

HERMENEGILDVS REX

Prince, Usurper, and Martyr.
A Critical Study on the Rebellion
of St Hermenegild (578-585).

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



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Contents

List of Figures	6
Evocation of St Hermenegild: a Silenced History, a Pending Claim	9
Lights and Shadows around Hermenegild's Rebellion	12
History of Research and State of the Question	12
The Literary Sources	28
The Tyranny of Hermenegild	35
Hermenegild: Martyr or Rebel?	74
In Aeternum: Reign after Death	89
Hermenegild and the <i>Ordinatio Principis</i> in Visigothic Spain	97
Conclusions: Hermenegild, King David and the Sacralisation of Gothic Royalty	112
Addenda:	
Annex 1. On the Location of the Monastery of Biclaro.....	114
State of the Question.....	114
John of Biclaro. Some Biographical Notes	115
The Etymology of the Name of Biclaro	116
The Archaeological Material of Cabacés	122
An Hypothesis of the Location of the Monastery of Biclaro	126

Annex 2. An image of St Hermenegild from the Visigothic Period? Two Rectifications and a New Reading of a Relief from the Lapidary Museum of Narbonne (or To Err is Human).....

Bibliography 137

Sources 137

References 139

Locations 151

List of figures

- Figure 1: Medal of Leovigild and Hermenegild. *Retratos de los Reyes de España*, 1782.
- Figure 2: Coin of Leovigild. Mint of Reccopolis (Heiss 1872).
- Figure 3: Reccopolis. Aerial view of the archaeological site.
- Figure 4: Coin of Hermenegild with legend HERMENEGILDI REGI A DEO VITA (Heiss 1872).
- Figure 5: Tremis of Hermenegild with legend REGI INCLITO (Heiss 1872).
- Figure 6: Tremis of Leovigild with *uestes regiae* (Wiki).
- Figure 7: Kingdoms of France towards 587 (Wiki).
- Figure 8: The Ark of St Millan (San Millan de la Cogolla). Leovigild (Wiki).
- Figure 9: Leovigild coins, Merida mint, with legend VICTOR/VICTORIA (Heiss 1872).
- Figure 10: Map of Merida c. 500 (Ciudades Patrimonio de la Humanidad).
- Figure 11: Aerial view of the Los Hitos site (Arisgotas, Toledo) with the Montes de Toledo in the background (photo: J. Morín de Pablos).
- Figure 12: Map of the Roman roads in the southwest and probable routes followed by the armies of Leovigild and Reccared.
- Figure 13: Sketch of the city of Hispalis/Seville in the Visigothic era (Sánchez Ramos 2014).
- Figure 14: Leovigild coin, Hispalis mint, with legend SPALI CUM DEO (Heiss 1872).
- Figure 15: Inscription of Alcalá de Guadaira (photo: M. Camacho Moreno/CERES).
- Figure 16: Coin of Leovigild, Cordoba mint, with legend CORDOBA BIS OPTINUIT (Heiss 1872).
- Figure 17: Sketch of the city of Cordoba in the Visigothic era (Sánchez Ramos 2014)
- Figure 18: Castro of Puig Rom (photo: M. Pfeiffer, Wiki).
- Figure 19: Puig Rom (Rosas). Weapons (García - Vivó 2003).
- Figure 20: Puig Rom (Rosas). Lyriform belt buckles from the 7th century (García - Vivó 2003).
- Figure 21: Tremis of Leovigild, Roda mint, with Legend CVM DEO RODA (Heiss 1872).
- Figure 22: Aerial view of the El Monastil (Elda) (photo: J.M. Martínez Lorenzo, Wiki).
- Figure 23: Valencia la Vella. Remains of the ancient walls.
- Figure 24: Valencia. Prison of St Vicent.
- Figure 25: Toledo. Cathedral. Inscription of the reconsecration of the church of Santa María in catolico (Barroso - Morín 2007).
- Figure 26: Reccared. *Retrato de los Reyes de España*, 1782.
- Figure 27: Sevilla. Cordoba Gate. Place where Sevillian tradition places the prison of St Hermenegild (photo: J. Morín de Pablos).
- Figure 28: Sevilla. Museo de Bellas Artes. Apotheosis of St Hermenegild (Herrera el Viejo).

Figure 29: Museo del Prado. Triumph of St Hermenegild (Herrera el Mozo).

Figure 30: Cross and Badge of the Royal and Military Order of St Hermenegild (photo: R. Barroso Cabrera).

Figure 31: Madrid. Palacio del Senado. The conversion of Reccared (A. Muñoz Degrain).

Figure 32: León. Cathedral. Antiphonary. Anointing of David.

Figure 33: Oviedo. Cámara Santa. Cross of Victory (before its last restoration).

Figure 34: Coat of Arms of Béjar (Wiki).

Figure 35: Six petal flower (design).

Figure 36: Lauburu (design).

Figure 37: Torrijos (Toledo). Colegiata del Santísimo Sacramento. Bench arm (photo: J. Morín de Pablos).

Figure 38: Salamanca. Visigothic settlement in the surroundings of Béjar.

Figure 39: Salamanca. Museo Provincial. Decorated plaque with peacocks from Salvatierra de Tormes (Schlunk - Hauschild 1978).

Figure 40: La Tala (Salamanca). Marble frieze (Barroso - Morín 1992).

Figure 41: Navahombela (Salamanca). Blackboard with biblical text (Velázquez 1989).

Figure 42: Santibáñez de Béjar (Salamanca). Decorated plaque (Barroso - Morín 1992).

Figure 44: Narbona. Museo Lapidario. Decorated plaque with courtly scene and martyr (Barroso - Morín 1994).

Figure 43: Exorcism of San Armengol (Bertran - Orriols 2016).

*Nisi granum frumenti cadens in terram mortuum fuerit, ipsum solum manet;
si autem mortuum fuerit, multum fructum affert*

John 12: 24

*Parasti in conspectu meo mensam adversus eos qui tribulant me
inpinguasti in oleo caput meum et calix meus inebrians quam praeclarus est*

Psalms 22: 5

Evocation of St Hermenegild: a silenced history, a pending claim

He was never what you might call a lucky man. Neither as a prince did he manage to occupy the throne to which he was destined by lineage, nor as a saint did he obtain in his homeland the recognition he undoubtedly deserved. Practically neither in life, nor after his death was any merit recognised to the eldest son of the great Leovigild, one of the most illustrious monarchs who occupied the throne of the Kingdom of Toledo. Abandoned by his Byzantine allies for the price of a handful of coins, defeated by the force of arms by his father the king, first exiled to Valencia and then imprisoned in Tarragona, Hermenegild ended his days executed by a slayer for refusing to renounce his faith. It can well be said that the palm of martyrdom was his only triumph.

Undoubtedly, the figure of the young prince who opened the doors of the Catholic faith to the people of the Goths constituted for centuries an uncomfortable case for chroniclers and men of the Catholic Church. In his role as a prince whose martyrdom had served to unify the nation, he could have been a magnificent patron of Spain, but in the hard days of struggle against Islam, the Spaniards preferred to turn their eyes towards one of the Sons of Thunder instead of doing so on the son of the Arian Leovigild, thus sealing in some way the course of our medieval history towards Europe and not towards the Gothic past. The figure of Hermenegild only obtained a late recognition during the reign of the Austrians, in the times of Philip II and Charles II, for very different reasons and we could almost say trivial – due to coincidence with the birth of the future Philip III, in the first case, and due to the desire to strengthen the Habsburg ties with their Germanic past, in the second – and, later, in the Bourbon era, with Ferdinand VII, whose devotion to the memory of the Gothic prince was due to more spurious interests than those of his predecessors: to show himself as the prince-son unjustly persecuted by the king-father.

Certainly, fortune did not accompany Hermenegild. Already among his contemporaries he was considered 'miser' in its literal sense, not in the pejorative as has been repeated so many times by a defect of translation, but in its meaning of 'unfortunate' or 'that moves to compassion'.¹ Nor did it help excessively, it must be said, the fact that, according to the Spanish chroniclers, he rose 'tyrannically' against his father the great King Leovigild. Not even after his death did he share in the earthly glory that radiates around other martyrs, being practically erased from the memory of the Church and the chronicles by the complicated political circumstances that allowed the consummation of the Catholic victory at the Third Council of Toledo.² His early death in distant Tarragona, executed by a dark hitman of whom barely his name and a brief mention of his infamous end are recorded, undoubtedly marks the absolute failure of Hermenegild's earthly mission. Only interested foreigners, such as Pope Gregory the Great or

¹ Orlandis 1962a: 11.

² In 1585, Pope Sixtus V authorised the cult of the martyr at the request of Philip II. However, it would not be until 1639, when Philip IV was king of Spain, that Pope Urban VIII universally promoted him.

the Frank Gregory of Tours, collect the details of his martyrdom in some detail, and in passing turn their pens against the figure of his father.

For the rest, a practically unanimous silence surrounds Hermenegild until the times of the Counter-Reformation, when we witness a first attempt at rehabilitation of his memory by King Philip II and some of the intellectuals of the royal environment, such as Ambrosio de Morales or Cardinal Quiroga, great friend of Ignatius of Loyola, which explains in part the interest of the Society of Jesus in the figure of the prince. Also some famous playwrights, i.e. Lope de Vega and Sister Juana Inés de la Cruz, knew how to exploit the dramatic point of the story – after all, as Paul Goubert well appreciated, the conversion of Spain to Catholicism is born from a family drama – although, as has been said, it was the Jesuits who knew how to see in the martyrdom of the Gothic prince an effective tool in the struggle for the defence of Catholic orthodoxy, as well as a powerful model to oppose the Protestant heresy that had taken root in German lands.³

However, past the frenzy of the Counter-Reformation, the name of Hermenegild is once again plunged into the most absolute silence, shelved in his role as patron of the Spanish monarchy. And yet, there is no doubt that the history of Spain would have taken very different paths were it not for this young prince murdered in the prime of life in a gloomy dungeon in Tarragona. A tragic fate undoubtedly, but a fate that reserved for him the glory of opening the way to the conversion of the Gothic people to the Catholic faith and with it to illuminate the birth of Spain as a nation. If, as Tertullian said, the blood of the martyrs is the seed of new Christians, the blood shed by the young Hermenegild was necessary to engender a new kingdom.

Already in his time, Pope Gregory the Great understood it this way when, after learning of the conversion of Reccared and the people of the Goths, he exclaimed with joy:

‘And it is that in relation to this conversion we must think that all this could not have been carried out in any way if King Hermenegild had not died for the truth. Indeed, as it is written: “If the grain of wheat does not die falling into the earth, then it only endures; but if it dies, it produces much fruit”. And we see that in the limbs the same thing happens that we know has happened in the head. And so, in the people of the Visigoths, one died so that many would live, and falling a single faithful grain to achieve faith, a copious harvest of souls sprouted.’⁴

It can well be said, then, that the death of Hermenegild imprints an unexpected course to the peninsular history destined to open the way to an original political conception of the old *regnum Gothorum*. Thus, shortly after the death of the prince, St Isidore will identify this *regnum vel patria Gothorum* – a protocol formula that mimics the classic *Senatus Populusque Romanus* – with the old Roman province of Hispania. From this identification made by the bishop of Seville would be born the medieval concept of Spain:⁵

³ Munerón 2017.

⁴ Greg. I. Dial. 3 31: *Qua in re considerandum nobis est, quia totum hoc agi nequaquam posset, si Hermenegildus rex pro veritate mortuus non fuisset. Nam sicut scriptum est: ‘Nisi granum frumenti cadens in terram mortuum fuerit, ipsum solum manet; si autem mortuum fuerit, multum fructum affert’. Hoc fieri videmus in membris, quod factum scimus in capite. In Visigothorum etenim gente unus mortuus est, ut multi viverent; et dum unum granum fideliter occidit ad obtinendam vitam animarum, seges multa surrexit* (PL 77: 289-294; ed. Juan Galán 2010: 184s). The quote is taken from the Gospel of St John (12: 24).

⁵ Maravall 1954.

‘Spain, sacred and always happy mother of princes and peoples, the most beautiful of all lands that extend from the West to India... And for this reason, rightly, long ago golden Rome, head of the peoples, desired you and, although the same Roman power, first victorious, possessed you, nevertheless, in the end, the flourishing nation of the Goths, after countless victories throughout the world, eagerly conquered you and loved you, and until now enjoys you safely among royal insignia and very abundant treasures in security and happiness of empire.’⁶

The nuptial metaphor that St Isidore uses to describe the union of the matron Hispania and the illustrious people of the Goths comes to celebrate the origin of a new holy nation, in the style of Old Testament Israel. A chosen nation – *gens bona Gothorum... electus Domino populus*, defined by the great Alcuin of York – that with the passing of the centuries would also be destined to be her – like a new island of Scandza, the ancestral homeland of the Goths – *uagina gentium*, mother of a multitude of peoples on the other side of the Ocean. And indeed, if for centuries millions of men and women from Hispanic America and the Philippines have prayed, lived and celebrated their faith under Catholic orthodoxy, it has been largely thanks to the blood shed by this young Gothic prince on the eve of Easter in the year 586. Because yes, much to the chagrin of Américo Castro, the Visigoths – at least the Visigoths of the 7th century – were, and felt, in some way Spanish. And if that were so, our unfortunate prince was undoubtedly largely to blame.⁷

Seen in this way, it is hard to understand why St Hermenegild has not had greater popular recognition in his own homeland. Unlike other national patron saints – i.e. Stephen of Hungary, Edward the Confessor in England, Prince Casimir in Poland – the cult of the martyr was almost exclusively restricted to the monarchy and, only belatedly, to the militia. Perhaps to the son of Leovigild could be applied the biblical saying that no one is a prophet in his own land. But, as it has often been said, the designs of the Lord are inscrutable and his judgments incomprehensible (Romans 11: 33) and perhaps one day not too far away Hermenegild, like a new Arthur or Sebastian, will see his figure vindicated from on high and definitively occupy the place in history that rightfully belongs to him.⁸

Obviously, this current study does not intend to be a religious rehabilitation of the prince, something that, as is easy to understand, is quite far from our intentions, but an approach to an historical character from the literary and archaeological sources that better place him in the rarefied historical and political framework of his time. Hermenegild is, without a doubt, one of the characters that has caused the most controversy among historians practically since his death and, therefore, also one of those who has made the most ink flow over pages and pages of history. In fact, as we will have the opportunity to see, the bibliography about the Visigothic prince is vast, although very polarised between those who considered him a simple rebel rising against the legitimate king, and those who saw him a champion of the fight against tyranny and

⁶ Isid. Hisp. HG. *Laus Spaniae. Omnium terrarum, quaquae sunt ab occiduo usque ad Indos, pulcherrima es, o sacra semperque felix principium gentiumque mater Spania... 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 multiplices in orbe victorias certatim rapuit et anavit, fruiturque hactenus inter regias infulas et opes largas imperii felicitate securo* (ed. Mommsen 1894: 267).

⁷ Castro 1949: 246-263.

⁸ See Barroso – Morín – Sánchez 2021: 7 n. 8.

in defence of the sacred rights of religion. We, for our part, have tried to delve directly into the problem, leaving behind prejudices and historical interpretations that have done nothing but entangle the question, leaving aside the usual practice in post-modern historiography of systematically repeating already consolidated arguments while basic works that are simply sidelined by their antiquity are unknown. Our academic training obliged us, on the contrary, to exhaustively collect the main studies dedicated to the problem and review the original literary sources to try to solve a question that until now is stranded in a dead end.

In any case, for better or worse, the figure of Hermenegild emerges in the history of Spain as an ambiguous and somewhat confusing model, hence the reluctance he caused at the time and the difficulties found later in the spread of his cult. And indeed, on the one hand, Hermenegild, as a rebel against the legitimate king, seems to be inscribed in the long list of usurpers who, like Argimundus, Froya, or Paulus, to name only the most well-known cases from Visigothic Spain, failed in their attempt to seize the Toledan throne; on the other hand, in a more commendable aspect, the rebellion of the young prince also marks the start of a true sacralisation of royal power that will shape in a novel way the political practice of Visigothic royalty by assimilating it to the theocracy of ancient Davidic Israel. This last aspect, the sacred conception of royalty materialised in the solemn rite of royal anointing, is perhaps the most interesting – and in many cases unknown – of our study as it supposes the oldest antecedent of a political theory that will be current in the Middle Ages and that, although sometimes discussed, will endure in Europe until the French Revolution. In this precise sense, it does not seem exaggerated to say that Hermenegild, as a political model to follow, had the distinction of playing a pioneering role in the history of Western culture.

In Toledo, 13 April 2020,

Easter Monday and feast-day of St Hermenegild, King and Martyr.

R. Barroso Cabrera, J. Morín de Pablos & I.M^a. Sánchez Ramos

Lights and Shadows around Hermenegild's Rebellion

History of the Research and State of the Question

'The issues associated with the conversion, rebellion, and death of Hermenegild have been repeatedly discussed since the 16th century and have been intensely controversial for the last hundred years, but it does not seem that we are much closer to an agreement.'⁹

These above lines, written at the beginning of the 1960s by the British historian Jocelyn N. Hillgarth, remain fully valid today, eight decades after they were written. In fact, the problem of Hermenegild's rebellion continues to be, in many respects, insoluble. It has not been possible to reach a basic consensus on whether it was a political rebellion (a usurpation) or a religious uprising. The reasons that led Hermenegild to decide to rise against his father, the role that Queen Goisuintha played in all this, or Reccared's responsibility in the dramatic end of the prince, are not even entirely clear.

Already in the 16th century, Father Juan de Mariana (1536-1624) understood that the civil war between Leovigild and Hermenegild had been, above all, a war between Arians and Catholics: the latter, led by Hermenegild, constituted the majority of the population but were subjugated by an Arian minority that held power. He follows in this the version offered by foreign sources, particularly Gregory of Tours and Pope Gregory the Great, although as far as the facts are concerned, he subjects his sources to contrast with what was said by John of Biclaro. However, in this matter, the Jesuit always shows himself favourable to the Catholics, whom he considers defenders of the true faith against a heretic king. Logically, the vision that Mariana has of the problem was affected by the division of Christianity operated by the Protestant reform, as well as by his condition as a Jesuit, then the spearhead in the fight against the Lutherans.¹⁰ However, apart from being the first critical approach to the facts, Mariana stands out for his interest in fixing the chronology of the events, one of the most controversial aspects of the problem due to the inaccuracies that the chronicle of the *Biclarensis* carries.

On the other hand, it is curious that being Mariana, the author in 1599 of a famous treatise on the royal institution (*De rege et regis institutione*, Toledo), he makes no reference in it to Hermenegild's rebellion. The treatise, written at the behest of Loaysa to serve as a guide to Prince Philip (the future King Philip III, born coincidentally on April 13), was written as a response to the political doctrine of Machiavelli. As is known, Mariana, relying on St Thomas Aquinas and other classic authors, defended the lawfulness of regicide in cases of tyranny (in fact in 1610 the Paris parliament ordered his *De rege* to be burned, considering it subversive)

⁹ Hillgarth 1961a: 23.

¹⁰ Mariana 1785: 217-236 and 525-547. The Jesuit Juan de Mariana wrote a very famous *Historia General de España* (1601), originally published in Latin as *Historiae de rebus Hispaniae libri XX* (1592), expanded by another ten books in 1605. Considered as the reference historical work (until the publication of the *Historia de España* by Modesto Lafuente in the 19th century), the *Historia General* of Mariana is an ambitious project, with a surprising critical tone for its time, covering the periods from Antiquity to the reign of the Reyes Católicos.

and the need for only one religion – obviously the Catholic one – to be allowed in the kingdom. Moreover, somewhat surprisingly, the account that Mariana offers on the rebellion of the Gothic prince in his *Historia General* is also somewhat non-aligned. And that is because the insurrection of Hermenegild was an example that fits like a glove for the defence of the theses he develops in *De rege*. In this point it is undeniable that for Mariana, being a critical author with his sources, the unfavourable testimony about the figure of Hermenegild established by John of Biclaro and St Isidore must have influenced the vision he had of the problem, and for this reason he did not consider it especially accurate to make of the prince an example congruent with his political theory.¹¹

Practically a century after Mariana, the Augustinian Father Enrique Flórez (1702-1777) writes his work. Flórez is the initiator of the monumental *España Sagrada*, an ecclesiastical history of Spain, in 61 volumes, of which the wise Augustinian is the author of the first 29. The *España Sagrada* compiles a huge number of documents, illustrations, and antiquities that make it especially interesting. It is a remarkable work for its time, and in many ways, it continues to be useful even for current researchers, since some of the documents it reproduces have been lost, or are in locations unknown at present.

Due the structure of the work, divided into volumes according to the different ecclesiastical dioceses of Spain, Flórez was obliged to deal with Hermenegild's rebellion and his death in different books, in particular volume VI (dedicated to the Church of Toledo), and IX (dealing with the Baetica province). In addition, he reproduces the chronicle of John of Biclaro – with important annotations about the chronological problems that this work raises.¹² It is also worth noting that Father Flórez is the author of a treatise on ancient coins known in his time, in which he addresses the study of the numismatic emissions corresponding to the reigns of Leovigild and Hermenegild.¹³

Although the erudite Augustinian knows all the versions given about the rebellion, he declares his choice for the chronicle of John of Biclaro, 'whose authority is irrefutable, as a diligent and patrician contemporary; without being able to be put before the Turonensis what is not concordable'. An opinion that seems more than recommendable to us, but one which that must carry a severe censure in terms of Hermenegild's actions.¹⁴

The works of Mariana and Flórez maintained a certain balance between the critical effort of the historian and the reticence of publicly censoring Hermenegild that typifies men of religion. This kind of self-censorship was diluted with the appearance of the work of the Frenchman Charles Romey (1804-1874). Romey was the son of Baron Louis Romey, a diplomat and historian of Sicilian origin who had served in Italy and Spain. Through his father, Charles Romey came into contact with the Spanish and Italian milieu of his time, later working as a journalist in Paris. He is the author of a *Histoire d'Espagne* (Paris, 1839) that deals with the period up to the Catholic monarchs and which was released in instalments. The *Histoire d'Espagne* of Romey had a huge

¹¹ Mariana 1981: I: 5-7 (tyrannicide) and III: 17 (true religion).

¹² Flórez, ES 6 (1859) and 9 (1752).

¹³ Flórez 1773.

¹⁴ Flórez 1752: 287.

influence within the intellectual circles of Spain, especially among the Frenchified liberals. Perhaps Romey's greatest claim to fame was that he encouraged Modesto Lafuente to write his *Historia de España*, which, in a good way, is a response to the work of the French writer.¹⁵

Finally, if we have referenced here the figure of Ch. Romey it is in part because he produced a devastating account of the figure of Hermenegild that would influence the negative judgment that most of the liberal Spanish historiography will have about the prince.¹⁶ For Romey there is no doubt that Hermenegild was anything but a saint:

On en a fait [d'Hermènegild] un saint et un martyr. Mais périt-il pour avoir confessé le Christ? Y a-t-il dans sa vie et dans sa mort ce caractère de sublime résignation que fuit le propre des martyrs chrétiens? Nullement. Rebelle à son père, pris les armes à la main, comme il cherchait à passer chez l'ennemi de sa nation, l'irritation paternelle ordonna sa mort. C'est tout ce qu'on on peut dire d'Hermènegild.¹⁷

As could not be helped, Romey's thesis also ended up permeating within the conservative historiography, and especially in the thoughts of Marcelino Menéndez Pelayo (1856-1912). In fact, outside of the authors contemporary to the prince, no one has influenced so greatly the negative judgment on the figure of Hermenegild as the position held by Menéndez Pelayo. He, in his great work *Historia de los heterodoxos españoles*, published between 1880-1882, issued a hugely adverse verdict on the Gothic prince, which, coming from its author – a prestigious thinker of Catholic and conservative ideology close to the theses of traditionalism – struck like a thunderbolt among those Catholic historians (the only ones really interested in defending the morality of the character), those who would later have to deal with the problem of Hermenegild's rebellion. The hostile stance of Menéndez Pelayo towards Hermenegild is perfectly summarised in a lapidary phrase: 'It is singular that Saint Isidore only remembers the king of Seville having said in praise that Leovigild subdued his son, one who tyrannised the empire'. In his opinion, only martyrdom would have managed to wash away the prince's previous errors: 'He washed away all his faults in 585, receiving the palm of martyrdom from the hands of Sisbert'. Indeed, according to him,

'[As] for Hermenegild, the martyrdom suffered for the confession of faith erased his primitive disrespect, and the Hispano-Roman people began to venerate from long ago the memory of that Gothic prince who had generously embraced the cause of the oppressed against the oppressors, even if they were of his race and family.'¹⁸

However, Menéndez Pelayo does not fail to ponder the impartiality of the Spanish Catholic authors. On the *Biclarensis*, Menéndez Pelayo affirms that he narrated 'with impartiality

¹⁵ Romey 1858: 133-138; Lafuente 1887-1890. For this character, see Roca Barea 2019: 295-308.

¹⁶ Modesto Lafuente (1887: 26-29) only narrates the events, mainly following John of Biclaro, and without issuing a resoundingly negative judgment against Hermenegild; in general terms he seems to accept Romey's interpretation as correct.

¹⁷ 'We have made [of Hermenegild] a saint and a martyr. But did he die for having confessed Christ? Was there in his life and in his death that character of sublime resignation that is characteristic of Christian martyrs? In no way. Rebellious against his father, captured with weapons in hand while trying to pass to the enemy of his nation, his father's anger ordered his death. That is all we can say about Hermenegild' (Romey 1858: 138).

¹⁸ Menéndez Pelayo 2003: 236 ff.

worthy of a true Catholic this war, scandalous on both sides'. Immediately afterwards, after commenting on the negative judgment that St Isidore deserved in the actions of the prince, he states categorically that, [so] little worried and fanatical were the doctors of that Church of ours, that not even for the benefit of the truth did they consent to the slightest departure from moral law!'.

As has been said, the negative verdict of Menéndez Pelayo will go on to decisively influence the majority of interpretations made by later Catholic authors. The judgment of the illustrious Spanish writer is even evident in such a distinguished historian as Jesuit Father Z. García Villada. Not to mention the liberal faction, generally very hostile to the Catholic Church, which, in an ideologically divided Spain, found the ammunition it needed with which to attack the Catholic tradition. To such an extent did the unfavourable opinion of the *Historia de los heterodoxos* weigh that, twenty years after its publication, militant liberalism proposed changing the name of the Royal Order of San Hermenegild – a military order instituted by King Fernando VII to reward bravery in the field – because the rebel prince represented a 'bad example for the military since there are uprisings'.¹⁹

Almost half a century had to pass, until the publication of the great *Historia de España* directed by R. Menéndez Pidal, in the year 1940, just after the civil war, when this author nuanced the negative judgments of opinion issued by his teacher and thus gave way to a new approach to the problem raised by Hermenegild's rebellion.²⁰ This line of research will culminate in the works that L. Vázquez de Parga and J. Orlandis Rovira dedicated to the figure of Prince Hermenegild and the Visigothic concept of tyranny to which we will soon refer.

