ello son muy difíciles de localizar, distorsionando nuestra visión de esta actividad. ('The Late Antique and early medieval mining sites, usually of alluvial type and open-cast, leave a much smaller (or no) footprint, and therefore are very difficult to locate, distorting our vision of this activity'.)

In addition, the same author considers that there are at least two important reasons that support the idea of continuity in mining exploitation in northwest of the Iberian Peninsula after the fall of Rome: the need to make long-distance trade profitable, and the increase in pollution from lead levels between the 6th and 7th centuries AD.²⁸³ Two further reasons can be added that favoured the search for mining resources, as previously indicated: the need for noble metals (substantially gold) for which Visigothic Spain had to buy expensively as imports from the East, and tin to supply the bronze industry, one of the most important economic activities at the moment due to the strong demand for everyday objects (items for the church and court, buckles, harnesses, etc., etc.). It is interesting here to see how imitations of Byzantine belt buckles and brooches found in deposits and miscellaneous finds in the Cantabrian area (i.e. in an area where Visigothic occupation levels were relatively low) are mainly made of iron with threads of embedded silver (or damascene technique), rarely in bronze.

In this sense, Sánchez Pardo has investigated the relationship between mints and *parroquias* ('parishes') and possible deposits of gold (inland Galicia) and tin (coastal Galicia), reaching the conclusion that there is a relationship between parishes and mints and the mining centres, a relationship that in some way would have become fossilised in their ecclesiastical establishments, which would be nothing other than the material reflection of the economic dynamism of this society and the social strength of its leaders.²⁸⁴ Together with such evidence, treasures such as those from Villafáfila (Zamora), or gems, such as the rings from Tuy (Pontevedra) and Samos (Lugo), may be indicative of the amounts of gold that were still present in Gallaecia and northern Lusitania at this time (Figure 22).²⁸⁵ And to all these indications,

²⁸² Matías 2006: 221–223. The author suggests an authentic 'gold rush' in the 19th century, with some exceptional results, especially in northern Portugal.

²⁸³ Sánchez Pardo 2014a: 988–991, 998.

²⁸⁴ Sánchez Prado 2014b: 999.

²⁸⁵ Bouza 1946; Vázquez de Parga 1947; Hübener 1981: 272.

of course, we can add the clear and explicit mention by John of Biclaro of not just the taking of the kingdom, but also the royal treasury of the Sueves after the conquest by Leovigild; a possible reference to the great wealth that was captured, and which Orlandis supposes came from the exploitation of the Galician gold mines by the Suevi.²⁸⁶

The profitability of mining operations would depend, of course, on various factors (wealth of deposits, state trade balance, economic situation, etc.) that directly affected demand. As we have said, for the 7th century AD all these factors were conducive to the exploitation of gold and tin deposits, in fact there was an accumulation of circumstances that stimulated a highly favourable situation for mining (i.e. a trade balance deficit with the Byzantine East because the importation of luxury items, the need for monetary payments to the army and the administration, a desire for hoarding by the state and the Church, the practice of donations, industrial needs in metalworking and goldsmithing, etc). Byzantine demand itself for such mining products – necessary for the metal industry and goldsmithing – would also be an important factor that would further increase interest in the exploitation of mining resources in the Northwest. Gold and tin, the main minerals produced in Gallaecia, were essential for both goldsmithing and metalworking in general, and Byzantium was interested in finding alternative sources given the amounts of such products needed by them to supply the imperial factories.²⁸⁷

However, this explanation by itself is not enough to understand a phenomenon as complex as that of the multiplicity of mints in Gallaecia. Among other reasons, logically a good part of the Galician gold would have to be transported directly to the capital of the kingdom for safekeeping in the royal treasury, since the Gothic monarchy, unlike the Frankish one, always retained the status of *regalia* for the minting of coins. As we say, a significant part of the production had to directly to the monarchy so that it could meet the needs of the court. Once in Toledo, precious metals would be locked away as savings, thus ensuring the social status of the court. This treasury was absolutely essential for the crown if the king wanted to ensure the loyalty of his *primates* and establish new loyalty bonds with the nobility.