More or less at the same time as Menéndez Pelayo, straddling the 19th and 20th centuries, the German Franz Görres (1844-1909) also addressed the problem of Hermenegild's rebellion. Although also Catholic, in the case of the German historian the moral judgment was somewhat attenuated by the mere historical exposition. However, Görres also does not depart from the general idea that Hermenegild had been a rebel (*tyrannus*) against the legitimate king and the kingdom, although he focuses on the political character of the uprising and places the religious question in the background. The author points out that this was also the opinion defended by other important Catholic authors of the time, notably the Gothic John of Biclaro and the Frankish historian Gregory of Tours. In his opinion, even Reccared's conversion would have been a decision marked more by political interest than truly a religious one.²¹

Görres' study decisively influenced subsequent research carried out from the Catholic field. Thus, the Jesuit Z. García de Villada (1879-1936) also censures Hermenegild's uprising against King Leovigild. For García Villada, the negative testimony about the prince from two declared Catholics, i.e. John of Biclaro and Gregory of Tours, is crucial to judge the rebellion. On the other hand, the Jesuit emphasises the political connotations that originated from Hermenegild's

¹⁹ The newspaper *Heraldo de Madrid* praised St Isidore because 'an eminent writer, not at all suspicious, has noted that the said saint called Saint Hermenegild a traitor'. As J. Gárate points out, 'Menéndez Pelayo was also alluded to with the necessary discretion so as not to fail to comply with the "instruction of silence" that our illustrious historian suffered, like so many others.' Gárate 1975: 7-9. The paradox is that, despite general opinion, most of the military pronouncements of the 19th century in Spain were carried out by liberal elements.

²⁰ Menéndez Pidal 1963.

²¹ Görres 1873a; 1873b. The author dealt with practically all the protagonists of this story in a multitude of works.

conversion as an explanation for the subsequent silence about his person that is noticed in the acts of the Third Council of Toledo, as well as in other ecclesiastical documents, such as the Mozarabic calendars and sanctorals. However, for Villada, and against what is defended by other authors who present the prince as *dux* of the Baetica province,²² it is clear that Hermenegild had effectively been king, although he understands that in the eyes of John of Biclaro he represented the figure of the tyrant who rebels against the legitimate power of Leovigild. Moreover, Villada highlights the work carried out by St Leander in the conversion of the prince and the rumour collected by Pope Gregory of Leovigild's conversion on his deathbed, news that, although uncertain, he considers worthy of all credit.²³

After the civil war, several important studies on Visigothic numismatics appear that shed new and important data on the rebellion, especially in its propagandistic aspects and political theory. Already during the conflict, several interesting works dedicated to Visigothic coins had appeared, signed by the Valencian numismatist Felipe Mateu y Llopis. In this sense, two publications stand out in which he made known the Visigothic funds of the Numismatic Cabinet of the Museo Arqueológico Nacional de Madrid that he himself contributed in saving from plunder, and a third, which saw the light at the end of the conflict, dedicated to the study of the formulas and symbols of the coins minted in Seville by Hermenegild.²⁴ This period also corresponds to the review of the problem carried out by Menéndez Pidal to which we have previously referred.

Just over a decade later, the important monograph by George C. Miles on Visigothic numismatics was published.²⁵ Between the late 1950s and early 1960s, other important contributions from the numismatic field came to light: a study by Manuel C. Díaz y Díaz about the *Regi a Deo Vita* formula of Hermenegild's coins and another by J.N. Hillgarth dedicated to the religious formulas of the emissions of Leovigild and Hermenegild.²⁶

In the meantime, two studies by J. Orlandis on Hermenegild's rebellion and the Visigothic concept of tyranny had been published that would colour further investigations.

The historian and Jesuit priest J. Orlandis Rovira (1918-2010) was undoubtedly one of the best scholars of the history of Visigothic Spain. Orlandis was also a prolific writer and populariser who dealt with very varied topics, given his extensive training as an historian, jurist and theologian. His contributions to the knowledge of the most diverse fields of this historical period (the Catholic Church, monasticism, law, Jews, royalty, etc.) have been fundamental for research and, in general terms, are still fully valid today. He was also the author of numerous popular works on Visigothic Spain, a rather exceptional case within our historiography.

²² Dahn 1885: 324; Reinhart 1945: 102; Stroheker 1965: 152. The kingship of Hermenegild, attested by literary sources and archaeological testimonies, is defended by practically all Spanish authors.

²³ García Villada 1932: 46-60.

²⁴ Mateu y Llopis 1936a; 1936b; 1941.

²⁵ Miles 1952.

²⁶ Díaz y Díaz 1958; Hillgarth 1961a [=1966].

As has been said, we owe two of the most important studies on Hermenegild's rebellion to Father Orlandis: one of them dedicated *ex profeso* to the prince's uprising and another on the concept of tyranny in the Visigothic kingdom.²⁷ Also worth highlighting is his study on the political role of queens in Visigothic monarchy, where he dedicates a few lines to the figure of Goisuintha, one of the fundamental characters of this story.²⁸ It is, without a doubt, a pioneering article in this field, which, however, did not find continuity in practice until the studies of M^a. Rosario Valverde Castro.²⁹

Regarding our topic, Orlandis highlighted the religious character of Hermenegild's uprising and the breaking point it represents with Leovigild's unifying policy. In his opinion, the king's legislative and religious measures were ordered towards the unification of both ethnic groups in order to achieve the political unity of the kingdom. In his opinion, the problem that was



Fig. 1. Medal of Leovigild and Hermenegild. Retratos de los Reyes de España, 1782.

being settled was political independence with respect to the Empire, and Leovigild addressed the issue by arrogating the Imperial prerogatives. In this context, the crisis caused by Hermenegild's rebellion in Seville influenced the subsequent development of the unification policy devised by Leovigild in a very different sense to that which the monarch had designed. He had tried a religious understanding of both peoples under a form of national Church of Macedonian type, which, however, provoked the rejection of the majority of Catholics and a lack of enthusiasm by one section of the Gothic nobility. The failure of Leovigild and the death of Hermenegild facilitated that his son Reccared continued the unification policy under different parameters to those of his father: the new monarch, in fact, understood that the integration of both ethnic groups necessarily passed through the conversion of the Visigoths to Catholicism.

In 1961, the British historian of Irish origin, Edward A. Thompson (1914-1994), published a study on the conversion of the Visigoths that challenged the thesis – until then the majority among historians – that the rebellion had been a confrontation between Hispano-Roman Catholics and Arian Goths. This study was later expanded into a book titled *The Goths in Spain*, a work widely disseminated in Spain, having been translated and published in a pocket edition by a popular publisher.

The main and controversial thesis of Thompson is that Hermenegild's rebellion was a matter that would have involved exclusively the Goths, and that the Hispano-Roman element would have hardly been concerned. Contrary to what was defended by Orlandis and most researchers,

²⁷ Orlandis 1957 [=1962: 3-12] (from here on we will cite from this edition).

²⁸ Orlandis 1957-1958.

²⁹ We can highlight two that are directly related to the topic we discuss here, i.e. Valverde 2000b; 2008.

Thompson advocated for a strict segregation between the Gothic element and the Hispano-Roman still at the end of the 6th century. The British historian also argued that Leovigild's intention was to preserve at any price the social and legislative differentiation between Goths and Hispano-Romans. When the uprising and conversion to Catholicism of Hermenegild occurred, all the policy of segregation between both peoples would have gone awry because many of the Goths would have supported the rebel.³⁰

In general, one perceives in the work of Thompson – a convinced Marxist who had been educated in the strictest Protestant observance – animosity against anything Catholic. Like most researchers of Protestant culture, it is possible to notice a barely disguised admiration for the figure of the Arian Leovigild, whose political plans would have failed in the face of the closedness of Catholics. Thus, for example, Thompson unambiguously defends Leovigild's religious policy and assumes that Hermenegild would have snatched the churches from the Arians and that, therefore, the measures adopted by the king would have only restored the status quo prior to the confiscation.³¹ But this is untenable: no Arian church of this time is known and, as much as it is said, it is difficult to think of an Arian ecclesiastical structure similar to the Catholic one. This was only formed with Leovigild and precisely as a result of the crisis produced by the conversion of his son.³² Of course, there is also no indication in the literary sources that confirms actual persecution of Arians by the prince, and, in addition, as we will have the opportunity to see later, the sovereignty of the prince does not seem to have extended much beyond the cities of Hispalis and Cordoba, so the allusion to the religious situation in Merida would be out of place.

As part of this staunch defence of the figure of Leovigild, Thompson also denies that there was a genuine persecution of Catholics, except in a few very exceptional cases which, in general, affected Gothic personalities.³³ Logically, the author has to do real juggling to reject the testimony of Isidore and the fact that the Suevi had been converted to Catholicism for decades when Leovigild imposed the Arian sees in Galicia.³⁴

Nor is the story that the British historian offers of Hermenegild's death supportable. Thompson seems to suggest a direct relationship between the mistreatment inflicted on the Arian bishop and the death sentence of the prince, i.e. that the order to execute him would be a consequence of Hermenegild's violent action towards the Arian prelate.³⁵ Educated in the Protestant faith,

³⁰ Thompson 1956; 1985: 81-104 [=1969: 64-87].

³¹ Thompson 1985: 103 [=1966: 80].

³² Mathisen 1997. Not even the basilica of Reccopolis would have really been an Arian temple (Barroso 2020: 123-130). It is true that it has been assumed that in some cities the Arians would have occupied Catholic temples (the clearest case is that of Barcino, vid. Beltrán Heredia 2013: 26), but the chronology of these confiscations is uncertain and it is very likely that most of them correspond to this moment. In any case, they would have been ancient Catholic temples usurped by the Arians.

³³ Thompson 1985: 94-104 [=1966: 78-87].

³⁴ Isid. Hisp. HG 50: '*Denique Arrianae perfidiae furore repletus in catholicos perrsecutione commota plurimos episcoporum exilio relegavit. Ecclesiarum reditus et privilegia tulit, multos quoque terroribus in Arrianam pestilentiam inpulit, plerosque sine persecutione inlectos auro rebusque decepit*' (Mommsen 1894: 288).

³⁵ Thompson 1985: 89 [=1966: 73].

Thompson is, it seems, incapable of understanding the gravity of the deception plotted against the prince and the consequences on the moral plane that the sacrilege offered to him would carry. For much less, Thomas More lost his head!

However, and although a total segregation of both ethnic groups at the end of the 6th century is difficult to sustain today, we believe that there is a part of reason in the thesis defended by Thompson. In our opinion, one of the factors that determined the crisis of 580 was undoubtedly the progressive abandonment of the identity traits of the Visigothic minority. This was a phenomenon that had been developing since the middle of the 6th century, especially in urban areas, as a result of the gradual conversion of the Visigothic elites to Catholicism.³⁶ The transformation of Visigothic society was also permeating the rural population through the social influence of aristocratic circles and threatened to dilute Leovigild's unitary political project in which the Gothic element had to play a leading role. As is known, Leovigild's policy was based on the stimulation of certain distinctive facets of identity (legislative, religious, implementation of a court apparatus, etc.) that were to mark points of difference with respect to the Empire. The problem that Leovigild had to face is that all the reference points for this policy came precisely from the Empire itself. In this situation, the monarch needed a differentiating ideological element and believed it could be found in Arianism. The conversion of Hermenegild, however, precipitated events and forced Leovigild to try a religious policy of consensus that ended up failing in the face of the firmness of most Catholics. Once the crisis was over, Reccared understood that Leovigild's old policy had to be made on a new basis: Catholicism would be accepted as a state religion, but the Goths would retain the leading role.³⁷ We will return to all this later.

A few years after Thompson's work, L. Vázquez de Parga addressed the critical study of the sources of Hermenegild's rebellion in his reception speech at the Real Academia de la Historia, completing the annotations that J. Campos had made in his edition of John of Biclaro. It is a brief, but essential contribution to the knowledge of the literary sources and the context in which they were written.³⁸

The main contribution of Vázquez de Parga to the debate was his original interpretation of the controversial passage of the *Biclarensis* in which he holds Goisuintha responsible for Hermenegild's rebellion. The author rejects the correction of Goisuintha by Ingundis proposed by Flórez and proposes a different interpretation to the one that historiography had been offering until then. In fact, his reading represents a radical shift in research on the subject by directly blaming Goisuintha for the uprising, as would be inferred from the text of John of Biclaro.³⁹

At the end of the 1980s, on the occasion of the celebration of the fourteenth centenary of the Third Council of Toledo, new and original contributions to research followed. Perhaps the main one of all of them, due to its influence on later studies, is the article by Luis A. García Moreno on

³⁶ Díaz y Díaz 2004: 14.

³⁷ Navarro 2000.

³⁸ Vázquez de Parga 1973. Two decades later the topic would be reviewed by Marcotegui Barber 2003.

³⁹ Vázquez de Parga 1973: 30s.

the complex process that culminated in the official conversion of the Goths to Catholicism at the synod of 589.⁴⁰ Contrary to the majority opinion, García Moreno, following the hypothesis previously stated by Vázquez de Parga, argues that the religious issue would not have triggered the rebellion and would only have had a relative importance in the development of events, or at least at the beginning of them. According to this author, one would have to delve into various political and dynastic factors typical of the Germanic tradition to find the true cause of the prince's uprising. The author specifically points out the Baltic origin of Goisuintha and her desire to establish an heir of her own lineage on the throne of Toledo. This would be, in short, the context in which the decision to send Hermenegild and Ingundis to Seville, a city from which the lineage of Athanagild, Goisuintha's first husband, originated.⁴¹

Actually, the cause of the young couple's departure from the court of Toledo has been the subject of varied interpretations, since Gregory of Tours elaborated his version of the events decades after they had occurred, adorning them as a confrontation between Catholicism and Arianism. In any case, this episode, and specifically the interpretation that must be given to the expression *factione Gosuinthae* used by John of Biclaro to indicate the cause of the uprising, is one of the most controversial incidents in the already controversial history of Hermenegild. This expression has given rise to two polar opposite interpretations.

The traditional interpretation, based mainly on the narratives of Gregory of Tours and Pope Gregory the Great, assumes that the quarrel was a consequence of the abusive treatment that the queen inflicted on Ingundis on her arrival in Toledo, in which we can see a repetition of the situation experienced half a century earlier between Amalaric and Clotilde.⁴² The treatment meted out to the Frankish princess would be the trigger for Hermenegild's uprising in Seville and, therefore, the expression used by John of Biclaro must be interpreted in the sense of the queen's instigation of Leovigild. It would then be an indirect consequence due to a previous action by the queen.⁴³

Definitely, this was the most widespread reading of the episode until a few years ago, especially in Catholic historiography: Goisuintha's violent action in the face of Ingundis's stubbornness would have accelerated events and, ultimately, would have forced Hermenegild to rise against the king as soon as he had the opportunity. This version has the virtue of reconciling the different stories that have come to us independently, as well as partially safeguarding the morality of the prince. After all, we are talking about a character canonised by the Church, and therefore a subject of worship, whose history is known to us by the stories transmitted by other characters, themselves considered saints. Indeed, Hermenegild would have done nothing more than rebel in defence of the Catholic faith, i.e., the prince's rebellion would fall within what is allowed by Catholic casuistry for situations of tyranny.

⁴⁰ García Moreno 1991. In general, this paper reproduced and expanded his entrance speech at the Real Academia de la Historia in 2008, which will be the version we prefer to use.

⁴¹ Vázquez de Parga 1973: 30 ff; García Moreno 1991: 275-277; 2008: 102-104; Vallejo Girvés 1999: 263-267; 2012: 235-246; Castellanos García 2007: 115-117; Castillo Lozano 2019: 101-115.

⁴² Thompson 1985: 81, 24 ff [=1969: 12, 65].

⁴³ Campos 1960: 131 ff; Goubert 1944: 22; Orlandis 1962a: 11; Schäferdiek 1967: 147; Fontaine 1967: 110-113; Galán 1994: 158 ff; Valverde 2008: 26; Jiménez Garnica 2008: 360.

However, the traditional interpretation presents a serious drawback: the silence of the Spanish literary sources about Hermenegild's conversion to Catholicism. For this reason, we have already seen how in recent decades a new reading of the facts has emerged that speculates about a possible direct incitement by Goisuintha herself to the prince, whom she would have seen as the standard bearer of Athanagild's cause.⁴⁴ This current reduces the value of the testimony of the *Turonensis*, due to its late and interested nature, and defends, following the letter of the *Biclaensis's* account, that Hermenegild rose in Seville by instigation of Goisuintha herself. Religious motivations would give way here to politics and factors of lineage.⁴⁵

In this case, once established in Hispalis, Hermenegild, supported by Queen Goisuintha, would have been adopted (*Versippung*) by the family clan of Athanagild. This adoption would have linked the prince with the royal and semi-divine lineage of the Balts. In this way, the prince

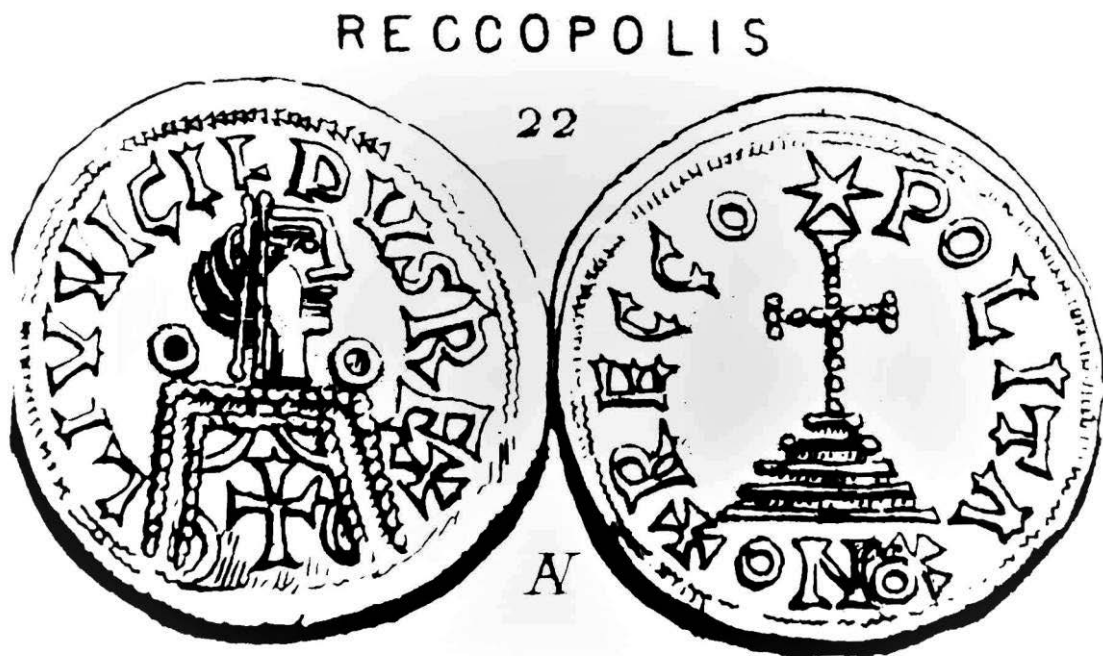


Fig. 2. Coin of Leovigild. Mint of Reccopolis (Heiss 1872).

would have placed himself at the head of the faction of Athanagild's family clan against Leovigild. In this context, it is understood that the son of Hermenegild and Ingundis bore the name of his illustrious grandfather, Goisuintha's first husband, and that Leovigild, for his part, tried to approach Chilperic – the murderer of Galasuinda, the other daughter of Goisuintha and Athanagild – through a marriage arranged between Rigunthis, the daughter of the king of Neustria, and his son Reccared. With the adoption of the Baltic *Sippe*, Hermenegild would have gained the support of the Visigothic noble faction that three decades earlier had led to

⁴⁴ Vázquez de Parga 1973: 30-35, Isla 1990: 16 ff; García Moreno 1991: 275-277; 2008: 102-104; Collins 1991: 219-220; 2015; Vallejo Girvés 1999: 263-267; 2012: 235-246; Castellanos García 2007: 113-117; Gehler-Rachunek 2019: 29-39.

⁴⁵ García Moreno 1994: 565s; Vallejo Girvés 1999: 263-267; 2012: 235-262; Isla 2004: 414; Castellanos 2007: 115-117; Castillo Lozano 2019: 102.

Athanagild's accession to the throne. Only years after the events had occurred, Gregory of Tours would reinterpret the events in a religious sense, placing Goisuintha's fanaticism and Ingundis's perseverance in faith as the root of the problem.

Although this proposal had already been suggested by other authors, it was undoubtedly L.A. García Moreno who expressed it in its most developed form. García Moreno's study is undoubtedly a brilliant exercise in scholarly knowledge that at the time of its publication sparked a Copernican revolution in the interpretation that had invariably been made of an episode that had marked the historical development of the Visigothic kingdom of Toledo.⁴⁶

Sed contra it is difficult to accept his hypothesis because it would force us to reject practically all foreign testimonies and consider them as false, as well as deny the numismatic evidence.⁴⁷ And both Gregory of Tours and Gregory the Great wrote their stories at the same time as John of Biclaro and both also had first-hand testimonies: the *Turonensis* had direct access to the legates travelling between the court of Toledo and France, while Pope Gregory had the testimonies of travellers and his friend Leander, the latter very involved in the events. As we will have the opportunity to see, despite the fact that there are some discrepancies that have sometimes been interpreted as contradictions, the truth is that each of the authors offers a complementary point of view about the problem.

An intermediate position between the traditional interpretation and the hypothesis of Vázquez de Parga developed later by García Moreno was defended by J. Maldonado Ramos. According to this author, Goisuintha would have tried to use Hermenegild as a rallying point for a sector of the Visigothic nobility discontented with Leovigild, but the prince adopted a peaceful attitude and unexpectedly decided not to rebel against his father. At last, Hermenegild's alliance with Byzantium would have alienated Goisuintha's support.⁴⁸ As can be seen, this reading tries to reconcile the two versions, but it does not stop us interpreting the facts as an effect of Goisuintha's interest in overthrowing Leovigild through Hermenegild, and, therefore, we will answer his arguments together with those of Vázquez de Parga and García Moreno.

In fact, the different versions that ran about Hermenegild's rebellion are due either to the different purpose that the author pursues when writing his work – historical chronicles of John of Biclaro and Isidore of Seville, or works with a moralising intention, i.e. those of Gregory of Tours, Gregory the Great, VSPE or Valerius of Bierzo – or to the political context in which they were written. In this second case, we must distinguish between the works written by Spanish authors, who were mostly writing when Reccared was already occupying the throne, or foreigners, either in Merovingian France or in Rome under Imperial rule. However, as has been said, all of them gathered and taken together offer a fairly complete picture of the events that allows a faithful reconstruction of an event that, as we have emphasised, marked the history of the Visigothic kingdom and that of Spain.⁴⁹

⁴⁶ García Moreno 1991; 2008. The aforementioned paper is highly influenced by Rouche 1986.

⁴⁷ Hillgarth 1961a: 24.

⁴⁸ Maldonado 1997.

⁴⁹ Vázquez de Parga 1973: 19. A relationship has been assumed between the writing of John of Biclaro's chronicle and the news provided by Gregory of Tours; cf. Pozo Flores 2014: 170-180.

On the other hand, the question arises as to what Hermenegild could gain from his rebellion, when he was the firstborn and sure heir of Leovigild. In this regard, it has been supposed that the reason for the prince's uprising could be the king's personal inclination towards Reccared. In this way, Leovigild's predisposition for his second son would explain why the monarch named the city of Reccopolis in his honour, when it would normally have been named after Hermenegild, as well as the departure of the firstborn from the court of Toledo to Seville. Queen Goisuintha, on the other hand, would have shown her preference for Hermenegild – after all, the prince was Ingundis's husband and, therefore, the man who would have to provide an heir for her lineage – which would explain the enigmatic expression in the *Biclaensis* that the uprising occurred *factione Gosuinthae*.⁵⁰ Thus, the king's favouring of Reccared and the demotion of Hermenegild would be the trigger for the prince's rebellion in *Hispalis*, and in that context the queen's support for the firstborn and the incitement to rise up in arms against his father would follow.

However, the sending of the prince to Seville cannot be considered in any way a snub for the king's firstborn but rather quite the opposite, given the economic and strategic importance that Baetica had within the power structures of the Visigothic kingdom. It should be noted that, once the Byzantine invasion had taken place in Athanagild's time, Baetica constituted one of the main war fronts (the other was Septimania) and undoubtedly had a high geo-strategic value. From their positions in the *fretrum Gaditanum*, the Byzantines could go up the Baetis (Guadalquivir) Valley towards Seville and Cordoba and conquer all of Baetica, seriously threatening Merida and Toledo. In addition, during the Visigothic period, both riverside cities were characterised by their strong Roman tradition, which meant a danger that an important sector of the population would have a certain sympathy with the Imperial interests of Constantinople. It is evident, therefore, that the prince enjoyed the full confidence of Leovigild when the king decided to send him to Seville.⁵¹ Although we will have the opportunity to qualify this statement later, this confidence of the king in his son is even more evident given the fact that he does not appoint him a normal governor (*dux*), but viceroy (*ad regnandum*) for a city that, to make matters worse, had already been a royal seat during the reigns of Theudis and Theudigisel, and was the main fief of Athanagild, Ingundis's grandfather.

On the other hand, we have already expressed elsewhere our doubts that the city of Reccopolis was named in honour of Leovigild's second son. This suspicion had already been raised earlier by J. Cabré and later picked up by R. Collins, who suggested that the city's name actually referred to a 'royal city' (Reccopolis/*Rexpolis*) and that if Leovigild had wanted to name it in honour of his second-born, he should simply have called it 'Reccaredopolis', in the customary style of the Empire and its sphere of influence.⁵²

The hypothesis of Cabré and Collins seems entirely convincing. Reccopolis, indeed, had been founded in 578 CE to commemorate the *decennalia* of the monarch and as such it was an act of ostentation of the sovereignty assumed by the Visigothic monarch. With this foundation,

⁵⁰ García Moreno 2008b: 84s; Arce 2010: 373-394; Vallejo Girvés 1999: 266s; 2012: 238; Castillo Lozano 2019: 103.

⁵¹ Thompson 1985: 83 [=1966: 65]; García Moreno 2008b: 109.

⁵² Cabré 1946; Collins 2005: 52s. Contra Arce 2000: 57; 2011: 217; Velázquez - Ripoll 2012: 153-155, although the latter admit that it would be the most pertinent name.

Leovigild made a real exhibition of independence that, for the first time among the barbarian kingdoms, put an end to the theoretical submission owed to the empire.⁵³ The same numismatic evidence corroborates this idea: the *trientes* struck by Leovigild at the mint of Reccopolis exhibit a special typology, i.e. with the bust of the sovereign facing forwards, bearing the attributes of the coronation ceremony of contemporary Byzantine emperors (*chlamys* with *fibulae* and crown with *infulae*).⁵⁴ In this sense, the foundation of Reccopolis is a measure that joins other actions aimed at the same objective, i.e. the assumption of sovereignty: minting of own currency, assumption of the *vestes regia* and enthronement, revision of the legal corpus, etc.⁵⁵

Obviously, we are not unaware that this interpretation to do with the foundation of Reccopolis contradicts what was explicitly indicated by John of Biclaro and Isidore of Seville in their respective chronicles.⁵⁶ Certainly, the concordant testimonies of both writers constitute a powerful argument and deserve more than a comment. However, in our opinion, there is a reasonable explanation for this apparent contradiction. Indeed, we think that, as Cabré and Collins defended, Reccopolis received the name as a commemoration of the royalty of Leovigild – as a celebration of the assumption of full sovereignty and expression at the same time of the birth of a new kingdom, one independent of Imperial power – although we differ with both authors in that it was done so based on the Gothic term *reik-s* (<germ. **rika*), not from the Latinised Celtic *ricus* (Cabré) or Latin *rex* (Collins). In this way, the name that King Leovigild gave to the city would underline the Gothic character of the new state, highlighting its different nature in relation to the empire.

But then how to reconcile this reading with the fact that the chronicles affirm in unison that Leovigild had founded this city, designating it *ex nomine filii*? In our opinion, the answer to this question lies in the fact that both accounts were composed *after* the events they narrate, when Reccared occupied the Visigothic throne and both Leovigild and Hermenegild had died. The Third Council of Toledo had sealed a great state pact between the Gothic nobility (recently converted to Catholicism) and the Hispano-Roman intelligentsia. At that moment the whole kingdom is experiencing an explosion of joy to which John of Biclaro himself is not immune, whose chronicle is an ode to the longed-for unity of Spain operated by Leovigild and sanctioned by Reccared.⁵⁷ It is at that precise moment that the city of Reccopolis would be associated with the figure of Reccared, and probably for two different reasons. The first of these, obviously, is philological in nature, since both the name of the city and that of the king share the same

⁵³ Martin 2003: 271s; García Moreno 2008b: 84.

⁵⁴ Miles 1952: 57.

⁵⁵ Isid. Hisp. HG 51: '*Aerarium quoque ac fiscum primus iste auxit, primusque etiam inter suos regali veste opertus in solio resedit. Nam ante eum, et habitus et consessus communis ut populo, ita et regibus erat. condidit etiam civitatem in Celtiberia, quam ex nomine filii, Recopolim nominavit. in legibus quoque ea quae ab Eurico incondite constituta videbantur correxit, plurimas leges praetermissas adiciens, plerasque superfluas auferens*' (Mommsen 1894: 288).

⁵⁶ Iohan. Bicl. Chron. 578? 4: '*Leouegildus rex, extinctis undique tyrannis et peruasoribus Ispanie superatis, sortitus requiem propria cum plebe resedit et ciuitatem in Celtiberia ex nomine filii condidit, quae Recopolim nuncupatur: quam miro opere in menibus et suburbanis adornans priuilegia populo noue urbis instituit*' (Mommsen 1894: 215). Isid. Hisp. HG 51 (see previous note).

⁵⁷ Barroso 2019: 123-130.

radical *reik-s*, a detail that facilitated the association between both names, and which, perhaps, over the years, was interpreted by the chroniclers as an omen that came to show a divine predisposition in favour of the new monarch. The second reason is of a more personal nature, i.e. the link of Leovigild's son with the city, perhaps for having been in charge of its construction while Hermenegild was in Seville. This might be confirmed by the close relationship that Reccared had with Eutropius, the abbot of the Servitanus monastery, in Arcavica (Cañaveruelas, Cuenca), who, surprisingly – because he was a simple abbot from a remote city in the province of Celtiberia – would be, along with Leander of Seville, the organiser of the transformative Third Council of Toledo. The intimate link of the abbot of the Servitanus with Reccared is evidenced by the fact that, after 589, Eutropius was elevated to the episcopal



Fig. 3. Reccopolis. Aerial view of the archaeological site.

seat of Valencia, a measure that can be seen within the diplomatic strategy played out by the monarch to put an end to the Byzantine invasion of the eastern coast of Iberian Peninsula.⁵⁸

Discarding the alleged preference of the king for Reccared, there are also two other important arguments that would go against the suggested support of Goisuintha for Hermenegild, arguments that have been well explored by Rosario Valverde.⁵⁹

⁵⁸ We refer to our previous studies: Barroso - Morín 1996a: 160-162; Barroso - Morín 2007c; Barroso 2019: 10-23, 120-122.

⁵⁹ Valverde 2008: 26.

The first of these is the strong position the queen held in the court of Toledo, both in the years of Leovigild's reign, and, above all, at the time of the death of the king. Only after having proven her participation in a conspiracy against Reccared did the queen lose this privileged position she had there.⁶⁰ Supporters of a Goisuintha, who was an enemy of Leovigild, explain this significant situation of the widowed queen because she would have signed a pact with the new monarch, resulting in his adoption (*Versippung*) by Goisuintha and the payment of the corresponding financial compensation due to Childebert for the death of Ingundis.⁶¹ This pact would have fallen apart when the projected marriage of Reccared with the Frankish princess Chlodosind – the youngest daughter of Brunhild, sister of Ingundis and therefore also a granddaughter of Goisuintha – was frustrated by the king's marriage to Baddo.⁶²

But this is mere hypothesis. It is difficult to think that Goisuintha would continue to hold such a prominent position during the first two years of Reccared's reign were she not only to have participated in, but also be a direct promoter of Hermenegild's rebellion. Even less so when in 587 the widowed queen continued to be a fervent Arian and Reccared had not only personally embraced the Catholic faith but initiated the first actions to gain the support of the Gothic nobility and the Arian episcopate for the official conversion.⁶³ On the other hand, it is most likely that Queen Baddo, who signed the acts of the Third Council of Toledo alongside Reccared, was not of royal blood, and was paired with the king through a free union (*Friedelehe*), a quasi-matrimonial bond characteristic of the Germanic tradition that cannot be considered as a true marriage.⁶⁴ Thus, this union did not initially constitute a serious impediment to Reccared's marriage to the Frankish princess (as, by the way, Chilperic's union with Fredegund had not been an impediment for the king of Neustria to marry Princess Galsuinth).

⁶⁰ Ioh. Bicl. Chron. a. 589? 1. '*Uldida episcopus cum Gosuintha regina insidiantes Reccaredo manifestantur et fidei catholicae communionem, quam sub specie Christiana quasi sumentes proiciunt, publicantur. quod malum in cognitionem hominum deductum Uldida exilio condemnatur, Gosuintha vero catholicis semper infesta vitae tunc terminum dedit*' (Mommsen 1894: 218).

⁶¹ Greg. Tur. HF 9 1: '*Igitur post mortem Leuvigilde Hispanorum regis Richaredus, filius eius, foedus iniit cum Goesintha, relicta patris sui, eamque ut matrem suscepit. 9 16: Post haec Richaredus legationem ad Gunthchramnum atque Childeberthum regem direxit pacis gratia, ut scilicet, sicut in fide se aderebat unum, ita et caritate se praestaret unitum... Haec legati audientes, ad Childeberthum proficiscuntur; quo et in pace suscepti sunt, dicente: 'Vult se dominus noster, frater tuus, Richaridus, de hoc crimine exuere, quod ei inponitur, quasi in mortem sororis vestrae fuisse conscius; quod aut sacramenta vultis aut qualibet conditione, idoneus reddi potest. Deinde, datis gratia vestra decem milibus solidorum, caritatem vestram habere desiderat, ut et ille vestro utatur solatio et vos eius, ubi necesse fuerit beneficia potiamini*' (Krusch - Levison 1951: 414 ff).

⁶² Castillo Lozano 2019: 138-140.

⁶³ Ioh. Bicl. Chron. a. 587? 5: '*Reccaredus primo regni sui anno mense X catholicus deo iuvante efficitur et sacerdotes sectae Arrianae sapienti colloquio aggressus ratione potius quam imperio converti ad catholicam fidem facit gentemque omnium Gothorum et Suevorum ad unitatem et pacem revocat Christianae ecclesiae. sectae Arrianae gratia divina in dogmate veniunt Christiano*' (Mommsen 1894: 218).

⁶⁴ Isid. Hisp. HG 57: '*...regnat Livva filius eius [Reccaredi] annis duobus, ignobili quidem matre progenitus*' (Mommsen 1894: 290). Orlandis 2011: 55. Previously Orlandis (1957-1958: 115) had spoken out against Baddo being the mother of Liuva II, an opinion followed more recently by Collins (2005: 71). However, neither of the two authors explains the reason that made them reject that identification. From the context it is intuited that it is the presence of Baddo at the III Council and the subscription of the same profession of faith as 'glorious queen'. We believe that the most probable version is that Liuva II was the son of Baddo (hence his name is not mentioned in Isidore's chronicle) and that the projected marriage between Chlodosind and Reccared was frustrated by the opposition of Guntramn (suggested by Greg. Tur. HF 9 20) and his subsequent offensive of 588 against Carcassonne.

As for the testimony of Gregory of Tours about Goisuintha's adoption as Reccared's mother, it seems inconclusive to us. In Germanic law, the woman was always subject to some power: either that of the father or the holder of the *Mund* (until her marriage), or that of the husband (after marriage) and the *Sippe* (if she were an orphan or widow). In the case of Goisuintha, once Leovigild had died, and given her advanced age, it is logical that she would be left out of the protection of the *Sippe* and would become dependent on Reccared.⁶⁵ This was, as has been said, what the custom provided for. Only later, when the Germanic tradition had faded, and to avoid problems in the realm of succession to the throne, the 3rd Council of Zaragoza decreed that the widowed queens should be confined in a monastery.⁶⁶ Therefore, the account of Gregory of Tours should be interpreted in relation to the new state in which the Goisuintha found herself, i.e. once deprived of the support of her husband and her own *Sippe*, becoming subject to Reccared.

Obviously, the advantages that this adoption provided to the king are easy to guess at. With it, Reccared managed to forge ties with the old Arian establishment, thus gaining the support of the followers of the widowed queen, which, by the way, falls within the king's mode of action in his policy of pacifying the kingdom. In this sense, the adoption of Goisuintha as a mother was a clever measure that has all the appearance of a political pact to facilitate the transition to the new period that was opening with the enthronement of Reccared. As in the times of Agila and Athanagild, Reccared must have been very aware of the risk of a new division within the Gothic nobility. The danger that the Goths of Spain would suffer the same fate as the Gothic kingdom of Italy, i.e. if there were a division within the noble state and a joint action of the Franks and Byzantines, was more than predictable. Hence, Reccared always acted with utmost prudence and political tact towards Leovigild's widow. The adoption of Goisuintha is therefore linked to other political actions of the monarch aimed at weaving a network of alliances that involved the different forces of the Gothic nobility. Thus, Reccared kept his conversion to Catholicism secret, and before making it public and official he reached an agreement with the Arian bishops, whom he convinced more by reason than force (*ratione potius quam imperio*).⁶⁷

Seen in this way, Reccared's adoption of Goisuintha as a mother can be compared in its political aspect to the marriage between the queen and Leovigild: an attempt to heal the wounds caused by the civil war and to control the group of clients of the queen.⁶⁸ If, in addition, as some

⁶⁵ In Germanic custom, the woman never breaks the bond with the *Sippe*, not even in the case of marriage. The *Sippe* was made up of the ancestors up to the fourth generation, following the principle of agnation. Given Goisuintha's age (which must be assumed advanced), the lack of male offspring (except her grandson Athanagild) and with the rest of the female offspring in Neustria, the queen's state of orphanhood is better understood. Hence, once Goisuintha was widowed, she had to take refuge in the *Mund* or seek the protection of Reccared. The funerary pavilion of Los Hitos (Arisgotas, Toledo) is a magnificent archaeological testimony of the transition from the Germanic *Sippe* towards Christianised forms (Barroso *et al.* 2018c; Morin *et al.* 2019).

⁶⁶ III Conc. Caesaraug. c. 5 (691 CE) (Vives 1963: 479 ff). Valverde 2003. But even in this case it was a very exceptional situation within the context of the rebellion of Suniefred – a nobleman who had had the support of Queen Liuvigoto, widow of Erwig, and Bishop Sisbert of Toledo – it was soon rectified. See our study on Theudimer: Barroso - Morín - Sánchez 2018a.

⁶⁷ See supra n. 62.

⁶⁸ Orlandis 1957-1958; Valverde 2000b: 343 ff.

authors have argued, Goisuintha was in charge of guarding the royal treasury, the political advantages of such adoption can be better understood.⁶⁹

Similarly, as can be deduced from Bishop Gregory's account, the adoption of Goisuintha as the king's mother also had important implications in terms of the kingdom's foreign policy, since, while on one hand with this measure Reccared intended to avoid the revenge of the Merovingian kings, who were related to Ingundis, on the other he could establish a new alliance with them through his marriage to Chlodosind, the other daughter of Brunhild and Sigebert of Austrasia. And for this, it was of vital importance to gain the support of Goisuintha, mother of Brunhild.⁷⁰

The payment of the *Faida* for the death of Ingundis must be interpreted in the same way. It was entirely in line with Germanic custom that if Reccared wanted to marry Chlodosind, he first had to compensate the Merovingian king for the death of Ingundis. This compensation was set at 10,000 gold *solidi*.⁷¹ We also find it hard to link the death (execution) of Sisbert with the payment of the *Faida*, as the *Turonensis* is explicit in saying that the *Faida* would be paid only for the death of Ingundis. Hermenegild was not part of Childebert's *Sippe*, but that of Leovigild and Reccared.

The second argument put forward by Valverde Castro is no less forceful than the first: how to explain that Goisuintha, a fervent Arian, would have supported a rebellion that had actually raised the banner of the defence of Catholic orthodoxy as a unifying ideological element. In this sense, although the testimony of Gregory of Tours may seem suspicious of bias due to the pastoral purpose with which he writes his history, it coincides with other sources and, very especially, with the account of John of Biclaro when he describes the conspiracy of the widowed queen and Bishop Uldila against Reccared. According to the abbot of Biclaro, the conspirators, although they pretended to have accepted Catholic orthodoxy, profaned communion because they were secretly Arians. In fact, the *Biclarensis* describes Goisuintha as a staunch enemy of the Catholics until the end of her days.⁷²

In light of all the available data, there is no doubt that Goisuintha's attitude is entirely consistent with the traditional interpretation of this episode. Indeed, the queen was a convinced Arian whose uncompromising attitude towards the princess had caused the expulsion of Hermenegild and Ingundis from the court. The queen's stance must have turned into pure resentment fuelled by the fact that she had seen how her daughters had renounced the faith of their elders, with one of them, moreover, having been murdered far from her homeland. In this atmosphere, Ingundis's situation at court must have become unbearable and

⁶⁹ Godoy 2004: 62; Isla 2004: 414.

⁷⁰ Valverde 2000b: 343ff; 2008: 27-29.

⁷¹ Greg. Tur. IX 20. An exorbitant amount considering that the price for a nobleman from the royal court was 600 *solidi* (*Lex Salica*). In addition, the king had to surrender the cities of Iubiniacum and Cornelianum, both in Gothic Gaul. Thompson 1985: 185 ff [=1969: 161]; Rouche 1986: 107; García Moreno 1991: 281 ff.

⁷² Iohan. Bicular. Chron. a. 589? 1: '*Uldila episcopus cum Gosuintha regina insidiantes Reccaredo manifestantur et fidei catholicae communionem, quam specie Christiana quasi sumentes proinciunt, publicantur... Gosuintha vero catholicis semper infesta vitae tunc terminum dedit*' (Mommmsen 1894: 218). From the context, it seems deducible that Gosvinta took her own life, although Collins (2005: 66) is not clear if this was the case or if she was executed.

would have motivated her eviction from Toledo. The couple's stay in Seville, away from the direct influence of Leovigild and Goisuintha, and alongside a figure like Leander, facilitated the prince's conversion to the Catholic faith, which was interpreted by the kings as a usurpation. In this context, the decision to march against Hermenegild must have come from Goisuintha herself (*factione Gosuinthae*), as narrated in the *Biclaensis*, and as seems logical, given her condition as a convinced Arian and stepmother of the prince.⁷³ Once Hermenegild and Leovigild had died, and with Reccared occupying the Visigothic throne, Goisuintha agrees to a pact with the new monarch, maintaining her privileged status at court until the king's conversion incites her again to plot a conspiracy in collaboration with the Arian bishop (surely from Toledo) Uldila.

Nevertheless, the greatest obstacle to accepting the theory of Goisuintha's direct support for Hermenegild is a question posed by R. Collins, and to which we have already referred: What need did Hermenegild have to rise up against his father when he was already ruling in the south and expected to succeed him on the throne of Toledo in the not-too-distant future? What could the prince gain from this that he did not already have, or that was not within his reach? Hermenegild, let us not forget, ruled *ad regnandum* in Baetica and this was one of the most important provinces of the kingdom. Furthermore, the prince was in the prime of his youth and he had just had an heir. The latter meant in practice the dynastic unification of the clans of Athanagild and Leovigild, and, therefore, a considerable advantage for the affirmation of the kingdom, something that Reccared could not count on. On the contrary, Leovigild was then in the final stretch of his reign. Also, the king's warlike spirit favoured Hermenegild's aspirations and increased his options for the crown.⁷⁴

In any case, the only reason that could have led Hermenegild to start a rebellion would be the suspicions he might have had if Reccared had stayed with the king in Toledo after his departure to Baetica. But we have already said that it is very possible that Reccared established his court in Reccopolis at the same time that Hermenegild did in Hispalis. It is true that no source can prove this hypothesis but sufficient indications can be found. In fact, a Reccared installed in Reccopolis can explain the close relationship he maintained with Eutropius, abbot of the Servitanus monastery in Arcavica.⁷⁵

On the other hand, the subsequent elevation of Eutropius to the chair of Valencia, a decision that can be framed within the diplomatic game deployed for the resolution of the Byzantine question, the certainty that Reccopolis would have acted as the capital of a newly created province (Celtiberia), and the subsequent transfer of the Arcavicensis episcopal see to that city (as well as part of the Servitanus monastery to Toledo, as suggested by C. Codoñer), all strengthen the idea that Reccared was in charge of the government of the Celtiberia province

⁷³ The same expression is used by John of Biclaro on two other occasions (Sophia, the wife of Justin II, and the wife of the Lombard king Alboinus, Rosamund, whom John does not name) to describe the instigation of a woman; c.f. Pozo Flores 2014: 174-177.

⁷⁴ Collins 2005: 54. Two facts should be remembered here: 1) that Leovigild would die a natural death in 587 CE (see *infra* n. 320), just seven years after the rebellion began; and 2) that, as attested by what happened with Liuva II and Witteric, Reccared did not produce offspring of royal blood.

⁷⁵ *Ioh. Bicl. Chron. a. 590? 1: '...summa tamen synodalis negotii penes sanctum Leandrum Hispalensis ecclesiae episcopum et beatissimum Eutropium monasterii Servitani abbatem fuit'* (Mommsen 1894: 219). Díaz y Díaz 2004: 11-30; Barroso - Morín 1996a: 157-162; Barroso 2018: 142.

and that the seat of this new territorial demarcation was Reccopolis. Obviously, although close to the *regia sedes*, the new province was nowhere near as economically and strategically important as Baetica (where Hermenegild resided), or, come to that, Septimania and Gallaecia, both heavily militarised provinces. And if we also add the symbolic element – Seville was a city linked to the memory of king Athanagild – it is difficult to accept that Hermenegild had real reasons to feel aggrieved by his situation.⁷⁶

Indeed, Seville was not only a city with a brilliant Imperial past, but by the middle of the 6th century it had also acquired great strategic importance, especially since the landing of the Imperial troops in the south had placed it at the forefront of military interest. After his ascent to the throne in 555, Athanagild had made some attempts to recover the territory invaded by Imperial forces, but without much success except for Seville, a city that was taken by the king in 566-567 under circumstances not entirely clear. It is likely that the Cordoban rebels had conquered the city, taking advantage of Athanagild's departure to Toledo, or that the Sevillians had followed the example of Cordoba and declared themselves in rebellion.⁷⁷

The death of Athanagild in 567 CE and the problems derived from the succession to the throne of the Goths left the situation in suspense for a few years. But once the succession problem was resolved and, with Leovigild firmly established in Toledo, hostilities with the Empire began again. In 571 Leovigild conquered the important stronghold of Asidona (Medina Sidonia) thanks to the betrayal of a certain Framidancus, probably a Goth in the service of the Byzantines.⁷⁸ Since then, the territory of the Strait of Gibraltar seems to have been under the authority of a *dux*, or at least that is what can be deduced from a funerary inscription found in Villamartín (Cadiz), dated in 578, where a Zerezindus *dux* is mentioned, probably the Visigothic authority in charge of the Strait's duchy.⁷⁹ A year after the conquest of Asidona, it was Cordoba's turn, a city

⁷⁶ See Barroso - Morín 1996a; Barroso 2018: 136-141, with the bibliography cited there. The hypothesis of a derivation of the monastery of Agali in Toledo from the Servitanus de Arcavica had previously been defended by Codoñer (1972: 51). For the *prouintia Celtiberia uel Carpetana*, see Codoñer 1972: 62-64; Barbero de Aguilera 1989: 185-187; Barroso 2018: 31-34. That there was a governor in the Carpetania is deduced from an anecdote told by St Ildelfonsus about Bishop Eladius (Vir. Ilustr. 6; Codoñer 1972: 124-127). García Moreno's claim (2008: 125) that Eutropius could have raised suspicions due to his dealings with the Byzantine authorities is inadmissible. The abbot of the Servitanus was certainly one of the monks who had abandoned the Imperial territory along with Donatus. It is true that his biographer, Ildelfonsus, relates the attack of the barbarians (*mauri*) as the cause of their escape. But this does not explain why they marched towards the Visigoth territory instead of settling in the coastal area occupied by the Byzantines. Definitely, as García Moreno himself recognises, this decision was influenced by the rejection of the emperor's position in relation to the *Tria Capitula* controversy (García Moreno 1989: 275; 2008: 125-127). That is to say, if Donatus and his monks (among whom was Eutropius) sought the protection of the Toledo court, it is because they preferred to live under an Arian, but tolerant, monarch rather than on Imperial soil. After all, while the emperor forced his religious policy to be followed, Leovigild, for political reasons, was benevolent towards the refugees arriving from Africa (Vallejo Girvés 2012: 222-224). This is also seen in the case of Nactus (VSPE 3; Camacho 1988: 47 ff, 91 ff). The situation, therefore, was rather the opposite: there is no doubting Eutropius's loyalty to Reccared, but it was the correspondence that he maintained with Licinianus of Cartagena that aroused suspicions in the Imperial court about Licinianus and other prelates of Spania fidelity, as well as the subsequent trip of the bishop of Cartagena to Constantinople, and perhaps his assassination once there; cf. Barroso 2018: 144 ff.

⁷⁷ Thompson 1985: 367 ff [=1969: 323].

⁷⁸ Iohan. Bicl. Chron. a. 571.3: '*Leovegildus rex Asidonam fortissimam civitatem proditione cuiusdam Framidanei nocte occupat et militibus interfectis memoratam urbem ad Gothorum revocat iura*' (Mommsen 1894: 212). García Moreno 1974a: 48 ff, no. 60.

⁷⁹ ICERV 153 (=IHC 91). Vives 1969: 153; Vallejo Girvés 1993b: 155; 2012: 217. Unfortunately, the inscription is at an unknown location, although Rodrigo Caro could have read it in the 17th century. García Moreno 1974a: 87, no. 174.

that had long been in rebellion against Visigothic power. As a continuation of this campaign, Leovigild carried out another expedition to subdue the local nobility entrenched in their possessions within the Cordoban countryside.⁸⁰

Therefore, the military frontier situation that Baetica was experiencing suggests that Leovigild had full confidence in Hermenegild when, in 579, he handed over the government of the province to him.⁸¹ However, that confidence must not have been exempt from a certain prudence, given the special circumstances experienced in the court of Toledo after the confrontation between the queen and Ingundis, as narrated in the *Turonensis*. As an old fiefdom of Athanagild, it must be assumed that in Leovigild's decision to send the prince to Seville, Goisuintha's opinion must have weighed heavily, she still having, presumably, some influence over the local Sevillian nobility. It is possible that the kings thought that, once there, the royal couple would have little room for manoeuvre, as, in some way, they would be controlled by the noble circles linked to the families of Athanagild and Goisuintha. Nevertheless, as so often happens throughout history, events did not unfold according to the planned design.

The Literary Sources

As has already been said, the figure of Hermenegild has been the subject of controversy practically since his death. Hero, and champion of the Catholic cause for some, usurper and rebel for others, Hermenegild has not enjoyed a unanimous judgment among historians. The unique circumstances that surrounded the whole episode (the nature of the usurpation that would have led Hermenegild to rise up against his father, the tragic death of the Gothic prince in a dark dungeon, involvement in the death of the prince, etc.), are all factors that fuelled the controversy from ancient times.⁸²

Already in an important article published in 1961, Jocelyn N. Hillgarth attested to the difficulty of this episode in the history of Spain and the lack of a scientific agreement about the interpretation that should be given to it.⁸³ Today, when more than half a century has passed since Hillgarth's study, we have been able to verify that there is still no consensus on the eldest son of Leovigild and it is even possible that we are even further away from what the noted British historian suggested. Perhaps for this reason, the rebellion of Hermenegild continues to this day to be an episode not well known to the general public despite the work of countless researchers, constituting as it does one of the most significant events in the history of Spain. It is possible that the importance of Hermenegild's rebellion lies not so much in the fact itself –

⁸⁰ Iohan. Bicl. Chron. a. 572.2: '*Leovegildus rex Cordubam civitatem diu Gothis rebellem nocte occupat et caesis hostibus propriam facit multasque urbes et castella interfecta rusticorum multitudine in Gothorum dominium revocat*' (Mommsen 1894: 213).

⁸¹ Iohan. Bicl. Chron. a. 579.2: '*Leovegildus... provinciae partem ad regnandum tribuit.*' Likewise, Thompson 1969: 65. In practice, Hermenegild's government had to include the duchies of Baetica and the Strait of Cadiz. More doubtful, although some authors have suggested it, is that it also extended to Lusitania. This would explain Leovigild's reprisals against Bishop Mazona and John of Biclario, as well as the confusion in the *Turonensis* about the situation of the Osset Baptistery in Lusitania. In any case, the VSPE clearly report that the king always had control of this city, even after the rebellion broke out (see below).

⁸² For this entire section, see Vázquez de Parga 1973 and Marcotegui 2003.

⁸³ Hillgarth 1961a: 23. Cf. Díaz y Díaz 2004: 19-21.

after all, one more episode of usurpation in a period of frequent rebellions among the nobility – as in the political and religious consequences that it entailed and that determined the subsequent historical development of Spain.

Contrary to this transcendence we have pointed out, hardly anything is known about the personality of the prince except for a few details that refer to his public life and the events that followed his expulsion from the court of Toledo. This is due to the nature of the sources and especially to the circumstances in which they were written and which forced a strict censorship on the figure of Hermenegild, which, in some cases, i.e. during the Third Council of Toledo, borders on a genuine ‘conspiracy of silence’.⁸⁴ As if this were not enough, the Spanish and foreign literary sources provide a very different account of the facts (although not contradictory), which has led to denying the veracity of one or the other depending on the degree of credibility that each historian grants them. For this reason, we must make our way through all the narratives – between what they write and, of course, also between what they keep silent about – to try to discover the historical truth they hide. Sometimes silences can be more eloquent than words.