Thus, mining wealth must be seen as the explanation for the importance that the control of Galicia, Asturias, and northern Lusitania seems to have had for the Visigothic crown. It may seem obvious, then, to point out that the phenomenon of the multiplicity of mints in these areas is partly explained by the abundance of precious metals. However, this phenomenon is broader and exceeds a single specific fact. It must be understood above all and directly in the light of the social and military importance that the local aristocracy had acquired within the structures of the kingdom.²⁸⁸ Or, in the words of Sánchez Pardo:

Las cecas no son una expresión directa ni reflejan una relación causa-efecto de la actividad minera, ya que responden a una realidad político-económica más amplia y compleja, pero sí reflejan un pacto, una articulación entre un poder local y el poder monárquico... no todas las cecas responden a la minería, pero sí nos parece probable que la delegación de la actividad minera que existió quedase reflejada a través de las cecas. ('The mints are not a direct expression nor do they reflect a cause-effect relationship of mining activity, since they respond to a broader and more complex political-economic reality; but they do reflect a pact, an articulation between local and kingly power... [Not] all the mints respond to mining, but it seems likely that the delegation of the mining activities that existed would be reflected through the mints'.)

This would explain the appearance of so many mints in seemingly 'peripheral' places and at the same time also the disappearance of all of them in the middle of the 7th century AD and their concentration

²⁸⁶ Orlandis 1988: 266f.

²⁸⁷ Puche and Bosch 1996. For this subject, see Sánchez Pardo 2014b.

²⁸⁸ For Lusitania: Martín Viso 2008; for Gallaecia: Sánchez Pardo 2014b: 1002–1007.

in the workshops of Tude, Bracara, and Lucus, in what has been interpreted as a faithful reflection of the administrative centralisation and power measures carried out under the reigns of Chindaswinth and Recceswinth. These centralising measures would also coincide with the return of the southern territory of the former Suevic kingdom to Lusitania.²⁸⁹ However, since the phenomenon of the reduction of mints can be seen already some decades earlier, under Suinthila (AD 621–631), it is possible that centralisation had to do with the rise to the throne of Toledo of a dynasty of Suevic-Gothic origin in the figure of Sisenand, whom, as we have seen, was familiarly associated with important members of the nobility of El Bierzo, and therefore with the direct control of that wealth from kinship ties.

On the other hand, the need to guard the gold holdings of the region led to a heavily fortified landscape in which *castros* ('burghs'), such as at Ventosa or Petrense, would have been granted *in stipendium* to noblemen of proven fidelity to the king. With this panorama, the reoccupation of some former Roman army camps should not be ruled out, if we take into account the low visibility of the Visigothic archaeological record and the link between some of these *castra* and the main mineral deposits.²⁹⁰ In this way, the deep concern aroused within the power circles of the kingdom by increased monastic activities caused by the foundations of Saint Fructuosus in the El Bierzo region can be better understood, as they represented a significant factor in the evasion of the mandated military obligations.²⁹¹ Likewise, perhaps the description *dux exercitus Hispaniae* used by the author of the *Vita Fructuosi* for the Duke of Gallaecia tells of the importance attached to the leader of the Gothic military force in that area. In any event, what clearly shows up in the analysis of the currency is the enormous power that the Galician nobility had acquired within the political structures of the Visigothic state and the close bonds formed between this aristocracy and the royal power established in Toledo. In sum, these mints come to be, in our opinion, the most accurate testimony of the *stipendia* deliveries to the *fideles regis* agreed by the kings of Toledo as payments for the loyalties and services they provided to the crown, but they are also reflections of the enormous importance that local aristocratic groups will assume from the middle of the 7th century AD.

²⁸⁹ Sánchez Pardo 2014b: 1006. Obviously, it should be clear that not all the mints were a response to these needs for delegation payments. We have already cited some coin issues with the legend VICTOR/VICTORIA that are explained by the effect of military campaigns.

²⁹⁰ Maluquer already assumed that the reoccupation in the 5th century AD of Castro de Las Merchanas (Lumbrales, Salamanca) was related to the custody of the tin mines that were still being exploited at that time: Maluquer 1968: 119. See also Sánchez Pardo 2014b: 1001f. For the archaeological testimonies of this era in the province of León: Benítez 1989; Avello 1990–1991; Pérez Rodríguez-Aragón 1996.

²⁹¹ Vit. Fruct. 14 23–31: *...nisi et duces exercitus provinciae illius uel circumseptus undique confinibus regi clamassent ut aliquantum proiberetur, -quia si fas fuerit permissionis non esset qui in expeditione publica proficisceretur- innumerabilis se debuit congregare exercitus monacorum.*