The *Chronicon* of John of Biclaro is the first of the literary sources that reports on the usurpation of Hermenegild, and is perhaps the one that has had the greatest impact on the subsequent interpretation of the events.⁸⁵ St Isidore of Seville provides some valuable biographical data about the author, whom he surely got to know in person. From a very young age, Isidore must have often accompanied his brother Leander in his dealings, serving him as an assistant and secretary. According to the *Hispalensis*, John of Biclaro was a Goth, a native of Scallabis, a city in the ancient province of Lusitania (the current Santarem, Portugal). In his adolescence, John went to Constantinople, where he resided for seven years and where he had the opportunity to learn firsthand the events that surrounded the government of Emperor Justin. It is likely that there he obtained a copy of the chronicle of Victor of Tunnuna. Indeed, his work seems to be a continuation of the chronicle of the North African bishop, in which Spanish affairs appear at the same level as those of the Empire, a very significant aspect as it implies an incipient awareness of Hispanic-Gothic nationality. On his return to Spain, John was persecuted by Leovigild, apparently due to his double status of Goth and Catholic. Be that as it may, the king exiled him to Barcino (Barcelona), a city in which he remained confined for a decade. Once returned from his exile, John founded a monastery ‘that now [i.e. the times of his biographer Isidore] they call Biclaro’, of which he would become abbot and to which he endowed a monastic rule. Later, shortly after the meeting of the Third Council of Toledo (589 CE), John of Biclaro was elevated to the episcopal chair of Gerona.⁸⁶ As titular of this see, he

⁸⁴ The expression is quoted from Thompson 1985: 93 [=1966: 76].

⁸⁵ Joh. Bicl. Chron. (Mommsen 1894; Álvarez 1943; Campos 1960; Cardelle de Hartmann 2001; Fernández Jiménez 2007).

⁸⁶ Isid. Hisp. Vir. Illustr. 31: ‘Iohannes, Gerundensis ecclesiae episcopus, natione Gothus, prouinciae Lusitaniae Scallabi natus. Hic, cum esset adolescens, Constantinopolim perrexit, ibique graeca et latina eruditione nutritus, septimo demum anno in Hispanias reuersus est, eodem tempore, quo incitante Leouigildo rege, arriana feruebat insania. Hunc supradictum rex, cum ad nefandae haeresis credulitatem compelleret, et hic omnino resisteret, exilio tursus, Barcinona relegatus, per decem annos multas insidias et persecuciones ab arrianis perpressus est.

‘Qui postea condidit monasterium quod nunc Biclaro dicitur, ubi congregata monachorum societate, scripsit regulam ipsi monasterio profuturam, sed et cunctis Deum timentibus satis necessariam. Addidit et in libro Chronicorum ab anno primo Iustini iunioris principatus usque in annum octauum Mauricii principis Romanorum, et quartum Recharedi regis annum, historico

attended the councils of Zaragoza (II) (592), of Toledo (597), Barcelona (II) (599) and Egara (614). He also appears documented in *the De fisco Barcinonensi* and the *Decretum Gundemari* of 610, and would appear to have died shortly before 621 CE.⁸⁷

These are, as we say, valuable notes of the biographer's biography, but which nevertheless leave some areas of shadow. In fact, we do not know the reasons that led Juan to travel to Constantinople, where he had the opportunity to expand his knowledge of Latin and Greek cultures. In any case, there is no doubt that he belonged to an important family of the Gothic nobility, hence on his return to the peninsula (c. 576) the king ordered his exile to Barcelona, another of the dark corners in his life. The exact location of the monastery of Biclario is also unknown, and although various sites in the Catalan area have been proposed, it is more likely that it was somewhere in Lusitania, probably, as Menéndez Pidal defended, in the area of Bejar (province of Salamanca), halfway between his hometown and the court of Toledo.⁸⁸

Unlike Victor of Tunnuna, who only deals with the events that affect the Empire, the *Biclaensis* contains events that occurred in Spain between the first year of Emperor Justin and the eighth year of Maurice, which is the fourth of Reccared, i.e. between the years 567 and 604. Since the author must have died around the second decade of the 7th century, and the last entry in his chronicle is dated 604, John must have written his account towards the end of the 6th century or already in the first decade of the 7th, e.g. not long after the events he narrates.⁸⁹

Although John of Biclario is generally considered a reliable author, his chronicle does have a certain Hispano-Gothic nationalist bias that is worth taking into account when addressing the difficult problem posed by the rebellion of Hermenegild. In fact, the object of his chronicle is to extol the unity of the kingdom fashioned by Leovigild and Reccared, to the point of equating the kingdom of the Goths with the Empire itself.⁹⁰ This bias is very evident when he deals with the events related to the uprising of the prince in Seville, and in a certain way, as we will have the opportunity to discuss later, has induced modern interpretations of the events that followed the prince's conversion. However, despite his undeniable bias, historiography presents a benevolent judgment of the work and figure of John of Biclario. There are three factors that have undoubtedly contributed to this favourable opinion among historians: his status as a Goth, his undoubted fidelity to Catholic orthodoxy, and the admiration that the chronicler cannot disguise for Leovigild. Indeed, the *Biclaensis* presents Leovigild as the true restorer of the kingdom of the Goths and he does so despite being an Arian monarch and having been himself the object of reprisal by the king.⁹¹

compositoque sermone ualde utilem historiam. Et multa alia scribere dicitur, quae ad nostram notitiam non peruenerunt' (Codoñer 1964: 151 ff).

⁸⁷ Campos 1960: 25-29; García Moreno 1974a: 213s, no. 616; Wolf 1990: 1-10.

⁸⁸ Probably to be found at Santibáñez de Bejar or Salvatierra de Tormes (province of Salamanca). For the location of the monastery of Biclario, see Addendum I.

⁸⁹ Mommsen 1894; Álvarez Rubiano 1943; Campos 1960; Díaz y Díaz 1962; Álvarez García 1997; Galán 1998; Cardelle de Hartmann 2001; Collins 2005: 47 ff; Fernández Jiménez 2007; Pozo Flores 2014; Torres Michelette 2007.

⁹⁰ Galán 1998.

⁹¹ This favourable judgment is observed in practically the entire narrative, but it is especially evident when it compares the situation of the kingdom before Leovigild's arrival to the throne and the achievement of his great

About three decades after the *Biclaensis*, Isidore of Seville (c. 556-636) writes his *Historia Gothorum*. Two drafts of this work are preserved (a brief one dated 620, and a longer one finished in 624) that show some differences in terms of content and treatment, although the entry corresponding to Hermenegild does not vary between versions. Isidore limits himself to making a simple mention of the prince's uprising without dwelling on further details.⁹² It is also possible that the *Hispalensis* alludes to the death of Hermenegild and the exile of several Gothic ecclesiastics in another passage.⁹³

In another of his works, the *Viri Illustribus*, Isidore also provides some relevant data about several of the main protagonists of this story, some of whom he got to know personally. Especially important in this work is the praise he heaps on his brother Leander (c. 534-596), Bishop of Seville and main actor in the conversion of the prince. But he also provides some biographical data for other important characters of this story, i.e. Gregory the Great, Eutropius of Valencia, Licinianus of Cartagena, and the already mentioned John of Biclara.⁹⁴

Due to the particular political situation experienced during the reign of Reccared (586-601), Spanish authors provide barely any details of Hermenegild's rebellion, at most they limit themselves to recording the most important events and their chronology. The only exception is the anonymous author of the *Vitas Sanctorum Patrum Emeritensium*. The *Vitas*, attributed to a certain Paul, a deacon of the Church of Merida, who would have written his work c. 610, provide certain important news in relation to the religious policy of Leovigild and the particular situation of the city of Merida. In addition, the author literally reproduces the testimony of Pope Gregory, although censoring the expression *fratrem martyrum* ('[following]... his brother the martyr') dedicated to Reccared for the more aseptic *Christus dominum* ('[following]... Christ the Lord').⁹⁵

A separate case among Spanish authors is that of Valerius of Bierzo (c. 630 - c. 695). Valerius includes in his work *De vana saeculi sapientia*, a strange relationship of martyrs of the faith among which he includes Hermenegild, whom Valerius considers *rex Gothorum*.⁹⁶ Apart from

political success, i.e. territorial unity: Ioh. Bicl. Chron. a. 569.4: '...Leovegildus germanus Livvani regis superstite fratre in regnum citerioris Hispaniae constituitur, Gosuintham relictam Athanaildi in coniugium accipit et provinciam Gothorum, quae iam pro rebellionem diversorum fuerat diminuta mirabiliter ad pristinos revocat terminos' (Mommsen 1894: 212).

⁹² Isid. Hisp. HG 49: 'Cesserunt etiam armis illius plurimae omnes rebelles Hispaniae urbes... Hermenegildum deinde filium imperiis suis tyrannizantem obsessum exsuperavit' (Mommsen 1894: 287). There is an excellent bilingual edition in Spanish: Rodríguez Alonso 1975.

⁹³ Isid. Hisp. HG 51: 'Exstitit autem et quibusdam suorum perniciosus; nam quoscumque nobilissimos ac potentissimos vidit aut capite truncavit aut proscriptos in exilium egit' (Mommsen 1894: 288).

⁹⁴ Isid. Hisp. Vir. Illustr. 27 (Gregory I); 28 (Leander); 29 (Licinianus); 31 (John of Biclara); 32 (Eutropius); (Codoñer 1964: 144-151).

⁹⁵ VSPE 5 9 4: 'Post cuius crudelissimam mortem venerabilis vir Reccaredus princeps filius ejus, jure administrationem regni adeptus est... vir denique orthodoxus, et per omnia catholicus, qui non patrem perfidum, sed Christum Dominum sequens ab Ariana haereseos pravitate conversus est, totamque Wisigothorum gentem mira praedicatione ad veram fidem perduxit' (Camacho 1988: 70). Orlandis 1962a: 12. Cf. Lacarra (in Vázquez de Parga 1973: 52).

⁹⁶ Val. Berg. *De vana saeculi*, 4: 'Non solum ex plebeio coetu vulgati conversioni degentes sed et pontifices, reges, duces atque diversi saeculi potentes. Inter quos quantum nostra nosse potuit ineptia, pauca de plurimis distinguimus nomina. Id est, de pontificali sacerdotii culmine immensus est numerus. De reguli vero fastigio, meminimur cesarem, nomine Crispum, regem

this testimony, we will have to wait until the 12th century, with the *Historia Silense* (or *Legionense*), in literal and confessed dependence on the *Dialogues* of Pope Gregory, to find in Spain a mention of the martyrdom nature of the prince's execution.⁹⁷

As can be seen, Spanish authors, with few exceptions, and already at a late date, do not go into detail about what happened, limiting themselves to giving some news about the prince's rebellion and the subsequent military campaign of Leovigild. Despite this absence of data, the numerous gaps in this story can be completed thanks to some precious details provided by two foreign authors: Gregory of Tours and Pope Gregory the Great.

Gregory of Tours (c. 538-594) belonged to an important Gallo-Roman senatorial family. The main source relating to Hermenegild's rebellion is found in his *Historia Francorum*, an ecclesiastical history that is in actuality a chronicle of the Merovingian dynasty, in which he occasionally refers to events in Spain that affected the Franks. Gregory composed his *Historiae* a few years after the events – in any case before his death in 594 – and possibly remodelling them at whim to fit within the moralising plan of his work. For this reason, the *Turonensis* presents the events in a disordered way in different books, which, in our opinion, adds more credit to his information and invites us to discard the idea that we are dealing with a fantasised account.⁹⁸

In general terms, Gregory of Tours is an author who shows open hostility towards everything that pertains to the Visigoths, animosity fuelled mainly by their condition as Arians. This predisposition against his southern neighbours becomes even more evident when he addresses the events involving Leovigild, a king who combined in his person the two most serious sins in the mind of the bishop of Tours, i.e. being both a Visigothic and a heretic. However, despite being an author very biased in all matters affecting relations between Franks and Goths, he is not so partial as to invent such a detailed story, and when there were very renowned witnesses to events, i.e. those directly affected, St Leander and Pope Gregory, who could contradict the story. The chronological and geographical proximity to the events, verified by the details he provides, as well as the reports transmitted to him by the different diplomatic legations with whom he had direct contact, are factors to be taken into account when assessing the credibility of his work. In any case, the animosity of the *Turonensis* towards the Goths does not prevent the author from recognising some of their virtues. This relative objectivity can be seen, for example, in some details of an episode in which he was personally affected, such as the discussion with the Gothic nobleman Agila.⁹⁹ Also, when he narrates the attack on the monastery of St Martin, near Sagunto, Gregory recognises that King Leovigild took charge of

gothorum Hermenegildum, regemque barbarorum Aucala, Ippolitum ducem, Georgium comitem, et reginam nomine Alaxandriam ' (Fernández Pousa 1942: 149, in García Rodríguez 1966: 431 ff). Cf. Lacarra (in Vázquez de Parga 1973: 52).

⁹⁷ *Hist. Sil.*: 'Qui profecto Leouegildus arriane hereseos accensus zelo, Hermegildum filium nefandis ritibus communicare nolentem, diversis tormentis prius cruciatum, denique in vinculis positum, dira secure interficere iussit. Post cuius mortem Recaredus rex, non patrem perfidum sed fratris martyris vestigia sequens, Leandri Yspalensis venerabilis episcopi doctrina imbutus, predicator veritatis factus, insaniam arrianorum aborrens omnino extirpavit: Scribit enim Gregorius papa in libro Dialogorum, quem de vitis et virtutibus sanctorum patrum studiose confecit' (Pérez de Urbel 1959: 115 ff). Cf. Lacarra (in Vázquez de Parga 1973: 52).

⁹⁸ Greg. Tur. HF (Krusch - Levison 1951).

⁹⁹ Greg. Tur. HF 5 43 (Krusch 1951: 249-252). For this nobleman, see Thompson 1985: 50 and 182 [= 1966: 104]; Island 1990: 16-20; Orlandis 1992: 71-74. It is very possible that he was the same Aila who signed the abjuration of the Third Council of Toledo (Vives 1963: 123).

restoring as much as possible the damage caused.¹⁰⁰ But, above all, this equanimous attitude – always speaking in relative terms – is reflected in the negative judgment that the bishop of Tours reveals for the rebellion of Hermenegild against his father the king, even though he considered him a heretic and that the prince had embraced Catholic orthodoxy. Gregory, indeed, does not present Hermenegild, although converted, as a champion of the Catholic cause, but condemns his rebellion as impious and doomed to disaster by divine judgment.¹⁰¹

In summary, there is no doubt that we are dealing with an author who is certainly biased, especially in details directly referring to the Goths, and with a clear moralising intention, but in no case is he a mere fabulist. In addition, as has been pointed out, Gregory had direct contact with the Frankish ambassadors at the court of Toledo and with the Visigothic legates making for the court at Metz, providing him with substantial information that later Spanish chroniclers silence.

As we have said, the main problem of the *Turonensis* is not falsehood or lack of impartiality, but the scattering of the data, even within the same work. This means that Gregory of Tours does not offer a coherent account of Hermenegild's rebellion, but a series of accounts about it that he adds to his general purpose of narrating the history of the Franks within a moralising narrative. In general terms, the idea that a modern historian can get from reading the *Turonensis* is that the author is well informed of the affairs of the Toledan court thanks to his direct contacts with the Visigothic and Frankish embassies, but at the same time confused and disordered. This forces us to interpret some episodes in the light of John of Biclaro, or other authors, in order to get a correct idea of what happened. At the same time, it gives the impression that Gregory's knowledge of Spanish geography is very limited, which leads to inaccuracies, although, fortunately, these can be corrected by resorting to other sources.¹⁰²

For the rest, and as has already been said, the version of the *Turonensis* agrees with that offered by other independent sources among themselves, and especially with the testimony offered by Pope Gregory.

Pope Gregory the Great (c. 540-604) wrote his *Dialogues* a decade after the events took place, and his testimony seems to reflect the opinion of some Spanish supporters of the prince and Byzantines who had travelled to Rome. He likely also had the testimony of St Leander (c. 540 - c. 601), a personal friend of the pontiff and with whom he is known to have corresponded. Gregory had met Leander in Constantinople, where both were carrying out similar diplomatic missions: Gregory was seeking the emperor's support against the Lombards and Leander for

¹⁰⁰ Greg. Tur.: 'In gloria confes. 12: In Hispaniis autem nuper factum cognovi. Cum Leuvieldus rex contra filium suum ambularet, atque exercitus eius, ut adsolet, graviter loca sancta concuteret, monasterium erat Sancti Martini inter Sagonthum atque Cartaginem Spartariam. Audientes autem monachi, quod hic exercitus ad locum illum deberet accedere, fugam ineunt et se, relicto abbate sene, in insulam maris abscondunt. Advenientibus autem Gothis ac diripientibus res monasterii, quae sine custode remanserant, abbatem senio incurvatum, sed sanctitate erectum offendunt. Extractoque unus gladio, quasi amputaturus cervicem eius, resupinus ruit ac spiritum exalavit. Reliqui vero haec videntes, timore perterriti fugierunt. Quod cum regi nuntiatum fuisset, cum testificatione praecepit omnia quae ablata fuerant monasterio restaurari' (Krusch 1885: 305).

¹⁰¹ HF 6 43: '...Herminichildum> patrem ad se cum exercitum uenire cognouit consiliumque iniit, qualiter uenientem aut repelleret aut negaret, nesciens miser, iudicium sibi imminere diuinum, qui contra genitorem, quamlibet hereticum, talia cogitaret' (Krusch 1951: 314s). Vázquez de Parga 1973: 19.

¹⁰² E.g. Gregory locates the town of Osset in Lusitania when narrating the miracle of the baptismal font (Greg. Tur. In gloria martyri. 23; Krusch 1885: 51s). Error warned by Flórez, ES t. 9, 1777: 119.

Hermenegild's cause. For these and other reasons, Gregory was directly involved in the events of the Visigothic kingdom, and this relationship resulted in a correspondence of a dozen letters in which he deals with both Spanish affairs and the Byzantine province of *Spania*.¹⁰³

The pontiff's account provides some details about the martyrdom of Hermenegild and the cult that was given to the prince shortly after his death, although always from a hagiographic and moralising point of view in which fantastic elements are not lacking. The narration of Hermenegild's martyrdom is inserted in a collection of biographies of martyrs of the Church written *c.* 593-594 and widely circulated in the Middle Ages.¹⁰⁴ According to Pope Gregory, the prince was executed by order of his father after having refused to receive communion from the hands of an Arian bishop, and after an unsuccessful attempt by the latter to deceive him. The pontiff himself reports that this story was collected directly from Spaniards who arrived in Rome *c.* 593. We have already referred to the fact that Pope Gregory the Great must have been well aware of what happened due to his personal friendship with Leander of Seville – having become acquainted with him at the Imperial court in his times as *apocrisiarius* (nuncio) in Constantinople, and whom his brother Isidore considered one of the main figures responsible for the triumph of Catholicism – and because he had important information networks among the ecclesiastical elements of the Byzantine possessions in the peninsula.¹⁰⁵ Pope Gregory's version is collected not long afterwards in Spain by the author of the *Vitas Sanctorum Patrum Emeritensium*, albeit opportunely censored, and is the one that seems to have been read beyond the court in Toledo, as evidenced by the subsequent testimony of Valerius of Bierzo, half a century after the Pope's death.

As has been said, in Spain the testimony of Pope Gregory I had rapid repercussions, albeit censored, in the VSPE (*c.* 610) and, later, already by the 12th century, in the *Historia Silense*. Like Gregory of Tours, the pontiff presents Hermenegild's rebellion as a matter basically of a religious nature. In fact, Pope Gregory does so even more emphatically than the Bishop of Tours. Thus, while the Gallic writer does not hesitate to recognise the illegitimacy of Hermenegild's uprising, since in his time the divine origin of royal power was not disputed,¹⁰⁶

¹⁰³ Vilella 1991.

¹⁰⁴ Greg. I. Dial. 3 31 (PL 77: 289-294; Juan Galán 2010: 184s).

¹⁰⁵ Isid. Hisp. Vir. Illustr. 28: '*Leander, genitus patre Seueriano, Carthaginensis prouinciae Hispaniae, professione monachus et ex monacho Hispaliensis ecclesiae prouinciae Baeticae constitutus episcopus... ut etiam fide eius atque industria populi gentis Gothorum ab arriana insania ad fidem catholicam reuerterentur. Hic namque in exilii sui peregrinatione composuit duos aduersus haereticorum dogmata libros, eruditione sacrarum scripturarum ditissimos, in quibus uehementi stilo arrianae impietatis confodit ac detegit prauitatem; ostendes scilicet, quid contra eosdem habeat catholica ecclesia uel quantum distet ab eis religion uel fidei sacramentis.*

'Extat et laudabile eius opusculum aduersus institute arrianorum, in quo propositis eorum dictis, suas responsiones opponuit. Praeterea edidit unum ad Florentinam sororem de institutione uirginum et contemptu mundi libellum... Siquidem et in ecclesiasticis officiis idem non paruo elaborauit studio...

'Scripsit et epistolas multas: ad papam Gregorium de baptismo unam, alteram ad fratrem... Ad ceteros quoque coepiscopos plurimas promulgauit familiars epistolas... Floruit sub Recharedo, uiro religioso ac principe glorioso, cuius etiam temporibus mirabili obitu mortalis uitae terminum clausit' (Codoñer 1964: 149 ff).

¹⁰⁶ The Christian principle of the divine origin of royal power is based *in primis* on the words of Jesus before Pilate (Jn 19: 1: '*...Non haberes potestatem aduersum me ullam, nisi tibi esset datum desuper...*'), ratified by the judgment that St Paul defends in his Epistle to the Romans (Rom. 13 1s): '*Omnis anima potestatibus sublimioribus subdita sit. Non est enim potestas*

Pope Gregory presents the prince as a champion of orthodoxy against a king who is shown as both tyrannical and heretical. The different treatment of the episode also corresponds to the characteristics of the literary genre chosen in one case or another: while the *Turonensis* proposes to historicise the Frankish kings from a moralising perspective, Pope Gregory writes his *Dialogues* from a purely hagiographic perspective and within a catalogue of martyrs of the faith, without caring about the political consequences that Hermenegild's rebellion had provoked. His account, therefore, appears isolated from the political context of the moment in which it took place and, apparently, unaware of Reccared's official conversion.¹⁰⁷ As J. Vilella affirms, the version that Gregory provides about Hermenegild constitutes the best epitome of the process that led to the Third Council of Toledo. Gregory's account, however, is evidently allegorical, but it also has an historical aspect whose veracity is corroborated by the remaining documentation and, above all, by the very course of the events that followed the prince's martyrdom.¹⁰⁸

Finally, two secondary authors, Bede (672-735) and Paulus the Deacon (c. 720-800), should be mentioned. Both are indebted to the version of Gregory the Great and present Hermenegild as a martyr of the Catholic faith. Bede practically summarises the narration of Pope Gregory.¹⁰⁹ On the other hand, Paulus the Deacon in his *History of the Lombards* collects some data based on the information provided by Gregory of Tours and Gregory the Great himself. Paulus narrates Hermenegild's conversion and martyrdom by the order of his father on the eve of Easter. He also provides some data on the fate of Ingundis and Athanagild, the wife and son of Hermenegild: her flight with her young son, the capture of the princess by the Imperial soldiers, her subsequent death in Sicily, and the transfer of the young Athanagild to the court of Emperor Maurice.¹¹⁰

To the words of all these authors must also be joined the epistolary relationship between the court of Metz and the empire, which provides details about the fate of Athanagild and Ingundis. They are part of the so-called *Epistolae Austrasicae*, represented by six letters, two of them

nisi a Deo; quae autem sunt, a Deo ordinatae sunt. 2 Itaque, qui resistit potestati, Dei ordinationi resistit; who autem resistunt ipsi, sibi damnationem acquirunt.' In the Catholic world this principle was in force until the 18th century.

¹⁰⁷ This is the opinion of Vázquez de Parga, but Pope Gregory explicitly states that Reccared has been converted, which suggests that he must have known the news unofficially, surely through his correspondence with Leander (Greg. Reg. I). In any case, the Pope explicitly states that the story of martyrdom comes from *hispani* who arrived in Rome, undoubtedly supporters of Hermenegild: Vázquez de Parga 1973: 13, n. 11.

¹⁰⁸ Vilella 1991: 170.

¹⁰⁹ Bede, Chron. maiora 529: '*Hirminigildus Levigildi Gothorum regis filius ob fidae catholicae confessionem inexpugnabilem a patre Arriano regni privatus infolis et in carcerem ac vincula proiectus ad extremum nocte sancta dominicae resurrectionis securi in capite percussus regnum caeleste pro terreno rex et martyr intravit. cuius frater Richardus mox ut regnum post patrem accepit, omnem Gothorum cui preerat gentem instante Leandro Hispalitano episcopo, qui et Hirminigildum docuerat, catholicam convertit ad fidem*' (Mommsem 1898: 308 ff).

¹¹⁰ Paul. Diac. HL 21: '*Interea Childepertus rex Francorum bellum adversum Hispanos gerens, eosdem acie superavit. Causa autem huius certaminis ista fuit. Childepertus rex Ingundem sororem suam Herminigildo, Levigildi Hispanorum regis filio, in coniugium tradiderat. Qui Herminigildus praedicatione Leandri episcopi Hispalensis atque ad hortatione suae coniugis ab Arriana heresi, qua pater suus languebat, ad catholicam fidem conversus fuerat. Quem pater inpius in ipso sacro paschali dies securi percussus interemerat. Ingundis vero post mariti et martyris funus de Hispanis fugiens, dum Gallias repedare vellet, in manus militum incidens, qui in limite adversum Hispanos Gothos residebant, cum parvo filio capta atque in Siciliam ducta est ibique diem clausit extremum. Filius vero eius imperatori Mauricio Constantinopolim est transmissus*' (Bethmann - Waitz 1878: 103 ff).

addressed directly to Athanagild (Ep. 27, from Brunhilda, and 28, from Childebert II) and four others (Ep. 43, 44, 45 and 47) that deal with his release.¹¹¹

John of Biclaro is recognised by modern historiography as the most balanced in his judgments and, therefore, is the one granted the most credibility of all the cited authors.¹¹² Of course, the *Biclaensis* has a clear political intention – in fact the chronicle is a national ode to the unifying action of Leovigild and Reccared – but historians recognise an absence of prejudice when addressing certain issues, an aspect that is especially evident in the case of Hermenegild's usurpation.¹¹³ Almost all historians admit that John's Catholicism and fear of reprisal did not prevent him from recognising the political virtues of the Arian Leovigild, the true unifier of the Visigothic kingdom of Spain. All this, as has already been said, has contributed to researchers shaping the idea of John as an impartial author and worthy of credit. However, we believe, as J.N. Hillgarth rightly warned, that this judgment should be revised, or at least nuanced, with regard to Hermenegild's rebellion, especially in light of events when John was writing his chronicle, i.e. in the midst of national effervescence due to the conversion of the Goths and under the rule of the rebel prince's brother, an actor directly involved in the events. The reading of the *Biclaensis* must, therefore, be done in the light of all these circumstances.¹¹⁴

Nevertheless, the truth is that the chronicle of John of Biclaro is a very valuable work, thus explaining the large number of editions and translations that have been made of it. After all, its author was a direct contemporary of the events he narrates and was also incidentally involved in them. However, it is regrettable that it is a work lacking in detail and therefore not allowing a completely faithful reconstruction of history. Partially, this is because the chronicle genre dictates it, but also because the author took care to hide certain details that could affect Reccared's reputation. For these reasons, the chronicle of the Abbot of Biclaro provides little more than the simple historical fact – sometimes in a very concise form, one we might label as 'technical' today – and the year the event took place. As we have seen, this sort of writing, typical of the genre, has given rise to wide interpretations of the same passage, fuelling the controversy about the true meaning of the prince's uprising.

Another significant problem raised by John of Biclaro's chronicle is the question of the chronology he uses. The chronological computation is made from the years of the emperor's reign, in combination with those of the Visigothic kings, and this causes an overlap in the years. And this is without taking into account that John composed his chronicle years after the events took place, at the beginning of the 7th century, and thus could have made certain errors in dating some of them. It is important to keep this in mind in terms of certain events, i.e. the exact year of Hermenegild's martyrdom, or Leovigild's death.¹¹⁵

In any case, and regardless of the version one prefers, the story of Hermenegild's rebellion (579-586) has all the ingredients of a great Germanic epic tragedy, which undoubtedly increases its

¹¹¹ Vázquez de Parga 1973: 34 ff. These were edited by W. Gundlach: *Epist. Austr.* (1892: 139 ff, 149-152).

¹¹² Orlandis 1962a: 6s; García Moreno 1989: 123.

¹¹³ Hillgarth 1961a: 25; Galán 1998; Marcotegui 2003: 290-293.

¹¹⁴ Hillgarth 1961a: 25-27.

¹¹⁵ Flórez, *ES* 6: 399-406; Campos 1960: 62-67; Collins 2005: 47 ff.

appeal: the enmity of two noble women (Goisuintha and Ingundis), and the role of a further spirited woman (Goisuintha), who, like Hildegund from *Waldere*, urges the young prince to take up arms (depending on the version we choose); a conflict of loyalties (Hermenegild is torn between love for his wife and the loyalty he owes his father, the king); the recourse to arms (war between father and son, with a brother in between); the tragic death of the protagonists (with the martyrdom of the prince by the executioner's axe) and, finally, the *Faida*, or blood revenge (i.e. the execution of Sisbert); a tragic drama with an apotheotic ending (the conversion of Reccared and the people of the Goths at the Third Council of Toledo) that resolves the conflict.

With all those elements in contention, it is not surprising that the story of Hermenegild has aroused the interest of so many historians. What is really strange is that the figure of the prince was practically forgotten for centuries. A disregard that can only be explained by the great disgrace that the uprising against the legitimate king meant for the defence of his cause in an era when the divine origin of the royal institution was not discussed. And, indeed, from ancient times the controversy was fuelled as to whether Hermenegild was a tyrant who was later exalted as a saint for political reasons or, on the contrary, whether the prince was a true martyr executed protecting the Catholic faith. Throughout these pages, we will try to give a convincing answer to this difficult question, and for this we must resort not only to what the literary sources say – and also, of course, what they omit – but to the archaeological testimonies and the historical development that mediates between the election of Hermenegild as co-regent until the conversion of the Gothic people to Catholicism in the year 589 CE.

The Tyranny of Hermenegild

Actually, the story begins in 573 when King Leovigild decides to name his two sons, Hermenegild and Reccared, co-regents of the kingdom (*consortes regni*).¹¹⁶ The act of the Gothic king is framed within a practice that was common among the emperors of the Lower Empire and which was continued among the Byzantine emperors to ensure a dynastic succession within the same family. Among the Visigoths, there was a close precedent, although not exactly the same, viz. two years after his election as king of the Goths, King Liuva chose his brother Leovigild as co-regent. Both brothers divided the kingdom: Liuva took charge of the Narbonensis, probably to face the threat of the Franks and Burgundians, while Leovigild remained as king in Spain, to clarify a political alliance that would give stability to the kingdom.¹¹⁷

In any case, it was an exceptional measure adopted to face the delicate political moment that the Visigothic kingdom was living through. Indeed, after the death of Athanagild in Toledo, the Visigothic kingdom experienced a state of power vacuum that lasted five months, probably due to the division that had arisen within the Gothic nobility because of the irregular way in which

¹¹⁶ Ioh. Bicl. Chron. a. 573? 5: '*Leovigildus rex... duosque filios suos ex amissa coniuge Hermenegildum et Reccaredum consortes regni facit*' (Mommsen 1894: 213).

¹¹⁷ Ioh. Bicl. Chron. a. 570: '*Leovegildus germanus Livvani regis superstite fratre in regnum citerioris Hispaniae constituitur Gosuintham relictam Athanaildi in coniugium accipit et provinciam Gothorum, quae iam pro rebellione diversorum fuerat diminuta, mirabiliter ad pristinos revocat terminos*' (Mommsen 1894: 212); Isid. Hisp. HG 48: '*post Athanagildum Livva Narbonae Gothis praeficitur regnans annis tribus. qui secundo anno postquam adeptus est principatum, Leovigildum fratrem non solum successorem, sed et participem regni sibi constituit Spaniaeque administrationi praefecit...*' (Mommsen 1894: 286). Orlandis 1962a: 4-6.

the king had acceded to the throne.¹¹⁸ Within this context, the marriage contracted between Leovigild and Goisuintha, the widow of King Athanagild, was a compromise solution between the parties disputing power. In fact, the liaison was aimed at achieving the pacification of the kingdom in the face of the presumed ruin looming as a result of the threatening Byzantine presence, and with a view to the precedent experienced by Ostrogothic Italy. Therefore, the union of Leovigild and Goisuintha must be interpreted as a political agreement aimed at smoothing over the differences Athanagild's usurpation had caused within the Visigothic aristocracy. In this way, the link between both magnates meant a strengthening of the king's power bases, which contributed considerably to giving political stability to the kingdom against possible attempts at usurpation or the feared Byzantine threat. With this precedent, the association to the throne of Hermenegild and Reccared can be better understood. With it, Leovigild tried to put some order in the future succession to the throne and thus avoid what happened after the death of Athanagild, i.e. when the prolonged interregnum fuelled the appearance of numerous independent entities taking advantage of the power vacuum just referred to.¹¹⁹

In any event, the election of his sons as consorts did not imply the division of the kingdom in the Frankish style, which would be absurd if one considers that Leovigild had made territorial unification one of the main points of his policy.¹²⁰ In addition, the expression used by the Biclarenensis (*consortes regni*) seems to formulate a co-regency. According to Díaz y Díaz, Hermenegild would have obtained the government of the Baetica and southern Lusitania, while Reccared would have been in charge of the province of Celtiberia and the eastern part of the Iberian Peninsula.¹²¹ This would make sense if what Leovigild intended was to have his hands free for his expeditions against the disintegrating forces that threatened the kingdom without fear of a second front behind him. In this way, Reccared would be in charge of watching for possible manoeuvres by Imperial agents in the Levantine environment while his brother would do the same in the south of Spain.

Three years later, in 576, after Hermenegild and Reccared were associated with the throne, King Leovigild arranged the marriage of his eldest son to the Frankish princess Ingundis, daughter of King Sigebert I of Austrasia and Brunhild, one of the two daughters of Athanagild and

¹¹⁸ García Moreno 2008b: 35-40.

¹¹⁹ It must be remembered that the election of Athanagild as king had occurred at a time of serious political crisis, marked by the civil war and the landing of Byzantine troops. It was, thus, also a provisional expedient in the face of the danger of the collapse of Visigoth power, as had just happened in Italy with the Ostrogothic kingdom. However, division among the Visigoth nobility was still potent, reflected in the five-month interregnum prior to the election of Liuva (García Moreno 2008b: 35-40; Barroso - Morín - Sánchez 2018a: 21). On the other hand, we must also remember that, once the direct lineage of the Amals disappeared, the succession to the throne of the Goths was not legally regulated until the Fourth Council of Toledo (633 CE), and this happened in a context that bears some similarity to what happened with Hermenegild (see below).

¹²⁰ Orlandis 1962a: 4-6, 75-80. García Moreno 2008b.

¹²¹ Díaz y Díaz 2004: 15 ff, n. 23. This interpretation, which we subscribe to in general terms (although we prefer to call his province Celtiberia and not Carpetania, as Díaz does, and we doubt whether Hermenegild had control over Merida), is influenced by the supposed relationship that existed between Reccared and Reccopolis. Indeed, although we think that this relationship might have occurred, we believe that this reading is clouded by ambiguity in terms of the city's etymology. Certainly, John of Biclario (Chron. a. 578?) and Isidore of Seville (HG 51) explicitly state that the city was named after his son (*ex nomine filii*), but this is a confusion based on self-interest. Keep in mind that both chronicles were written when Reccared was already king and that the founding of the city happens at least five years after the association to the throne. See a discussion on the topic in Barroso 2019: 16-19, and *supra*.

Goisuintha; thus Ingundis was Goisuintha's granddaughter. Within the climate of division within the Visigothic nobility, which we have previously pointed out, the marriage of Prince Hermenegild and Ingundis came to further tighten – as heirs of both clans – the recently achieved political unity among the Gothic nobility. In addition, this link had another added advantage, serving to ease to the difficult relationship the Visigoths maintained with their Frankish neighbours ever since the days of Clovis and Alaric II. Moreover, marriages of this kind were frequent in the Germanic tradition.¹²²

At first glance, everything seemed favourable for the Visigothic royal family. However, history was to set a course certainly not foreseen by the court of Toledo. Looming was a significant obstacle that stood like a wall between the young couple. One of the conditions imposed on Brunhild for her marriage to Sigebert had been the renunciation of the Arian faith of her ancestors and the acceptance of the Catholic creed. Princess Ingundis was thus a Catholic, while Hermenegild was an Arian. At first, the difference in creeds did not seem to be a hindrance to the marriage, especially considering the precedent of Brunhild, Ingundis's inexperience, and the fact that the princess was going to find herself alone in an environment totally strange to her. Under these circumstances, it is evident that the Visigothic court took for granted that Ingundis would eventually abjure the Catholic faith, as her mother had done years earlier following her marriage to Sigebert in Metz. Reality, as has been said, would prove to be quite different.

Difficulties began at the very moment of Ingundis's departure for Spain. Before crossing the Pyrenees, the Frankish princess was received by Bishop Fronimius of Agathe (the current Agde), in Septimania (now southeast France), a figure closely related to the family of Brunhild, as well as with King Guntram of Burgundy, a monarch very hostile to the Visigoths. Apart from some doctrinal advice, Bishop Fronimius advised Ingundis as to how she should behave in the environment of Toledo's court, and must have urged the princess to persevere in her faith (against the certain pressures she would surely face from the Gothic monarchs).¹²³

After the meeting with Fronimius, the princely entourage continued its journey to Toledo. According to Gregory of Tours, and as befits a princess of royal blood, Ingundis was sent to Spain 'cum magno apparato' – in grand style. This would befit the young woman's rank, and even more so as she was returning to the house of her elders and, in this context, it is certain that Brunhild would have tried to impress her mother. If at first the arrival of the young woman at the Visigothic court must have provoked in Goisuintha an understandable feeling of pleasure as the family met (Gregory of Tours himself indicates that the princess was received 'cum gaudio magno'), soon there must have been friction between grandmother and granddaughter on account of conflicts of faith. Contrary to what was expected, especially considering the precedent of Brunhild and her sister Galsuintha, as well as Ingundis's youth, the Frankish princess refused to apostatise, despite the strong pressure exerted on the young woman by

¹²² Rivera Recio 1983: 318-319; Isla 1990: 11-32; Nelson 1991: 465-476; Valverde 2000b; Godoy 2004: 34-38; Isla 2004: 419-424; Castellanos García 2007: 111-117; López Sánchez 2013: 187-212; Castillo Lozano 2017: 105 ff.

¹²³ This seems to follow from Greg. Tur. HF 9 24: '*Sed post mortem Leuuanis cum Leuuieldus in illa hereticae pravitatis perfidia crassaretur et Ingundis, filia Sigiberti regis, cui supra meminimus, in Hispaniam ad matrimonium duceretur, audivit Leuuieldus, quasi hic episcopus ei consilium dedisset, ut numquam se veneno hereticae credulitatis deberit admiscere, et ob hoc semper ei molestus in iuriarum laqueos intendebat, quousque eum ab episcopato deiecerit*' (Krusch - Levison 1951: 444). Thompson 1985: 81 [=1969: 65, 81 ff].

Queen Goisuintha, who, according to Gregory of Tours, resorted to actual physical violence against her.

Given the growing hostility of the queen towards the princess at the latter's refusal to accept the *fides gothica*, the atmosphere in the Toledo court eventually became unbearable and Hermenegild was despatched as viceroy (*ad regnandum*) to the province (*prouintiam partem*) of Baetica in 579. According to John of Biclaro, our main source at this point, the expulsion of the couple from the court was the result of a confusing altercation which the chronicler calls '*rixa domestica*'. However, as usual in this story, the *Biclarensis* does not clarify what was the reason for Hermenegild and Ingundis's departure from the court and dismisses the matter with the obscure expression just mentioned that seems to allude to a simple family altercation.¹²⁴

Opportunely, the account of Gregory of Tours narrates in detail that part of the story that precedes the departure of the princes to Baetica, and that which John of Biclaro seems to skirt round. The *Turonensis* relates that shortly after the arrival of the Frankish princess to Toledo there was a rancorous discussion between Goisuintha and Ingundis that ended with the queen seizing the obstinate Catholic princess by the hair, throwing her to the ground, and kicking her until she bled. Then, not content with that assault, the queen dragged the young woman to a pond, with the actual intention of rebaptising her under the Arian rite. According to the *Turonensis*, Ingundis remained unscathed and true to her faith.¹²⁵

The story of Gregory of Tours has been interpreted as the climax of a stalemate between a fanatical Arian queen and a fervent Catholic princess, a situation that would have degenerated into open hostility between the two women. The unbearable atmosphere in the court would clearly have concerned Leovigild, who, fearing greater evils, would finally opt to remove the princes from Toledo and send them to a city Gregory does not name. The king's intention was for the couple to establish their court there.¹²⁶

¹²⁴ Ioh. Bicl. Chron. a. 579? 3: '*Leovegildo ergo quieta pace regnante adversariorum securitatem domestica rixa conturbat*' (Mommesen 1894: 215).

¹²⁵ Greg. Tur. HF 5 38: '*Quam nec passa est in relegione catholica diu commorare; sed ut rebaptizaretur in Arriana herese, blandis coepit sermonibus inlecere. Sed illa viriliter reluctans, coepit dicere: 'Sufficit satis me ab originale peccato baptismo salutare semel abluta fuisse et sanctam Trinitatem in una aequalitate esse confessam. Haec me credere ex corde toto confiteor nec umquam ab hac fide ibo retrorsum'. Haec illa audiens, iracundiae furore succensa, adpraehensam per comam capitis puellam in terram condidit, et diu calcibus verberatam ac sanguine cruentatam iussit spoliari et piscinae inmergi; sed, ut adserunt multi, numquam animum suum a fide nostra reflexit*' (Krusch - Levison 1951: 244). We translate *piscina* ('pool') here as 'pond', it being obvious that the scene must have taken place in the palace, not in a religious building. Gregory would use that word because it is ambiguous (in the sense of 'pond' and/or 'baptistery') and he wants to highlight what Goisuintha's intentions were. It seems doubtful that it would have been the Praetorian church of Ss Peter and Paul, located next to the palace, because its construction was a consequence of the development of ceremonies to do with the anointing of the kings and the importance the army had in this ritual. For this church, see Velázquez - Ripoll 2000: 558-563; Barroso *et al.* 2016: 42-50. Due to its double dedication to the Prince of the Apostles and the Apostle of the Gentiles, it is not out of the question that its construction began in the reign of Reccared, a testimony to the ethnic unity achieved at the Third Council.

¹²⁶ Greg. Tur. HF 5 38: '*Leuvichildus autem dedit eis unam de civitatibus, in qua resedentes regnarent*' (Krusch - Levison 1951: 244).

According to John of Biclaro, the city Leovigild sent the princes to was Hispalis (the current Seville), at that time an important city within Baetica, not least because the metropolitan throne of the province of the same name had been established there. The city has a documented Christian community of some antiquity, attested to by the Passio of Sts Justa and Rufina, and the presence of Bishop Sabinus at the Council of Elvira. A centre of some consequence, therefore, it had a walled perimeter enclosing an area calculated as being close to 11 ha.¹²⁷

One might think that Leovigild made a serious mistake, therefore, in sending his son to a city such as Seville under these circumstances. However, it must be remembered that this decision

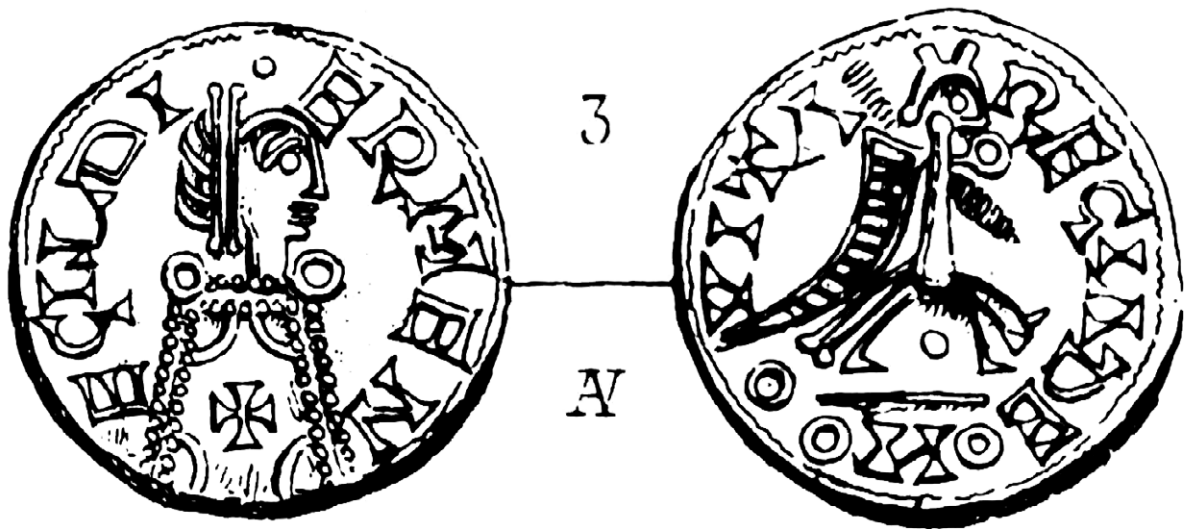


Fig. 4. Coin of Hermenegild with legend HERMENEGILDI REGI A DEO VITA (Heiss 1872).

must have been made six years before the link between Hermenegild and Ingundis, when Leovigild decided to appoint his two sons to the throne.¹²⁸ Nevertheless, the truth is that Hermenegild continued to be the future heir to the throne and, despite the clash between granddaughter and grandmother, there was no reason to doubt the prince's loyalty to the king.¹²⁹ Furthermore, his presence in Seville alongside Ingundis would be a priori a wise measure, as Athanagild's family nucleus would still have represented a great political presence within the social structures of the city. This last point must be taken into consideration, as we have seen that the marriage of Goisuintha and Leovigild must be understood as a political agreement between the two most powerful factions of the Visigothic aristocracy. In this way, by sending the young couple to Seville, Athanagild's followers could see directly the fruits of that unification policy, which in turn would result in greater stability of the kingdom.

Returning to the narrative of events, the Biclarensis narrates that once the couple was installed in Seville, Hermenegild, instigated by Goisuintha, assumed power tyrannically (*Hermenegildus*

¹²⁷ Sánchez Ramos 2014: 73.

¹²⁸ Iohan. Bicl. Chron. a. 573? 5 (Mommsen 1894: 213) (cit. n. 115).

¹²⁹ Thompson 1985: 82 [= 1969: 65]; García Moreno 2008b: 108 ff.

factione Gosuinthae reginae tyrannidem assumens in Hispali).¹³⁰ This is where the problems of interpretation begin. Actually, it is interesting to note that all interpretations of this obscure episode depend on the meaning we give to three expressions used by the Biclarenis: *rixa domestica*, *factione Gosuinthae*, and *tyrannidem assumens*. Traditionally, historians have understood the first of these as a simple family altercation, interpreting it in light of the testimony of Gregory of Tours. This reading was influenced by the fact that all the characters involved in the events that eventually led to Hermenegild's uprising in Seville were related to each other. In this sense, the interpretation of John of Biclaro's narrative agrees with that of the Turonensis, whose author limits himself only to offering the details of the brawl, which the chronicle genre prevented him from going into further. This interpretation also tallies with the intention underlying the chronicle of John of Biclaro, little interested in presenting the civil war as a war of creeds, explaining why he would have hidden the true motive that sparked the rebellion.

From our point of view, the problem is that this reading fits poorly with the rest of the narrative, i.e. *Liuuigildo ergo quieta pace regnante aduersariorum securitatem domestica rixa conturbat. Nam eodem anno filius eius Hermenegildus factione Gosuinthae reginae tyrannidem assumens in Hispali...*. It seems clear that in the first sentence '*domestica rixa*' is opposed to '*quieta pace*', and not to any dispute between the queen and princess – and of which John says nothing (we only know this from Gregory of Tours); therefore, in our opinion, it should be translated from the text of the Biclarenis in the sense of 'civil war'; a sense derived from other analogous expressions of classical Latin.¹³¹ We also think that by using the adjective '*domestica*' the chronicler was merely seeking to underline the character of the conspiracy within the court circle – in this case within the very royal house itself – in opposition to a war against foreign invaders (qualified at the end of the same entry as '*aduersariorum infestatio*'). In this sense, a certain parallel can be established with the account John of Biclaro gives of the conspiracy between dux Argimundus and Reccared, a rebellion that the chronicler defines as '*domestica insidia*'.¹³²

Once away from the court of Toledo, and without the intimidating presence of the kings, Hermenegild converted to Catholicism. This transcendental event is only known from the words of foreign authors. Astonishingly, neither John of Biclaro nor any other Spanish author reports this conversion; they limit themselves only to declaring that the 'prince tyrannidem

¹³⁰ Ioh. Bicl. Chron. a. 579.3: '*Nam eodem anno filius eius Hermenegildus factione Gosuinthae reginae tyrannidem assumens in Hispali civitate rebellione facta recluditur et alias civitates atque castella secum contra patrem rebellare facit. quae causa provincia Hispaniae tam Gothis quam Romanis maioris exitii quam aduersariorum infestatio fuit*' (Mommsen 1894: 215).

¹³¹ Cf. similar phrases such as *domesticae furiae* ('internal dissensions) or *bellum domesticum* ('civil war'): Segura 2014: 142, s.u. *domesticus* -a -um. A similar expression (*domesticae insidiae*) is also found in L.A. Seneca, De benef. VI 39 2. If this interpretation is not accepted, one would have to think that John of Biclaro used the *History* of Gregory of Tours as material to help him write his chronicle, as Pozo Flores (2014) suggests. Yet in this case, it is hard to understand why he did not use the rich material provided by the Frankish historian. Díaz y Díaz has already observed a causal relationship between the chain of expressions used by the *Biclarenis*, although his interpretation is diametrically opposed to the one we are proposing here (Díaz y Díaz 2004: 17, n. 27).

¹³² 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*' (Mommsen 1894: 219). We have discussed the topic in a previous study, see Barroso - Morín - Sánchez 2015.

assumens' (the third of the controversial expressions to which reference has been made earlier). This falls within the political intention of the Biclarenensis (and for Isidore later), i.e. a glorification of the unification of the kingdom made by Leovigild and his son Reccared. In any event, the expression used on this occasion by John of Biclaro makes it clear that Hermenegild's action was considered usurpation in the eyes of the chronicler and his contemporaries. Undoubtedly, this lack of legitimacy resulted in the disgrace that would shroud the memory of the prince after his death, and the sin that would relegate from the highest level within the sentiment of the Spanish Church¹³³

However, it does not seem that Hermenegild would really have taken up arms against his father. Actually, and despite everything that has been said and written, the prince never mobilised, or made a show of mobilising, his troops against the king. No attack on the cities of the kingdom is known; he did not even march towards Toledo when the king was away campaigning against the Basques, which would have been the logical move if it were a matter of armed rebellion. At all times the military initiative appears with Leovigild: it is the king who first goes against the Basques – and perhaps Septimania, if the coinages of Rosas can be extended to 581 CE (vid. infra) – and then against Merida and Seville. Hermenegild simply waits expectantly for the king's movements within the walls of Seville. Only when he is besieged by his father there does he flee – first to Osset and then to Cordoba – without offering more resistance than might be expected for the defence of himself and his family.

In other words, whatever Hermenegild's tyranny amounted to, it is evident that the prince cannot be charged with taking any military action against his father.¹³⁴ It is important to underline this point for two reasons: first, because it frees him from the terrible moral judgment with which the *Turonensis* accused him (*'nesciens miser, iudicium sibi imminere divinum, qui contra genitorem, quamlibet hereticum, talia cogitaret...'*) together with most of the Catholic authors following him,¹³⁵ and, second, because this lack of drive is something historians often overlook and yet it provides a valuable clue to explain the subsequent succession of events.

Thus, according to all indications, Hermenegild simply undertook a deed – public conversion to the Roman faith – that the court of Toledo interpreted as an open challenge to royal authority and a serious threat to the stability of the kingdom, despite the fact that it was not coupled with an armed rebellion. We will deal later with the reasons that led Leovigild to wage war against his son after his conversion. For now, we must halt at this precise point, as this is where the narrative of our sources raises more disagreement.

¹³³ Campos, 1960: 131 ff. However, the meaning of this expression refers to the illegitimacy of power or an irregular way of ascending to the throne. In reality, it is a technicality without the pejorative value the word 'tyrant' currently involves: Orlandis 1962a: 6-10, 13-42. This pejorative sense is present in the political theory of St Isidore (Etymol. IX 3), hence the bishop passes over the subject as if on a carpet of embers.

¹³⁴ 'If, as Father García Villada warns, it is advisable to take into account the entire context [of the expressions *rebellis* and *tirannizantem*], it is no less true that it is also advisable to keep in mind other passages by the same authors where they use the same terms in very different cases in order to better specify what their authentic meaning is when applied to Hermenegild. And in doing so we verify that this interpretation of "resist", which García Villada finds excessively benign, is not so misguided' (Orlandis 1962a: 8).

¹³⁵ Greg. Tur. 6 43 (cit. n. 100).

On the one hand, as has been said, strangely enough, as might be expected, neither John of Biclaro nor Isidore mention the conversion of the prince to the Catholic faith. Spanish authors simply speak of the usurpation of power – or more exactly of the exercise of tyranny – on the part of Hermenegild, with no allusion to the presumed religious motivations of the prince, taking for granted the details of the rebellion. In fact, the true meaning of this whole story would completely escape us if it were not for Gregory of Tours and Gregory the Great.