Conclusion: From the Suevic Kingdom to the Duchy of Gallaecia

There is no doubt that the rebellion of *dux* Argimundus was one of the most precarious moments of Reccared's reign. We lack the precise details of how the conspiracy developed, but without a doubt the throne was seriously threatened: John of Biclaro himself underlines the seriousness of this danger, expanding on the punishments suffered by the rebel and his accomplices: all is summed up in the succinct phrase with which the Biclaro abbot closes his chronicle: ... *et docuit famulos dominis non esse superbos* ('and taught the subjects not to be proud with their lords'). That categorical condemnation of the attempt to overthrow the king is unparalleled in any of the other uprisings narrated throughout the pages of his chronicle, which gives us an idea of the significance he granted to this in his account. The fact that John of Biclaro mentions that Argimundus was not only a member of the *Aula Regia* but also *dux prouinciae*, the name of the rebel, the situation of Gallaecia as a recently conquered province, as well as the parallel with the subsequent uprising of *dux* Paulus, in terms of *modus operandi* and later punishment, are arguments that incline us to think that insurrection of Argimundus was not a simple palace conspiracy, but an authentic revolt of the province of Gallaecia that put at risk all the political work achieved by Leovigild and Reccared.

However, due to the lack of precision in our source, it is difficult to verify what the Duke's ultimate goal was: whether to overthrow Reccared from the Visigoth throne, or, on the contrary, restore the old Suevic kingdom. Some clues seem to suggest this last option. First, the province had recently been conquered thanks in part to a confrontation between two factions of the Suevian nobility, to one of which – presumably one favourable to the Visigothic intervention – the rebel might belong. In the second place, there is the clamorous silence of John of Biclaro about the development of events, a silence that contrasts with the details he provides for other similar events. And, finally, we are inclined to believe in this option, whereby the rebels were punished, with a final ride on the back of a donkey through the streets of Toledo, in a sort of burlesque triumph or parody of the ceremony of investiture, which certainly seems more typical of a military triumph than a palace coup. These, in general, were resolved with a series of summary trials and subsequent execution of sentences, as we have seen with the conspiracies of Segga in Mérida and Uldila in Toledo. In this sense, and significantly, the punishment inflicted on Argimundus is practically identical to that suffered by the *dux* Paulus years after his failed rebellion in Septimania.

In our opinion, the importance of the Argimundus rebellion is due above all to the fact that we can start to make out the beginning of a phenomenon that will mark the future of Visigothic Gallaecia: the militarisation of the duchy. Thus, from the analysis of the various literary and archaeological sources, we have the solid premise that the incorporation of the former *Sueuorum regnum* into the Visigothic kingdom of Toledo was not as peaceful and complete as the chronicles of the time are determined to describe in unison. On the contrary, it seems clear that it was a long and gradual process, crisscrossed with difficulties and successes, which determined an important military presence in the area. This situation led Gallaecia to acquire a marked military character that would explain the emergence of a strong Suevic-Gothic aristocracy that will eventually gain control of power in Toledo. In a certain sense, a situation not very different from that experienced by Septimania can be assumed for Gallaecia, although the proximity in this case of Merovingians and Burgundians caused a greater risk there, with greater chances of success in case of usurpation, hence the need to place nobles with blood ties close to the ruling dynasty in the duchy's government.

For all this it can be said that, without going as far as the Narbonensis, it does seem true that Gallaecia was considered an alien element within the Visigothic kingdom of Toledo. As one author has stressed,

it is already highly significant that the *Chronicle of Alfonso III* mentions the kingdom of the Sueves a century and a half after its conquest.²⁹² The data, in fact, allows us to suppose the existence of a certain feeling of singularity in Gallaecia that would have remained until well into the Middle Ages.²⁹³ The strong militarisation of the territory and the enormous power accumulated in aristocratic circles would come to form an important faction within the Visigothic nobility, although unlike the Narbonensis, the geographic isolation of Gallaecia, and the impossibility of having foreign allies, made it difficult here to make any attempt at usurpation. In return, its isolation, and the way in which the conquest was carried out, served to tie important bonds of kinship between the Suevic and Gothic elites. This would have further strengthened the status of the territory and provided it with a certain political platform that will develop in the Middle Ages. Anyway, the situation experienced by Gallaecia and Narbonensis during the Visigothic period will have a certain parallel with the circumstances that followed the Arab conquest of AD 711, with the kingdom of Asturias isolated and left to its fate and a series of counties in Septimania and northern Tarraconensis willing to work with the Franks.²⁹⁴ In this sense, if the Gallaecian origins of the kings who occupied the throne of Toledo in the second half of the 7th century AD were confirmed, the mechanisms that led to the emergence of a powerful nucleus of political and military resistance to Islamic domination in the northern peninsula would be better understood.

²⁹² Díaz 2008: 419f.

²⁹³ An aspect already indicated in Gibert 1956: 45f. See also Isla 1993.

²⁹⁴ García Moreno 1997b: 377f.

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