On the other hand, and in a sense in opposition to the Spanish authors, Gregory of Tours declares that the cause of Leovigild's enmity against his son is nothing other than his Catholic faith. Indeed, the *Turonensis* places this confession in the mouth of Hermenegild: '*pro eo quod sim catholicus*' (HF 5 38). This is the version that Gregory the Great also accepts, making the prince a martyr of the faith, and which is adopted by both Paul the Deacon and Bede. According to foreign writers, Hermenegild would have converted to Catholicism of his own free will, encouraged by the example and tenacity of Princess Ingundis and under the direct influence of Leander of Seville.¹³⁶ St Isidore does not explicitly mention this last detail, although in some way he seems to suggest it when writing the biographical note on his brother for his *Viri Illustribus*.¹³⁷

Although it is not entirely certain, the chronology of Hermenegild's conversion supports that Leander was already bishop of Seville.¹³⁸ According to widespread opinion, Leander's father, Severianus, had held an important position in Cartagena, a coastal city from which he would have had to flee with his family after it was invaded by Imperial troops. The fact that after the expulsion the family of Severianus settled in Seville suggests a certain affinity towards Athanagild's cause. However, R. Collins questions this version and wonders if, given the family nomenclature (of Greek origin), they came from North Africa.¹³⁹ In any case, Severianus must have been an important character in his time: how else to explain how three of his sons came to occupy episcopal chairs in Baetica (Leander and Isidore in Seville, and Fulgentius in Ecija), and that his daughter, Florentina, became an abbess. In any event, there is no doubting that Leander was already by then a very influential character in a city that was now the court of princes, and,

¹³⁶ Greg. Tur. 5 38: '*Leuvichildus autem dedit eis (s.c. Hermenegildus et Ingundis) unam de civitatibus, in qua resedentes reganarent. Ad quam cum abissent, coepit Ingundis praedicare viro suo, ut, relicta heresis fallacia, catholicae legis veritatem agnuscere*' (Krusch - Levison 1951: 244). Greg. I, Dial. 3 31: '*Herminigildus rex Leuvigildi regis Visigothorum filius, ab Ariana haeresi ad fidem catholicam, viro reverentissimo Leandro Hispalitano episcopo... praedicante conversus est*' (PL 77: 289; Juan Galán 2010: 184). Paul. Diac. HL 21: '*Interea Childepertus rex Ingvndem sororem suam Herminigildo, Levigildi Hispanorum regis filio, in coniugium tradiderat. Qui Herminigildus praedicatione Leandri episcopi Hispalensis atque ad hortatione suae coniugis ab Arriana heresi, qua pater suus languebat, ad catholicam fidem conversus fuerat*' (Bethmann - Waitz 1878: 103).

¹³⁷ Isid. Hisp. Vir. Illustr. 28: '*Ut etiam fide eius atque industria populi gentis Gothorum ab arriana insania ad fidem catholicam reverterentur*' (Codoñer 1964: 149 ff). Again, Isidore's testimony is intentionally vague and could equally be interpreted as a reference to Leander's performance at the Third Council of Toledo.

¹³⁸ Görres (1886) assumed that Leander would not have been consecrated bishop until 584 CE. But this is difficult if one takes into account that he belonged to an illustrious family and that he was born c. 540. Therefore, at the time of Hermenegild's conversion, Leander must have already turned 40, far exceeding the age requirement for episcopal dignity (30). This is also the majority opinion, although, as has been said, it is not entirely certain due to lack of documentation.

¹³⁹ Collins 2005: 159.

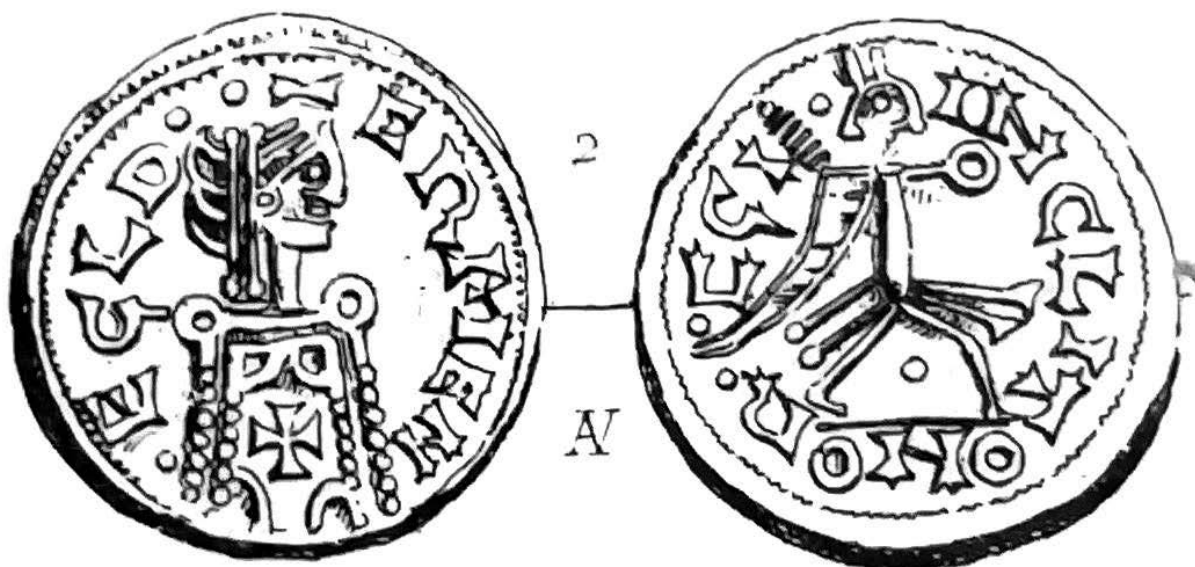


Fig. 5. Tremis of Hermenegild with legend REGI INCLITO (Heiss 1872).

according to the testimony of Gregory the Great, Leander's closeness to Hermenegild was pivotal in the prince's conversion to the Nicene faith.¹⁴⁰

At this point, it is interesting to highlight a fact that will have a great impact on the history of Visigothic Spain and, later, on that of the Carolingian and medieval world, namely, since the Catholic Church recognised the validity of the initiatory sacrament, converts of Arianism did not have to be rebaptised. Thus, Leander, following the Catholic rite, simply anointed the prince with the sacred oil (*dum crismaretur*) as a form of confirmation of the faith.¹⁴¹ It is clear to everyone that the sacred oil on the prince's forehead was a reminder of the anointing that the prophet Samuel had undertaken with David in Saul's lifetime. This parallel is of great interest for our study because it can reveal the background that hid the conspiracy of silence that loomed over the memory of Hermenegild after 589 CE. Over time, and for reasons that we will deal with later, the ceremony practised with Hermenegild would serve as a model for the formula of royal inauguration for Visigothic monarchs.

After being received into the fold of the Catholic Church, Gregory of Tours affirms that Hermenegild adopted the name John. Once again, the *Turonensis* is the only source that accounts for this name change, not attested either by epigraphy or numismatics. However, the custom of changing one's name at baptism or confirmation is common in the Catholic sphere, where both sacraments are associated with rebirth by water (baptism) and fire (confirmation), and is documented in the case of other Goths. For obvious reasons, the name John seems to have been quite common among the converts from Arianism and the first-generation Catholic

¹⁴⁰ Görres 1886; García Villada 1932: 46-60; Hillgarth 1961a: 27; Díaz and Díaz 2004: 16; García Moreno 2008b: 110-115; Orlandis 2011: 56 ff. This is a widespread opinion in the literature, which is why it is pertinent to remember here the categorical judgment of E.A. Thompson: 'If the conversion of the Visigoths to Catholicism could be ascribed to any one man, that man was Leander' (1969: 65) [1985: 82].

¹⁴¹ Greg. Tur. 5 38: 'Quo dille diu refutans, tandem commotus ad eius praedicationem, conversus est ad legem catholicam ac, dum crismaretur, Iohannis est vocitatus' (Krusch - Levison 1951: 244).

Goths. Therefore, coming from Gregory of Tours, a well-informed author of the affairs of the Visigothic court, it is not an account to be disregarded.¹⁴²

Obviously, due the transcendence of the act, the anointing of the prince must have been done publicly, surrounded by all the great personalities of Seville's court. Also, it is very possible that the Gothic nobility attending the anointing of the prince solemnly proclaimed Hermenegild as sovereign king. In fact, a monetary series minted in Seville with the legend *ERMENEGILDI REGI A DEO VITA* has been related to the *laudes* with which the prince was acclaimed on the occasion of his royal anointing (vid. infra).¹⁴³ There is no doubt that the numismatic issue is framed in the context of the propaganda war that followed the usurpation to which Leovigild himself was not alien. In any case, the legend of these coins testifies that the usurpation was interpreted as a real war of creeds by both sides.¹⁴⁴

It is also reasonable that on this occasion other Gothic nobles received the anointing following the example of the prince.¹⁴⁵ E.A. Thompson rightly suspected that the importance of the crisis originating from Hermenegild's conversion would have been the prompt defection of a considerable number of Goths from the Arian faith. If the British historian is correct, as several indications suggest, the situation must have greatly alarmed the court of Toledo.¹⁴⁶ It is true that Thompson thought that the king's concern was justified because it thwarted his policy of maintaining the privileges of the Goths against the Hispano-Roman population. But, as J. Orlandis already demonstrated, Leovigild's policy was oriented in the opposite direction to that proposed by the British historian, i.e. towards the unification of both peoples. The intention of the king, indeed, was to unify Goths and Romans into a single *gens Gothorum* devoid of the ethnic sense it had had until then. Within this context, his actions in terms of legislation (repeal of the prohibition of mixed marriages, assumption of *regalia*) and, of course, also in his religious policy, in principle tolerant with Catholics, at least while the issue of the *Tria Capitula* was in force.¹⁴⁷ However, the loss of support from a considerable sector of the Gothic nobility was something that clearly had to worry the monarch, because his policy necessarily made use of Arianism as a cohesive element.

The outbreak of the crisis did nothing but precipitate Leovigild's decision to establish a *fides gothica* common to all his subjects that would differentiate them from Franks and Byzantines

¹⁴² Vázquez de Parga 1973: 17, n. 23, n. 32; García Moreno 2008b: 113. A possible solution to this problem is that for protocol reasons the prince would officially continue to bear his baptismal name, while in a family environment he would have adopted John. Cf. Thompson 1985: 82 [= 1969: 289], where several cases of Goths with Roman nicknames are cited. The same Masona of Merida, whom the author of the *Vitas* defines as *natione Gothus*, bears a non-Gothic name, although it is not certain if it is of North African origin (Collins 2005: 160) or a Suevic name (García Moreno 1997b: 226 ff).

¹⁴³ Flórez 1773: 190-194; Heiss 1872: 83 ff, Pl. II.3; Miles 1952: 23 ff; Vives 1963: 116 ff.

¹⁴⁴ Díaz y Díaz 1959; 2004: 17; Hillgarth 1961a; 1966: 483-508; Thompson 1985: 84 ff [= 1969: 68 ff]; García Moreno 2009: 113-115.

¹⁴⁵ This is what happened, e.g., when St Remigius baptised Clovis: Greg. Tur. 2 31 (Krusch - Levison 1951: 76 ff).

¹⁴⁶ We have analysed this question, especially in relation to the Visigoth settlement north of the 'Central System', elsewhere (Barroso 2018: 148-168).

¹⁴⁷ Orlandis 1956: 8-10.

(Catholics), but at the same time devoid of the exclusivist character that until then marked the Visigothic Arianism. At the same time, it is evident that the prince's conversion to the Roman faith had political implications that could be interpreted as a clear challenge to royal authority. That the religious question was at the origin of the conflict, to the point of deforming the narrative of the events, is verified in the policy followed by Leovigild immediately after Hermenegild's conversion, namely the convocation of an Arian synod and issuing of a numismatic series with religious legends. The conflict was also, and predominantly, settled in the field of propaganda.¹⁴⁸

Indeed, within this context of ideological and propagandistic struggle, in the same year, 580 CE, the monarch convened a council in Toledo to facilitate the transition of Catholics to the Arian faith. Among the measures adopted by Leovigild were the suppression of the obligation of a new baptism for Catholics, the acceptance of the old Catholic symbol – later discarded as ambiguous – of the *Gloria* (*Gloria Patri per Filium in Spiritu Sancto*) and the abandonment of Arianism for a Macedonian-style solution close to Catholic theses but not entirely orthodox. To complicate



Fig. 6. Tremis of Leovigild with uestes regiae (Wiki).

matters further, the new Church that emerged from the synod of Toledo in 580 usurped the name 'Catholic', declaring that the Nicene-Chalcedonian Church was simply 'Roman', thus establishing an equivalence between it and the Imperial Church. At the same time, the king undertook a series of measures aimed at winning over, through flattery and benefits, all those who embraced the new confession.¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁸ For this entire topic, the article by Hilgarth (1961a) continues to be essential.

¹⁴⁹ Iohan. Bicl. Chron. a. 580.2: 'Leovegildus rex in urbem Toletanam synodum episcoporum sectae Arrianae congregat et antiquam haeresem novello errore emendat, dicens de Romana religione a nostra catholica fide venientes non debere baptizari, sed tantummodo per manus impositionem et communionis praeeptione pollui et gloriam patri per filium in spiritu sancto dare' (Mommsen 1894: 216). 'Mommsen corrects to "a nostra catholica fide", but the Mss. have "ad nostram catholicam fidem", which must be correct because it is Leovigild who speaks ("Leovigildus rex... dicens") as the Biclarenensis says...' (Hilgarth 1961: 45, n. 61). Greg. Tur. HF 6 18: 'Sed ex novo nunc ingenio eam nititur exturbare, dum dolose et ad sepulchra martirum et in

Leovigild's measures were intended to create confusion in the Catholic fold and favour the transition of Catholics to the new *fides gothica*. This is how both John of Biclaro – when he says that the *libellus* of 580 tried to convince the Spanish churches to switch from *Romana religione ad nostram catholicam fide* – and Gregory of Tours, who also affirms that in Spain the Arians *romanos enim vocitant homines nostrae religionis*.¹⁵⁰ Thus, while on the one hand the king assimilated the Catholics with the Imperial elements, considered enemies of the Goths, and odious to a good part of them for keeping occupied a part of the kingdom's coast, on the other he established an equivalence between the Nicene Church with the *fides romana*. From a doctrinal point of view, this equivalence was a masterstroke by Leovigild as it carried with it the condemnation of the so-called *Tria Capitula* ('Three Chapters'), something that, due to the influence of North African authors, the Spanish Church had not accepted (and in fact never came to accept) because it disavowed the Council of Chalcedon.¹⁵¹ Thus, the king's strategy was to leave the followers of Nicene orthodoxy, i.e. the true Catholics, as supporters of heresy and the semi-Arians (or Macedonians) as Catholics. To further increase the confusion, Leovigild was seen praying in Catholic sanctuaries and even venerating the relics of their martyrs.¹⁵² In the same sense, the affectionate reception that the king gave to the Catholics arriving from North Africa is explained (vid. infra).

In this muddy doctrinal field, in the midst of the serious confusion created after the synod of 580, Leovigild's religious policy – *novellus error* is what the *Biclaensis* calls it, as opposed to the *antiqua haeresis* or traditional Arianism – was intended bear abundant fruit, at least in principle. Another thing is that in the long run the confusion affected the Arian element more than the Catholic one. However, the testimonies of John of Biclaro and Isidore of Seville attest that many Catholics apostatised and accepted the *fides gothica*, moved more by ambition than force. And this was not only among the common people, but also among the episcopate. Undoubtedly, Leovigild's greatest victory in this regard was the apostasy of Vicentius, Bishop of Zaragoza, one of the most important and traditional sees in all Spain.¹⁵³ This would have serious

eclesiis reigionis nostrae orare confingit. Dicit enim: "Manefeste cognovi, esse Christum filium Dei aequalem Patri; sed Spiritum sanctum Deum penitus esse non credo"...' (Krusch - Levison 1951: 287).

¹⁵⁰ Ioh. Bicl. Chron. a. 580.2 (cit. en n. anterior); Greg. Tur. De glor. mart. 24 (Arndt - Krusch 1969: 52). See Thompson 1969: 78-87; Orlandis 1984b: 51-64; Godoy - Vilella 1986; García Moreno 2002: 432; 2008: 129-137.

¹⁵¹ Cf. the reproachful judgment that St Isidore makes of Emperor Justinian in this regard: Isid. Hisp. Vir. Illustr. 18: 'Iustinianus imperator... Condidit quoque et rescriptum contra Illiricianam sinodum et aduersus africanos episcopos, in quo tria capitula damnare contendit, id est, Theodori Mopsuesteni episcopi, idcta siue rescripta Theodreti et epistolam quae dicitur Hibae Edesseni episcopi' (Codoñer 1964: 144).

¹⁵² Greg. Tur. HF 6 18: 'Sed rex novo nunc ingenio eam nititur exturbare, dum dolose et ad sepulchra martirum et in ecclesiis reigionis nostrae orare confingit' (Krusch - Levison 1951: 287). He would attend Catholic services but it is unlikely he would access communion, as happened with the Oppila legate (Greg. Tur. 6 40). In this context, the controversy maintained with Bishop Masona of Merida regarding the tunic of the martyr Eulalia is also explained: VSPE 5 6 13-27 (Camacho 1988: 64-66, 107 ff). The legate Agila must have referred to this irenicism practised by Leovigild in his controversy with Gregory himself, although the Bishop of Tours interpreted the ambassador's opinion as pure foolishness. See Greg. Tur. HF 5 43: 'Sic enim vulgato sermone dicimus, non esse noxium, si inter gentilium aras et Dei ecclesiam quis transiens utraque venereture. Cuius ego stultitiam cernens, aio...' (Krusch - Levison 1951: 252).

¹⁵³ Iohan. Bicl. Chron. a. 580? 2: 'Leovegildus rex in urbem Toletanam synodum episcoporum sectae Arrianae congregat et antiquam haeresem novello errore emendat, dicens de Romana religione a nostra catholica fide venientes non debere baptizari, sed tantummodo per manus impositionem et communionis praeceptione pollui et gloriam patri per filium in spiritu sancto dare. per hanc ergo seductionem plurimi nostrorum cupiditate potius quam impulsione in Arrianum dogma declinant' (Mommsen 1894: 216). Isid. Hisp. HG 50: 'Denique Arrianae perfidiae furore repletus in catholicos persecutione commota plurimos episcoporum

consequences for the future of the Church of Cesaraugusta, as will be radically evident in the Second Council of Zaragoza in 592 CE, just three years after Reccared's conversion.¹⁵⁴ Unfortunately, we only know the certain example of Bishop Vicentius of Zaragoza, although it is possible that this also applied to Bishop Nepopis, sent to Merida to replace the unruly Masona, all the more odious because this Catholic bishop was of Gothic origin.¹⁵⁵

In addition to the aforementioned measures, Leovigild tried to confiscate the main relics of the kingdom, i.e. those of the martyrs Eulalia of Merida and Vincent of Huesca. In attempting the former, the monarch faced the energetic opposition of Bishop Masona,¹⁵⁶ but in the latter he must have had the acquiescence of Bishop Vicentius of Zaragoza.¹⁵⁷

It is also possible that the new situation created with the *libellus* of 580 CE favoured the seizure of the main Catholic temples where the bishops had accepted the royal proposal. For Zaragoza, we have reliable testimony thanks to the Acts of the Second Council.¹⁵⁸ In any event, the

exilio relegavit. ecclesiarum reditus et privilegia tulit, multos quoque terroribus in Arrianam pestilentiam inpulit, plerosque sine persecutione inlectos auro rebusque decepit. ausus quoque etiam inter cetera haeresis suae contagia etiam rebaptizare catholicos et non solum ex plebe, sed etiam ex sacerdotalis ordinis dignitate, sicut Vincentium Caesaraugustanum de episcopo apostatam factum et tamquam a caelo in infernum proiectum' (Mommsen 1894: 277 ff). The apostasy of Vicentius of Zaragoza merited the writing of a small theological treatise by Severus of Malaga (Isid. *Hisp. Vir. Illustr.* 30; Codoñer 1964: 151). Severus was bishop of a see located in the Byzantine territory, but he is part of a cast of illustrious characters – among whom were also Leander himself, Abbot Eutropius, and Licinianus of Cartagena – interested in the solution of the Byzantine occupation: García Moreno 2008b: 133 ff; Vallejo Girvés 2012: 243-248. It is what we have called elsewhere the 'Servitan clan': Barroso - Morín 1996a: 161; Barroso 2019: 144-160.

¹⁵⁴ The issue of the implications of religious politics and Vicentius' apostasy has been studied by Beltrán Torreira (1990).

¹⁵⁵ VSPE 5 6 29: '*Posthaec subrogatur ei [Masona] pseudosacerdos Nepopis quidam nomine atque in locum viri Dei in Emeritensern urbem substituitur, homo namque profanus servus sane diaboli angelus satanae praenuntius antichristi, et hic erat alienae civitatis episcopus'* (Camacho 1988: 66 ff). The name seems Egyptian, or at least Oriental, and it has been reasonably assumed that he had the support of the powerful Greek-Oriental colony of Merida: Alonso Campos 1986: 155; García Moreno 2008b: 125, n. 317, 132 ff. The seat of Nepopis, however, is unknown. Bueno Rocha (1972) assumed as an hypothesis that it would be Coria, since from the narration of the *Vitas* it is deduced that he was on the road between Merida and Toledo, where his baggage would cross paths with the entourage of his replacement, Masona – VSPE 5 8 11: '*per ipsam viam regredi ad Emeritam civitatem per quam plaustra rebus onusta properabant'* (Camacho 1986: 69) – and because the holder of this see appears to sign last among those of his province in the Third Council of Toledo. On the contrary, we think it more likely that it could be Elbora, a bishopric of little importance that appears to have been documented since ancient times (a certain *Quintianus episcopus Elborensis* is among the signatories of the Acts of the Council of Elvira: Vives 1963: 1), and that was also well communicated with Toledo, although in Lusitanian territory. In fact, Elbora was halfway between Merida and Toledo, but not Cauria, which is located north of Cáceres and on the Roman road from Emerita to Asturica. It may also be significant that the Bishop of Elbora is not represented in the signatures of the Third Council of Toledo: apart from the aforementioned Quintianus, the first known bishop is a certain Iosimus who signed last at the Council of Toledo of 597, and who must have been consecrated shortly after 589 (García Moreno 1974a: 178). As can be seen, the chronology does not contradict our hypothesis. For the identification of the city of Elbora with the archaeological site of Vascos (Navalmoralejo, near the Puente del Arzobispo), see Barroso - Morín - Sánchez 2018b.

¹⁵⁶ VSPE 5 6 13-27 (Camacho 1988: 64-66, 107 ff). The failed attempt to obtain the tunic of St Eulalia would have important consequences for the court, since it would end up favouring the development of the cult of St Leocadia as patron saint of the Kingdom of Toledo: Barroso - Carrolles - Morín 2001: 60-68; Barroso - Morín 2007a: 113-116.

¹⁵⁷ II Con. Caesar. c. 2 (Vives 1963: 154); Beltrán Torreira 1990: 43 ff.

¹⁵⁸ II Con. Caesar. c. 3 (Vives 1963: 154). Beltrán Torreira 1990; García Moreno 2008b: 130 ff.

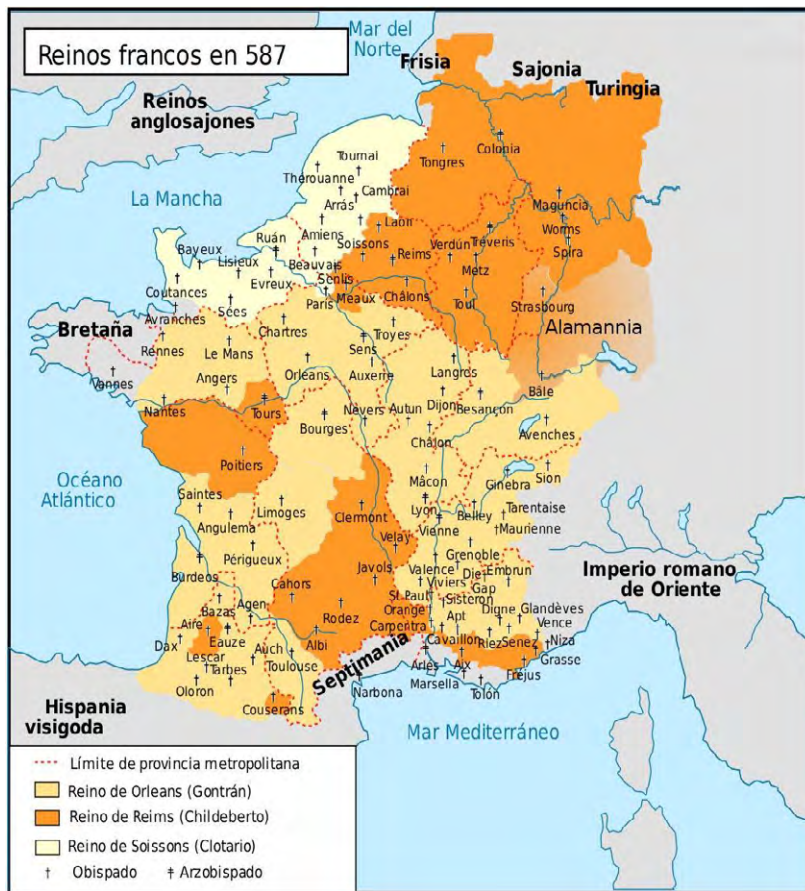


Fig. 7. Kingdoms of France towards 587 (Wiki).

confiscation of Catholic churches is attested both by literary sources¹⁵⁹ and by some isolated archaeological data, specifically the inscription of consecration *in catolico* of the church of Santa Maria in Toledo. Based on the chronology of the epigraph (587 CE), García Moreno argued that this inscription would be testimony to the seizure of the temple by the Arian authorities, now nominally ‘Catholic’.¹⁶⁰ However, it seems clear that the inscription of Santa Maria of Toledo responds to the return of the seized temples ordered by Reccared on the occasion of his personal conversion and once the meeting with the

Arian bishops of 587 was held.¹⁶¹ Be that as it may, the inscription attests that some Catholic temples were confiscated by the king in the context of Hermenegild’s rebellion and the usurpation by the king of the name ‘Catholic’. We will return to this inscription later as it is of great interest to our topic.

On the other hand, it has been speculated that the conversion alienated Hermenegild from the support of some of the nobility, both Gothic and Hispano-Roman aristocrats, who saw in the Empire a more dangerous enemy than Leovigild, especially after the bitter experience of the civil war between Agila and Athanagild. However, this does not seem to have affected his cause too much. There are no signs of unrest among the population of Seville and, on the contrary, the prince received the support of the city of Cordoba. It is more difficult to specify on what support Hermenegild counted beyond Seville, Cordoba, and, especially, the city of Merida. We will talk about this later.

¹⁵⁹ Ioh. Bicl. Chron. a. 587? 7: ‘Reccaredus rex aliena a praecessoribus direpta et fisco sociata placabiliter restituit’ (Mommsen 1894: 218).

¹⁶⁰ García Moreno 2008b: 131 ff.

¹⁶¹ From a symbolic point of view, we also believe it is very significant that the inscription is dated precisely 13 April 587, a day that corresponds exactly with the anniversary of the martyrdom of Hermenegild (see below).

A greater problem for Hermenegild was the condemnation that Emperor Justinian and his successors had made of the *tria Capitula*. In the eyes of the Spanish Church, the Byzantine emperor was a heretic and the measures carried out by Leovigild favourable to certain Catholic individuals who fled from Byzantine Africa in search of refuge in the Visigothic kingdom (i.e. Nactus and Donatus) must have increased even more the confusion among the Catholic ranks. The main consequence of Leovigild's religious policy was not only to create division among the Catholic fold, but to prevent the conflict from being seen as a simple confrontation between Catholics and Arians. By attenuating the differences between both creeds, the king tried to reduce possible support from the Gothic nobility to Hermenegild's cause. It must be taken into account that the problem posed by the prince's conversion was merely the very beginning of the phenomenon that had been materialising for some time, i.e. the conversion to Catholicism of an increasingly important sector of the Gothic nobility.¹⁶² As Thompson opines:

'And if we regard the war against Hermenegild as essentially a war of Goth against Goth... it is not at all surprising that the King took no steps whatever against Hispano-Roman Catholics. In such a war Leovigild would have directed his ecclesiastical policy against the Goths in his opponent's camp. But since his propaganda was certainly directed towards Catholics, it seems to follow that the many thousands of Goths in Hermenegild's entourage at Seville were Catholics.'¹⁶³

The phenomenon of the conversion of the Goths to Catholicism must have occurred to a greater extent in urban environments and must have been noticed even more in the populated cities of Baetica and Lusitania, where the Goths would have had contact with the rich Catholic tradition and in which the cultural influence of the Empire was still strongly felt.

Meanwhile, Hermenegild must have sent a delegation to negotiate some kind of alliance with the Byzantines.¹⁶⁴ At that time, the Byzantine governors of the western area enjoyed a wide autonomy with respect to Constantinople, due to their distance and the difficulty of communications, but it is logical that a military intervention in Spain would undoubtedly require the approval of the Imperial authority, since, because of its size, it would require the sending of new troops, diverting resources necessary at that time on other war fronts the Empire was engaged in. Thus, a diplomatic mission headed by Leander had to travel to Constantinople and directly request the emperor's help. The bishop of Seville remained at the Imperial court for several years, during which he formed a solid friendship with the pontifical

¹⁶² García Moreno (2008: 134), when referring to the persecution ordered by the king, concludes: '...it is as if Leovigild was especially concerned about the echo that Hermenegild's conversion would have in the sectors of the Gothic nobility, already Catholic and apparently well ready towards Byzantium'.

¹⁶³ Thompson 1969: 87; 1985: 103 ff. Cf. Besga 2007c: 48 ff.

¹⁶⁴ Greg. Tur. HF 5 38: '*...Ille [Hermenegildus] vero haec intellegens, ad partem se imperatoris iungit, legans cum praefectum eius ami citias, qui tunc Hispaniam impugnabat... Herminigildus vero, vocatis Grecis, contra patrem egreditur, relicta in urbe coniuge sua; 6 18: His diebus Leuvichildus rex in exercitu contra Herminichildum, filium suum, resedebat, cui et Meritam civitatem abstulit. Nam hic qualiter cum ducibus imperatoris Tiberii fuerit coniunctus, iam superius exposuimus; 6 43: Igitur cum Herminichildus, sicut supra diximus, patri infensus esset et in civitate quadam Hispaniae cum coniuge resediret, de imperatoris solatio fretus atque Mironis Galliciensis regis'* (Krusch - Levison 1951: 245, 287, 314 ff).

apocriary Gregory.¹⁶⁵ Leander's friendship with the future Pope would last a lifetime, and adding credibility to the pontiff's testimony in relation to this topic.

Leander had arrived at the Imperial court convinced of the support of Emperor Tiberius I Constantine to Hermenegild's cause, but after the death of the emperor in 581, the new basileus, Maurice, was not in a position to provide the promised help. The delay in the negotiations occurred because at that time the Empire was facing serious military problems – especially on the border with the Persians and in Italy with the Lombards – preventing the emperor from fully involving himself in Spanish affairs.

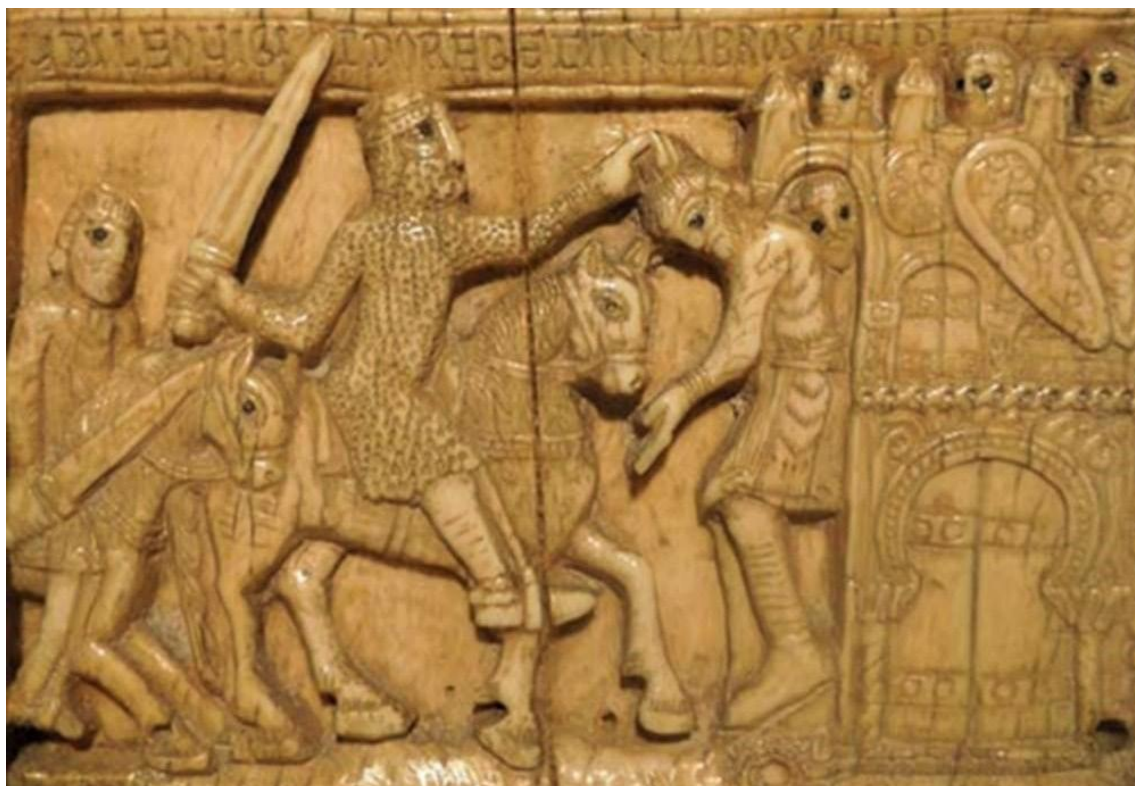


Fig. 8. The Ark of St Millan (San Millan de la Cogolla). Leovigild (Wiki).

Finally, some kind of agreement must have been reached, although it is not known exactly what the terms were or its exact date. According to the most widespread opinion, Hermenegild proposed the return to the status quo prior to Leovigild's campaigns in exchange for the Empire's military support. This meant the return to the borders established in the times of Athanagild and Justinian and the return of some of the territories the Goths had taken in later years.¹⁶⁶

¹⁶⁵ Goffart 1957: 88-90; Vallejo Girvés 2012: 249-251. It is not entirely clear how many years Leander spent at the Imperial court, although it is most likely that his departure took place in 582 and his stay lasted until 587, i.e. when the conflict had already ended (Godoy - Vilella 1986: 142, n. 104).

¹⁶⁶ García Moreno 2008b: 118. This suggestion is based on the subsequent interest that Reccared showed in obtaining from Pope Gregory a copy of the pacts signed between Athanagild and the emperor. But this interest could also be due to the agreement between Leovigild and the Byzantines, or simply to Reccared's desire to put an end to the Byzantine invasion.

On the other hand, we do not know the conditions that Hermenegild demanded from the Imperial court. It has been supposed that the prince would have requested military aid from the emperor, but, although feasible, none of this is known for sure. It has already been said that there is no record of military action by Hermenegild. Perhaps he did not act due to lack of military means, and that is what would have finally led him to negotiate with the Imperial authorities. However, this option seems unlikely: in the context in which Hermenegild's conversion took place, no one could be surprised – least of all the prince and his entourage – that this act would necessarily result in political consequences. Therefore, it is doubtful whether Hermenegild would have acted in this sense without having tied a military agreement with the Byzantines and obtained clear support from the Gothic nobility beforehand. It seems, rather, that we should look at the conversion as an act of sincerity and that only after it took place did the court of Toledo seek a solution to the complicated situation it had created. It would be at that point, not before, that the protection of the Byzantine and Austrasian courts would have been sought. In addition, we know that the embassy was addressed by Leander, implying that in no case could the conversion have taken place prior to 579/580 CE. This also explains the time elapsed between the conversion and Leovigild's reaction: Hermenegild had not started an armed rebellion against his father and, therefore, he had nothing to worry about, at least on the military plane.¹⁶⁷



Fig. 9. Leovigild coins, Merida mint, with legend VICTOR/VICTORIA (Heiss 1872).

So that, in our opinion, the request for help to the emperor occurred once Leovigild's military reaction had begun and not before. This means that Hermenegild's 'tyranny' cannot be considered a true military rebellion, such as, e.g., the one that had brought Atanagild to power in 552, but simply an assumption of royal sovereignty by the prince outside the dictates of the court of Toledo. But this proclamation, as Vilella and Godoy point out, must have been provided

¹⁶⁷ We again emphasise the questions this action poses: Thompson 1985: 85-87 [= 1966: 70]; Díaz and Díaz 2004: 17.

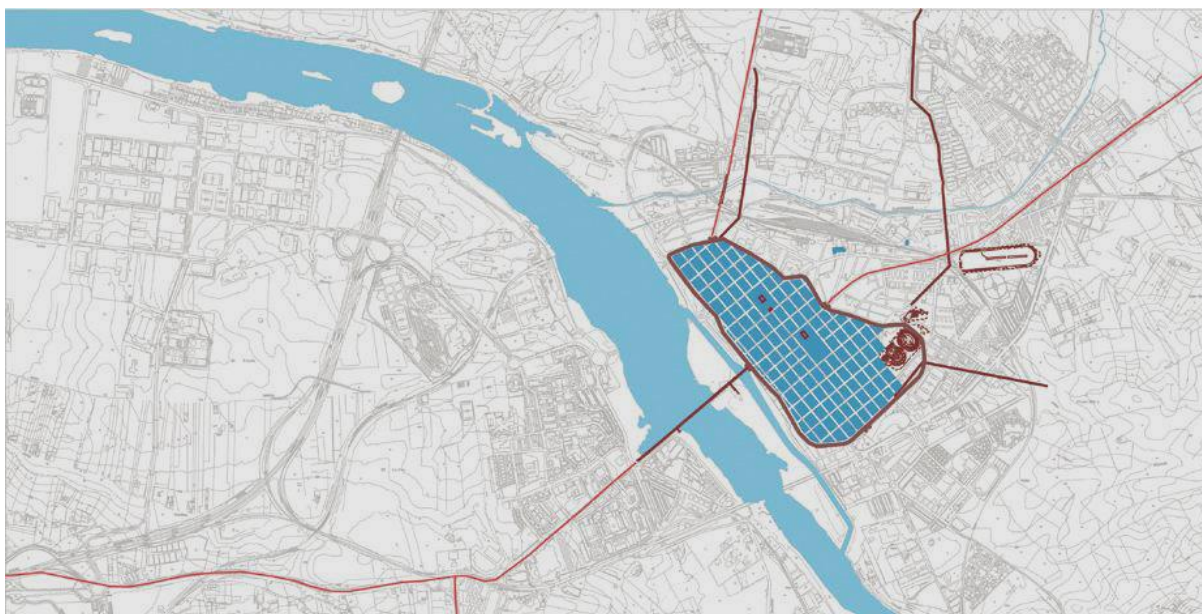


Fig. 10. Map of Merida c. 500 (Ciudades Patrimonio de la Humanidad).

with very much a special character, which is really what alarmed Leovigild and Goisuintha.¹⁶⁸ After all, as has already been said, Hermenegild was the king, regardless of his conversion – associated as such with the throne by Leovigild, and he had been given a province *ad regnandum*. Under these circumstances, it is not unreasonable to suppose that with the sending of an embassy to Constantinople, Hermenegild would have limited himself to requesting military aid and some form of recognition of his sovereignty by the emperor. For his part, the emperor would also be recognised in his Imperial prerogative and would obtain a kind of tutelage right over the kingdom, somewhat in the style of what was happening in Ostrogothic Italy, or in his own time, with the kingdoms of the Suevi and Franks. The assumption of full sovereignty, and especially the sacred character conferred by the royal anointing, was what had alarmed Toledo and led to the schism and eventual confrontation.¹⁶⁹ We will return to this in more detail later, but for now one thing seems clear: no matter how much has been written, at no time did Hermenegild lead a military uprising against the king; his actions throughout the crisis were passive and always defensive in nature.

Parallel to Leovigild's reaction, a kind of political entente was established between the Empire, the court of Austrasia, and the Suevi. In this alliance, Miro, king of the Sueves – always threatened by the Goths and the only one with the real military capacity to help Hermenegild – played a prominent role.¹⁷⁰ However, the soul of this alliance was undoubtedly the Austrasian queen, Brunhild, the indomitable mother of Ingundis. In early 580, Brunhild tries to contact Hermenegild through Elaphius, Bishop of Chalons. Almost at the same time, Miro sent an embassy to King Guntramn. In both cases, the attempts failed: Elaphius died of fever before

¹⁶⁸ Godoy - Vilella 1986: 130 ff.

¹⁶⁹ Godoy - Vilella 1986: 130-135.

¹⁷⁰ García Moreno 2008b: 151.

reaching his destination and Miro's ambassadors were detained by Chilperic's men as they passed through Poitiers.¹⁷¹ Nevertheless, an embassy from the court of Austrasia was able to reach Galicia.¹⁷²

Meanwhile, Leovigild had not remained idle in Toledo. That same year the king initiated a diplomatic counter-offensive and despatched legates to Chilperic of Neustria to negotiate the marriage bond between his son Reccared and Riguntis, the daughter of the Frankish king. A year later, Chilperic sent ambassadors to the court of Toledo to examine the dowry. Due to its geographical location, the alliance with Neustria complicated the support of Austrasia and Burgundy to Hermenegild's cause and increased the prince's isolation in Seville.¹⁷³



Fig. 11. Aerial view of the Los Hitos site (Arisgotas, Toledo) with the Montes de Toledo in the background (photo: J. Morín de Pablos).

Once the political and ideological position was established, the king went on to fully deal with the military problem. It is surprising that, instead of marching south towards Baetica, Leovigild directed a military expedition to the north of the country to fight against the Vasconi. After subduing them, and as a monument to his new triumph, the monarch founded the city of Victoriacum there. The name of the new city presents clear warlike resonances that have their

¹⁷¹ Greg. Tur. 5 40: 'Post haec Elafius Catalaunensis episcopus propter causas Brunichildis reginae in Hispaniis in legatione directus, correptus a febre nimia, spiritum exalavit, et exinde delatus mortuus, ad civitatem suam sepultus est'; 5 41: 'Mirus rex Galliciensis legatos ad Guntchramnum regem dirixit. Cumque per Pectavum terminume praeterirent, quod tunc Chilpericus rex tenebat, nuntiata sunt ei. At ille sub custodia sibi eos exhibere praecepit et Parisius custodire' (Krusch - Levison 1951: 247 ff).

¹⁷² Greg. Tur. De Virt. S. Martini 4. 7: 'Tempore quodam causa legationis Galliciam adiit, atque ad Mironis regis praesentiam accedens, negotia patefecit iniuncta. Erat enim eo tempore Miro rex in civitate illa, qua decessor eius basilicam sancti Martini aedificaverat, sicut in libro primo huius operis exposuimus' (Krusch 1885 [1969] 201).

¹⁷³ Greg. Tur. 5 43: 'Leuvichildus vero rex Agilanem legatum ad Chilpericum mittit, virum nulli ingenii aut dispositiones rationes conperitum, sed tantum voluntatem in catholica lege perversum..' 6 18: 'Igitur legati Chilperici regis, id est Ansovaldus et Domegiselus, qui ad conspiciendam dotem in Hispaniis fuerant missi, regressi sunt' (Krusch - Levison 1951: 249, 287). For the international implications of the conflict, see Goffart 1957: 87-91.

exact correspondence in some coinages with the legend VICTOR/VICTORIA that followed the conquest of the rebel seats in the south.¹⁷⁴

The general interpretation of this episode is that Hermenegild's rebellion coincided with an uprising of the Basques. However, the action of the monarch should rather be interpreted as an exercise of force against possible attempts of invasion by the Franks in this area of the peninsula and to cut off their possible land communications with the Suevi. The king's action would be inscribed, then, within a practice that will be repeated on other occasions throughout the history of the Visigothic kingdom practically until its disappearance (Sisenand, *dux* Paulus, Roderic). We have already seen that in principle Hermenegild could count on the help of the court of Metz, where his mother-in-law Brunhild reigned alongside Sigebert, and the foundation – or refoundation, if, as we have defended, it is the same Roman city of Velegia – of Victoriacum meant the control of communications between Gaul and the Suevi kingdom through the route that leads from Burdigala (Burdeos) to Asturica Augusta (Astorga).¹⁷⁵ The closure of communications between the courts of Metz and Braga would be a priority objective for Leovigild.

The campaign against the Vasconi would have thwarted the attempt to strangle Leovigild from the north. Let us remember that the king had open several possible war fronts: Franks and Basques to the north, Suevi to the west, Imperials in the Levant, and supporters of the prince in the south. At this juncture, King Leovigild, who had already amply demonstrated to be a shrewd strategist and a competent military leader, decided first to attack the theoretically more powerful rival and then turn to the south. It would be in this context of confrontation with the Merovingians, under the protection of their Aquitanian allies, that Leovigild's campaign against the Basques, traditional collaborators of the Franco-Aquitaniens in their raids on the peninsula, must be included. Some authors also postulate in the same sense the attack against Rosas, evidenced by a numismatic mint by Leovigild with the legend CVM D(EO) I(NTRAVIT) RODA and which presents parallels with other religious propaganda emissions of the moment made after the conquest of the cities of Seville and Italica.¹⁷⁶ In short, if both are synchronous, something that is not entirely clear, the double campaign on the two Pyrenean extremes suggests an action copied from the one which, a century later, King Wamba will carry out against the *dux* Paulus and the rebels of Septimania.¹⁷⁷

Seen in this context, what is really surprising is not that Leovigild headed north, but the inactivity of the prince before the departure of the king. The sensation produced by the reading of the news referring to the uprising is that in some way all the agents involved, from Leovigild to the emperor (Brunhild, Chilperic, Guntramn, Miro, etc.), use their power and influence either

¹⁷⁴ García Moreno 2008b: 148 ff.

¹⁷⁵ Barroso - Carrobes - Morín 2013b (with the bibliography cited there). The case of Victoriacum/Velegia would partially recall that of Italica, although there was no name change here, perhaps due to its proximity to Seville. Furthermore, Italica's Imperial past, as the birthplace of the emperors Trajan and Hadrian, provided greater prestige to the Gothic king. On the other hand, access to the central and eastern part of Iberia from Gaul was controlled through the city of Pamplona.

¹⁷⁶ Miles 1952: 85 ff; Thompson 1985: 86 [= 1966: 70]. However, it is possible that the Rosas broadcast corresponds to the campaign of the year 585 CE: Hillgarth 1961a: 43. Vid. *infra*.

¹⁷⁷ On this topic, see Barroso - Carrobes - Morín 2013b.

to end the rebellion, or to help Hermenegild. But, strangely enough, and as might be expected, the prince remained inactive at all times. Hermenegild, indeed, continued in Seville and did not take advantage of the occasion offered by the expedition against the Basques to march with his army on Toledo. The paralysis of the prince is really odd if we think of a military uprising as usual: it is normal that once power has been assumed publicly, the prince would march towards the royal city, ready to confront his father. In principle, the inactivity of the prince could be explained perhaps because he did not dare to confront the royal army without first counting on the promised Byzantine reinforcements. But even this is difficult to accept since the challenge to royal authority was public and notorious before the agreement with the Byzantines was closed, and the expedition on the Basques provided the best opportunity to confront the king's army. In reality, Hermenegild's decision to remain in Seville while Leovigild marched north makes no sense and can only be explained in terms alien to military practice. In our opinion, this behaviour is of the utmost importance in understanding the true nature of Hermenegild's rebellion¹⁷⁸

In any case, Hermenegild's inaction proved fatal for his cause: two years after his expedition against the Basques, Leovigild directed his army towards the prince's possessions.¹⁷⁹ First, the king headed towards Merida, taking it, then minting coins with the legend EMERITA VICTORIA in commemoration of his triumphant entry into the city,¹⁸⁰

Again, we find here a difficulty between what some literary sources relate and the numismatic evidence: the anonymous author of the *Vitas* seems to indicate that Leovigild maintained control over Merida at all times. Only in this way can the requirement that Masona appear in court and the appointment of Neposis as a 'Catholic' bishop be understood. On the other hand, Gregory of Tours notes that the city was effectively conquered (*cui et Emeritam Civitatem*

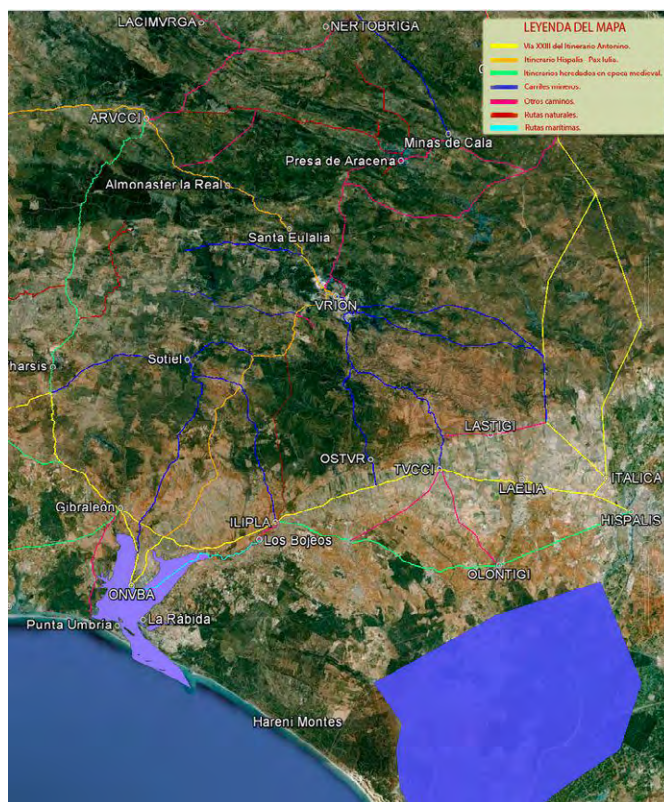


Fig. 12. Map of the Roman roads in the southwest and probable routes followed by the armies of Leovigild and Reccared.

¹⁷⁸ Both Leovigild's decision to attack the Basques instead of crushing the rebellion, and Hermenegild's inactivity in the face of that campaign are so disconcerting that Díaz y Díaz (2004: 17) assumed that the king would not have considered that the break with Hermenegild was total and irreversible.

¹⁷⁹ Ioh. Bicl. Chron. 582? 3: '*Leovegildus rex exercitum ad expugnandum tyrannum filium colligit*' (Mommsen 1894: 216).

¹⁸⁰ Flórez 1773: 182-184; Heiss 1872: 78-83, Pl. I 13-15; Miles 1952: 119.



Fig. 13. Sketch of the city of Hispalis/Seville in the Visigothic era (Sánchez Ramos 2014).

abstulit), which seems to coincide, at least in appearance, with the monetary legends of Leovigild.¹⁸¹

The idea of the military conquest of the great Lusitanian metropolis seems to be the one most widespread among researchers.¹⁸²

However, it is hard to accept that Leovigild would have taken the city by force. Merida had been an important city during the late Empire, in fact, it had been the seat of the *vicarius* and, therefore, can be considered the capital of the *diocesis*

Hispaniarum; at the end of the 6th century it continued to maintain much of its importance and prestige. In addition, the city was equipped with a strong, walled enclosure that would have favoured its defence and, even more so, knowing that an army of Sueves was approaching in aid of Hermenegild, something which would undoubtedly have excited the spirits of the defenders. Furthermore, the noble Claudius had his residence in Merida – the same nobleman who would later be (if he were not already at the time) *dux* of Lusitania and one of Reccared's closest collaborators at the beginning of his reign, as well as his best general.¹⁸³ It is also difficult to think that a military triumph over Merida would have gone unnoticed by an author like John of Biclaro, always ready to narrate Leovigild's military successes. The entry in the *Biclarensis* for that year only records the start of the military campaign against Hermenegild, with no reference to the conquest of Merida, or any other city.¹⁸⁴ Neither does the author of the *Vitas* mention any military action against Merida by Leovigild. It has already been said that the

¹⁸¹ Greg. Tur. HF 6 18: 'His diebus Leuvichildus rex in exercitu contra Herminichildum, filium suum, resedebat, cui et Meritam civitatem abstulit' (Krusch 1951: 287).

¹⁸² García Moreno 2008b: 149s.

¹⁸³ Iohan. Bicl. Chron. to. 589? 2. The news is dated just seven years after the alleged taking of Merida by Leovigild. Although there is no evidence of Claudius' participation in the civil war, it is worth highlighting the subsequent fidelity of this Catholic nobleman to Reccared – fidelity expressed in the position he held and put to the test in successive attempts at rebellion. This loyalty to the king seems to indicate a close connection with the throne that could go back to these moments, if not from Claudius himself, then at least of his lineage. Obviously, as occurs in all civil conflicts, the crisis caused by the coronation of Hermenegild must also have been a litmus test to contrast the loyalties of the different sectors of the Hispanic nobility.

¹⁸⁴ Ioh. Bicl. Chron. a. 582? 3: 'Leovegildus rex exercitum ad expugnandum tyrannum filium colligit' (Mommsen 1894: 216).

reading of the *VSPE* seems to support the idea that Leovigild always retained control over the city, appointing and removing bishops at will.

The account by Gregory of Tours, and the corresponding one in the *Biclarensis*, explains why there is no consensus about the position of Merida in the conflict. For us, the silence of John of Biclaro on this matter is decisive. From our point of view, two mirages have influenced an incorrect interpretation of Merida's role in the rebellion, i.e. the 'Frankish mirage', of which Orlandis already spoke, produced by the idea that Gregory of Tours had it that Leovigild had made a real territorial partition of the kingdom in the Merovingian style; and the 'Gothic mirage', derived from the distribution – this one territorial – made between Liuva and Leovigild. But the latter was an exceptional solution to save an equally exceptional fact (the *interregnum* produced by the death of King Athanagild). However, as Orlandis already defended, in the case of Hermenegild and Reccared there was no partition of the kingdom. Both sons are *consortes*

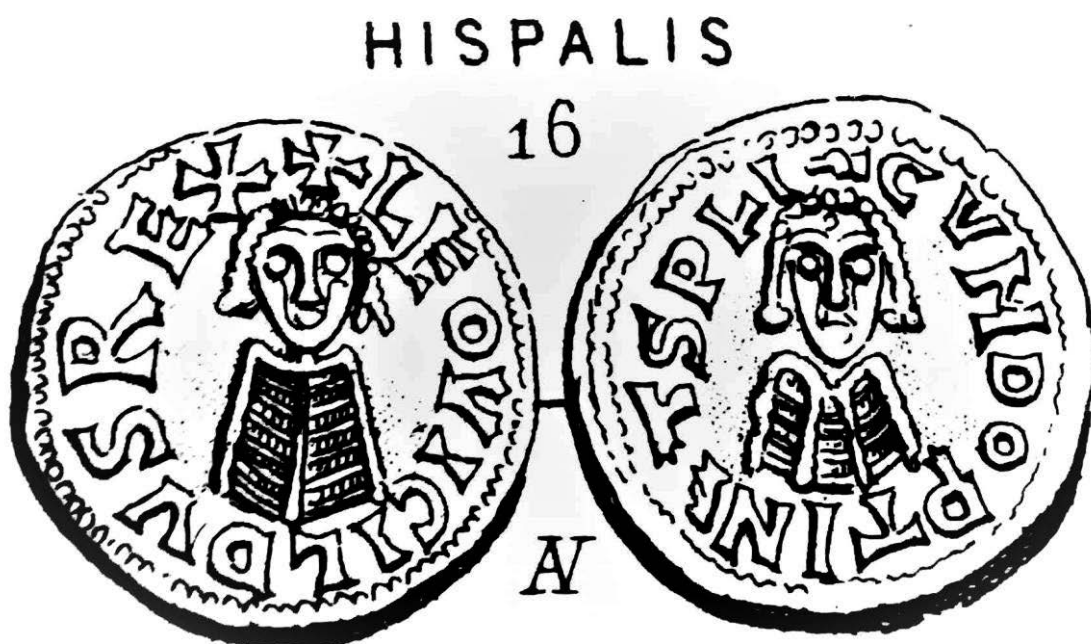


Fig. 14. Leovigild coin, Hispalis mint, with legend SPALI CUM DEO (Heiss 1872).

regni subordinate to the king (who thus places himself at the level of a true emperor) to facilitate the transmission of power in case of Leovigild's death and that the situation experienced with the death of Athanagild would not be repeated.¹⁸⁵ Leovigild provided his sons with a court, not a kingdom, establishing them as collaborators of the government for certain areas of the peninsula and thus having his hands free to act in other scenarios.

From our perspective, the silence of the sources suggests rather that Leovigild entered Merida without facing any military opposition because he retained control of the ancient capital of the *diocesis Hispaniarum* at all times and that Gregory of Tours was confusing the arrival of

¹⁸⁵ Orlandis 1962a: 77-79.

Leovigild's army in Merida with a real conquest.¹⁸⁶ Given the succession of events, it is logical to think that the purpose of the expedition against the city must have been related to Leovigild's strategy of cutting off the foreseeable support for the rebel by the Sueves, as indeed happened shortly afterwards, when an army led by Miro tried to relieve the prince while the king was besieging Seville.¹⁸⁷ We believe that the tactic used by Leovigild on this occasion is that the Visigothic army marched from Toledo, divided into two columns, taking advantage of Hermenegild's inaction: one column would march towards the southwest, over Merida, and the other directly towards the south, via Seville. If so, there is no doubt that this second column would be under the command of Reccared, whom we will find later in the siege of Cordoba. It would then be possible to establish some kind of relationship between the need of the Visigothic kings to control the road from Toledo to Cordoba from the middle of the 6th century and the earliest levels of the fortified *uilulla* of Arisgotas (Orgaz, province of Toledo), whose name seems to allude precisely to the Goth army. Arisgotas, in fact, is located c. 30 km south of Toledo and its strategic importance is due to the fact that it controls the port of Los Yébenes and the route that would be the usual one leading to Cordoba in the Middle Ages.¹⁸⁸ This was, moreover, the strategy usually followed by the Visigoths in other campaigns, as seen in the attack on the last Byzantine positions undertaken by Sisebut and Suinthila (621-622 CE), or in Wamba's expedition against the Septimianian rebels, when the Goth army, divided into three columns, advanced on Gothic Gaul. Likewise, this would also be the tactic used by Leovigild himself in his campaign of 576 against the Sueves, and by the *dux* Claudius in the battle for Carcassonne.¹⁸⁹

From a military point of view, King Leovigild's action was a wise decision, i.e. due Hermenegild's inactivity and the threat of the Suevi. Merida is located c. 170 km north of Seville. The domination of the city also entailed control of the road from Merida to Astorga (the so-called 'Silver Way') and the sealing off of any attempt by the Sueves towards Seville from the northwest. Under these circumstances, the latter must have taken an alternative route,

¹⁸⁶ It may be pertinent in this same sense to point out the difference in nuance between the series of coins minted on the occasion of the conquest of Seville (*obtinuit*) and the one minted at the taking of Rosas (*intrauit*): Fernández Martínez - Gómez Pallarés 2001: 634, n. 10. To our knowledge, archaeology has not detected with certainty a phase of destruction of the city that can be attributed to this campaign. A variety of transformations of the old enclosure from the classical period, with a gradual Christianisation of the urban areas, are documented, but no trace of destruction that can be linked to a military campaign: Mateos - Alba 2000: 146-153. Although the synthesis is from two decades ago, there has been no important variation from that outlined in this work.

¹⁸⁷ Ioh. Bicl. Chron. a. 583?: '*Leovegildus rex civitatem Hispalensem congregato exercitu obsidet et rebellem filium gravi obsidione concludit, in cuius solacium Miro Suevorum rex ad expugnandam Hispalim advenit ibique diem clausit extremum... interea Leovegildus rex supra dictam civitatem nunc fame, nunc ferro, nunc Baetis conclusionem omnino conturbat*' (Mommsen 1894: 216). Greg. Tur. HF 6 43: '*Patrata quoque victoria, 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 regressus. Sed Miro postquam in patria rediit, non multos post dies conversus ad lectulum, obiit. Infirmatus enim ab aquis Hispaniae fuerat malis aeribusque incommodis*' (Arndt - Kursch 1951: 315). This news was misinterpreted by Isidore, who assumed that Miro had come to Leovigild's aid. (Thompson 1985: 87 n. 52 [= 1966: 71, n. 3]. Isid. Hisp. HS 91: '*Deinde in auxilium Leovigildi Gothorum regis adversus rebellem filium ad expugnandam Spalim pergit ibique vitae terminum clausit*' (Mommsen 1894: 303). Actually, the defeat of Miro meant the obligation to render vassalage to Leovigild, so that the Suebian kingdom was de facto subordinated to the Visigoths. Hence Isidore's error, as when he writes his chronicle the kingdom of the Suebi no longer existed.

¹⁸⁸ Barroso *et al.* 2018.

¹⁸⁹ Barroso - Morín - Sánchez 2015: 63-69; Castillo Lozano 2018.

marching south to Pax Iulia (today's Beja) and from there heading west, crossing the Sierra de Aracena, to link again with the road from Merida to Italica (Santiponce) by the oppidum of Curiga (Monesterio), south of the province of Badajoz.¹⁹⁰ As can be easily seen, a manoeuvre like the one we propose here, with part of the army in Merida and another in the surroundings of Seville, would have caught Miro's army in a pincer movement without reducing the pressure on a besieged Hermenegild in Seville.

Unfortunately for the prince's cause, Leovigild defeated the Suevi and forced Miro to retreat to Galicia, not without first demanding a vassalage oath. In this context, it is possible that the issuance of coins in Merida with a triumphant legend occurred on the occasion of the commemoration of the resounding triumph over the Sueves and not linked to the actual conquest of the city. In the course of this expedition (according to John of Biclaro and Isidore), or shortly after it (as per Gregory of Tours), Miro dies, being succeeded to the throne by his young son Eboric. With the defeat and death of Miro, Hermenegild undoubtedly lost his best ally and the only one who could truly offer him military aid with guarantees. Meanwhile, Leovigild and his army continued their expedition against Seville, subjecting the city to a strong siege by land and by the river.¹⁹¹ At that time Hispalis continued to be one of the main cities of Baetica. However, the urban extension had retracted to the limits of pre-Roman times, i.e. towards the area of the river port. Although the aristocratic *domus* had survived the general crisis, the domestic areas show an evident impoverishment both in construction materials and in living quarters. The episcopal church, and therefore also the palace of St Leander, seems to have been located in the vicinity of the old forum area, around the current church of El Salvador, although archaeological excavations have only been able to document a mosque. It is also not impossible that the *episcopium* was located outside the walls, where the *kardus maximus* transforms into the via Augusta. The city had a walled enclosure affording an extension of c. 11 ha and an important river port, as well as suburban spaces for burials, which in some cases seem to be related to sacred structures.¹⁹² The strong defences of the city constituted a serious obstacle for the royal army, which was not prepared for warfare requiring significant technical assets (mainly siege machines), high numbers of fighters, and the necessary logistical infrastructure. In addition, the arrival of winter forced the king to change his objective: instead of marching directly against Seville, Leovigild conquered the neighbouring city of Italica (Santiponce), a short distance northwest of Hispalis. The monarch restored the walls of the ancient Roman city and set up a permanent camp there, from where he could safely attack Seville.¹⁹³ This action was celebrated in a new monetary minting with a religious legend that demonstrates the level of the confrontation between father and son had reached: CVM D(EO) O(BTINVIT) ETALICA. That same year Seville and several nearby fortresses

¹⁹⁰ Sillières 1990: 450 ff (tramo Arucci-Pax Iulia), 500-502 (vía Italica-Pax Iulia).

¹⁹¹ Vid. n. 187.

¹⁹² Sánchez Ramos 2014: 66 ff, 73.

¹⁹³ Ioh. Bicl. Chron. a. 584? 1: 'Leovegildus muros Italicae antiquae civitatis restaurat, quae res maximum impedimentum Hispalensi populo exhibuit' (Mommsen 1894: 216).

fell into the hands of Leovigild, and again the king minted commemorative coins with legends alluding to divine protection: CVM D(E)O OBTINVIT SPALI and CUM DEO SPALI AQVISITA.¹⁹⁴

As we have seen before, monetary emissions acquired a relevant role in the political-religious propaganda war that followed the exaltation of Hermenegild. In fact, the coins with a religious-themed legend issued by Leovigild represent the logical response to the series previously minted by Hermenegild as a commemoration of his own royal anointing. Hermenegild's series expresses the idea that his power has been conferred on him by God (HERMENEGILDI REGI A DEO UITA), deepening the implications that his sacred anointing at the hands of the religious authority entailed. On the contrary, Leovigild's coins focus on proclaiming his military victories, sure proof that God was on his side (CUM DEO OBTINUIT ETALICA/SPALI; CUM DEO SPALI AQUISITA).

There are also some series of fractional coins in bronze (*minimi*), of which a few specimens are known from the mint of Hispalis, and which seem to imitate Byzantine coins. In the case of Hermenegild's emissions, they present the bust of the king and the monogram ERM. Those of Leovigild (and later Reccared) present cruciform monograms – for the first time in Visigothic numismatics – both on the obverse (with the anagram of the king's name) and on the reverse (with the anagram of the issuing mint).¹⁹⁵ The motif of the cruciform monogram can be



Fig. 15. Inscription of Alcalá de Guadaira (photo: M. Camacho Moreno/CERES).

explained within this religious propaganda war and, although no Hermenegild specimen of this type is known, it is very possible that it was he who initiated the series, as we have seen, happening with gold mintings, with Leovigild clearly responding to his son's mintings.¹⁹⁶ In fact, once the crisis was over, the motif of the cruciform monogram will not appear again until the reign of Chindasuinth (642-653), perhaps because of the Imperial resonances it had.

To this moment an inscription must also correspond which seems to have been a lintel or frieze of the door of some building, most likely a church, found in 1669 in Alcalá de Guadaira (Seville), next to the medieval mill of Cajul. The lands belonged to Carthusian monks, who took it to their monastery in Seville. In 1913, after the sale of the monastery, the inscription went to the

¹⁹⁴ Flórez 1773: 179 ff; Heiss 1872: 78-88; Miles 1952: 110 ff; Díaz y Díaz 1958; Vives 1959; Hillgarth 1961a: 35-46 [=1966: 501-508].

¹⁹⁵ Pliego 2018.

¹⁹⁶ The model of the Regi a Deo Vita series is a coin of Justin II, who also used the cruciform monogram in some of his series, see Wroth 1908: 99.

Municipal Museum and later, in 1949, the City Council donated it to the Provincial Archaeological Museum, where it is currently kept.¹⁹⁷

It is a very interesting inscription that tells of the persecution suffered by the king (sic) Hermenegild at the hands of his father King Leovigild:

(CHRISMON) IN NOMINE DOMINI ANN[O F]ELICITER SECUNDO REGNI DOM[INI] NOSTRI ERMINIGILDI REGIS QVEM PERSEQVITUR GENETOR SVS DOM(INVS) LIVVIGILDVS REX IN CIBITATE(M) ISPA(LIM) DVCTI AIONE.

(CHI RHO) IN THE NAME OF GOD, IN THE SECOND YEAR OF THE REIGN OF OUR LORD KING HERMENEGILD, WHO [IS] PERSECUTED BY HIS FATHER, THE KING AND LORD LEOVIGILD, TRANSFERRED FOREVER TO THE CITY OF SEVILLE.

The epigraph is framed within the propaganda war that accompanied the rebellion and Leovigild's reaction. It is not surprising that this inscription has been the subject of much study and interpretation due to its importance and uniqueness. The latest proposal, and the most convincing, assumes two different moments for its composition: the first reaching up to *Liuuigildus rex*, and the second corresponding to the phrase '*in cibitate(m) Ispa(lim) ducti aione*', which must be taken to refer to a later moment (vid. infra).¹⁹⁸

Focusing on the first part of the epigraph, it has been assumed that the mention of the second year of Hermenegild's reign should tally with 581 CE, i.e. two years after Leovigild nominated him king.¹⁹⁹ However, it is more likely that the date is 583. As Díaz y Díaz has defended, for Hermenegild the years of effective reign must be computed from the royal consecration of the prince and the assumption of full sovereignty. This is well reflected in the coins with the legend *Regi a Deo uita*, a legend that is an echo of the solemn exaltation of the prince by the nobles of Seville on the occasion of his royal anointing.²⁰⁰ Thus, the epigraph of Alcalá de Guadaíra would coincide with the siege Hermenegild was subjected to by Leovigild's army when he was in Seville. Hence the allusion to the persecution by King Leovigild, and the fact that, although nothing is said in the inscription about where the persecution took place – since we accept the interpretation by Fernández Martínez and Gómez Pallarès that the epigraph was composed at two different times – the place where it was found (Alcalá de Guadaíra) also indicates this.²⁰¹

However, according to Gregory of Tours, Hermenegild was able to escape the siege and, gathering a group of 300 faithful followers, took refuge in the fortress at Osset (i.e. Osset, the

¹⁹⁷ HAE 335; AE 1952, 129; IHC 76; ILCV 50; CILA II, 926; HEp 11, 2001, 442; AE 2001, 1190.

¹⁹⁸ Fernández Martínez - Gómez Pallarès 2001.

¹⁹⁹ Hillgarth 1961a: 41; Fernández Martínez - Gómez Pallarès 2001: 644s.

²⁰⁰ Díaz y Díaz 1958: 266-269, in which the author establishes a parallel of this numismatic series with Reccared's actions at the Third Council of Toledo.

²⁰¹ It could be thought that it corresponds to the flight of the prince from Osset to Córdoba, but given that the inscription was plausibly placed there on the occasion of the transfer of the martyr's remains (Fernández Martínez - Gómez Pallarès 2001) it is very possible that it was taken there from Seville at the moment of burial. Possibly it is necessary to identify Alcalá de Guadaíra with the ancient Irippa (see Pascual, 2002). It is also possible that the conservation of the epigraph is linked to monastic environments outside the official interpretation of the facts imposed by the chancellery of the court of Toledo, as is the case with Valerius of Bierzo.

current San Juan de Aznalfarache, near Seville).²⁰² From Osset the prince, together with his wife and son, sought refuge in Cordoba, where he was again besieged by the royal army and forced to parley. However, when dealing with the background to the prince's surrender, the account by Gregory of Tours becomes somewhat confusing and seems to imply that it took place in the same Osset/Osset.²⁰³ The fact is that the *Turonensis* mixes here two different episodes: the taking of the fortress of Osset and the capture of Hermenegild in Cordoba. Nevertheless, John of Biclaro informs us that Leovigild, after conquering several cities and fortresses in Cordovan territory, captured the prince in Cordoba and there – and these are his exact words – ‘deprived him of the kingdom and banished him to Valencia’.²⁰⁴ Once again, the successful campaign was celebrated with the minting of a series of coins bearing a triumphant legend: CORDOBA BIS OPTINUIT.²⁰⁵ It is significant that the legend of this new issue no longer includes any reference to divine help. This is a new indication that Leovigild used religion as a mere propaganda weapon and not with the conviction of acting in defence of a creed. This is important in terms



Fig. 16. Coin of Leovigild, Cordoba mint, with legend CORDOBA BIS OPTINUIT (Heiss 1872).

²⁰² Greg. Tur. HF 6 43: ‘Habitū ergo tractatū, de multis virorum milibus trecentos veros elegit armatus et infra castrum Osset’ (Krusch - Levison 1951: 315). The number of followers must have had a special meaning for the Gothic military organisation, since *dux* Claudius also went with 300 men to confront the army sent by Guntramn against Carcassonne (Iohan. Bicl. Chron. 589? 2). In Byzantium, they constituted a unit called *tagma* or *numerus*, in front of which was a *tribunus*. García Moreno assumes that it is an elite cavalry corps composed of warriors entrusted to Hermenegild (2008: 155 n. 405).

²⁰³ Greg. Tur. 5 38: ‘Herminigildus vero, vocatis Grecis, contra patrem egreditur, relicta in urbe coniuge sua. Cumque Leuvichildus ex adverso veniret, relictus a solacio, cum viderit nihil se praevalere posse, ecclesiam, qui erat propinquam, expetiit...’ (Krusch - Levison 1951: 245); ‘Et accedens ad locum [Osset], viros proteruit castrumque conbusit, sicut iam superius memoratum est... Leuvichildus vero filium suum Herminichildum coepit et sicum usque Toletum adduxit, condemnans eum exilio...’ (Krusch - Levison 1951: 316).

²⁰⁴ Ioh. Bicl. Chron. a. 584.3: ‘Leovegildus rex filio Hermenegildo ad rem publicam commigrante Hispalim pugnando ingreditur, civitates et castella, quas filius occupaverat, cepit et non multo post memoratum filium in Cordubensi urbe comprehendit et regno privatam in exilium Valentiam mittit’ (Mommsen 1894: 217).

²⁰⁵ Miles 1952: 104-106; Thompson 1985: 88s [= 1966: 72]. The first conquest took place in 572 CE, when Leovigild put an end to the city's de facto independence.

of understand the personal character of the monarch.²⁰⁶

At that time Cordoba was undoubtedly the most flourishing city in Baetica. The ancient Augustan city had an area of c. 78 ha, which increased even more in the Flavian era. In the 4th century, during the reign of Diocletian, several members of the local Christian community suffered martyrdom in the city, which later gave rise to the construction of martyrial spaces. Archaeology so far has only been able to document the one dedicated to St Acisclus. Subsequently the city retracts towards the old Augustan perimeter, although overflowing it in some areas. From then on, the axis of the city will gravitate towards the river, at that time navigable, where it is possible to suppose the presence of a castellum attached to the southern angle of the wall, in which Hermenegild could have entrenched himself.²⁰⁷

The prince's flight to Cordoba was a desperate and doomed move. It has already been commented on that it is very possible that a second army corps under the command of Reccared had left from Toledo towards that city, via the current provinces of Toledo and Ciudad Real, to cut off Hermenegild's rear. This route was, since the times of Teudis, important militarily, as evidenced by the site of Los Hitos in Arisgotas. In this way, Hermenegild would be trapped between two armies – Reccared's and the one pursuing him from Seville – and, unable to resist further, was forced to parley under unfavourable conditions.

Gregory of Tours adds important details to the brief news of the prince's surrender offered by John of Biclaro. According to the Bishop of Tours, while Hermenegild was besieged:

'Leovigild sent him messengers, saying: "Come to me, because we must talk together". But he said: "I will not go, because you are angry with me because I am Catholic". The king, having given the emperor's prefect thirty thousand gold solidi to withdraw his help from his son, marched against him with an army. Hermenegild, after having asked for help from the Greeks, went out to go against his father, leaving his wife in the city. Leovigild advanced against him, and he was abandoned by his supporters, thus seeing that he could not win, took refuge in a neighbouring church and said: "Let my father not march on me, because it is not allowed for a father to kill his son, nor for a son to kill his father". When Leovigild knew this, he sent his brother [Reccared], who told him that his father would not strip him of his dignity, and said: "Come and prostrate yourself at the feet of our father, and he will forgive you everything". But he asked that his father come to get him; and when he arrived, he knelt at his feet. The king took him and kissed him and, flattering him with kind words, took him to his camp; and then, forgetting his oath, he signalled to his own, who, taking him, stripped him of his clothes and dressed him in vile garments; and upon returning to Toledo, the king took his servants [*latispuer*]; he sent him into exile with a single page boy [*puerolo*].²⁰⁸

²⁰⁶ Hillgarth 1961a: 37.

²⁰⁷ Sánchez Ramos 2014: 70 ff.

²⁰⁸ Greg. Tur. 5 38: '*Haec audiens Leuvichildus, misit ad eum fratrem eius; qui, data sacramenta ne humiliaretur, ait: "Tu ipse accede et prosternere pedibus patris nostri, et omnia indulget tibi. A tulle proposcit vocare patrem suum; quo ingrediente, prostravit se ad pedes illius. Ille vere adpraehensum osculavit eum et blandis sermonibus delinitum duxit ad castra, oblitusque sacramenti, inuit suis et adpraehensum spoliavit eum ab indumentis suis induitque illum veste vile; regressusque ad urbem Tolidum, ab latispueris eius, misit eum in exilio cum uno tantum puerolo'* (Arndt - Kusch 1951: 245). The act of stripping the prince of his royal robes symbolised the removal of royal dignity: Barroso - Morín - Velázquez 2008: 492. Cf. the case

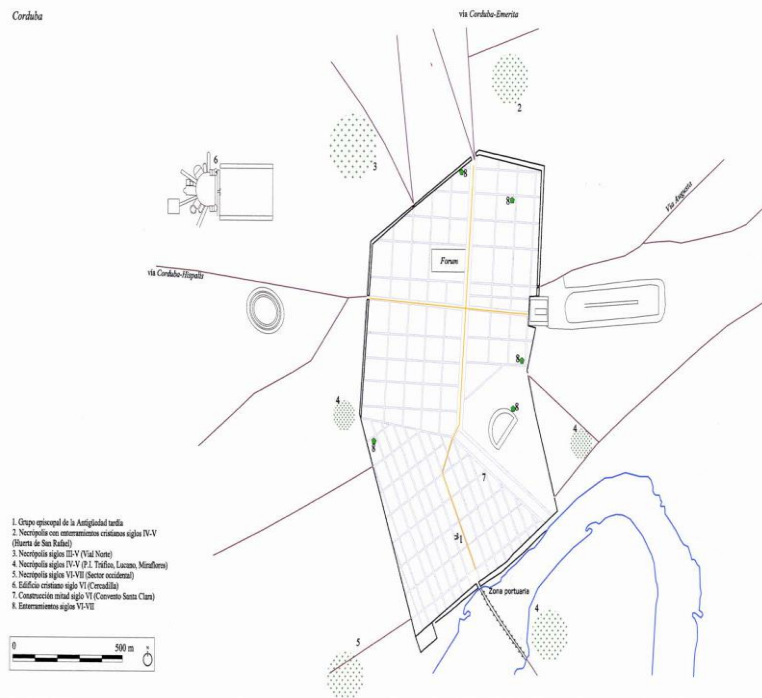


Fig. 17. Sketch of the city of Cordoba in the Visigothic era (Sánchez Ramos 2014).

Reccemund (961 CE), assumes that the Cordovan basilica of St Acisclus was located in the neighbourhood of the parchment manufacturers, next to the Gate of Seville.²¹¹ But, as García Moreno indicates, this is not at all conclusive since the same author mentions another different church that bore the appellation of *carceratorium* (or ‘of the prisoners’). In fact, the Mozarabic Calendar affirms that in Cordoba and its surroundings there were three sanctuaries where the memory of the martyr was honoured, one only sheltering the saint’s tomb.²¹² This martyr basilica should have been located next to the Cercadilla complex so that it partially took advantage of the late Imperial structures, serving as a residential complex and fortress with an attached martyr sanctuary.²¹³ The martyr basilica of St Acisclus would have also been the same

of the usurper Paulus and Wamba in HWR 20: *‘Tunc omnimoda desperatione permotus, regalia indumenta, quae tyrannidis ambitione potius quam ordine praeunte perceperat, tabefactus deposuit’* (Levison 1910: 518). On the other hand, the payment of 30,000 *solidi* made to the Byzantines must be put in relation to the financial needs of Emperor Maurice, who had to pay the Neustrian Franks 50,000 *solidi* for their intervention against the Longobards. See Vallejo Girvés 2012: 253. For the meaning that must be given to the terms *latispueris* and *puerolo* in this passage, see *infra*. n. 220.

²⁰⁹ García Moreno 1991: 279; 1995: 868.

²¹⁰ Sánchez Ramos 2014: 73 (*Hispalis*), 70 (*Cordoba*).

²¹¹ Marfil 2000: 122.

²¹² November XVIII: *‘In ipso est christianis festum Aciscli... Et sepultura ejus est in ecclesia carceratorium, et per illud nominatur ecclesia. Et festum ejus est in ecclesiam facientum pergama in Corduba et in monasterio Armilat’* (Simonet 1871: 33). Ambrosio de Morales maintained that there were two churches dedicated to the martyr in Cordoba. The monastery of Armilat was located somewhat away from the city on the banks of the River Guadalquivir (corruption of the old name). It is also cited by St Eulogius and Al-Maqqari: Simonet 1903: 334s (although, contrary to the Reccemund calendar, the author says here that the occupier was St Zoilus).

²¹³ García Moreno 2007a: 435, n. 4; 2008: 160 ff. It would be a common model at the time, as demonstrated by the parallel with Santa Leocadia of Toledo: cf. Barroso - Morín 2007a: 113-116; Barroso - Carrobes - Morín 2011: 60-68.



Fig. 18. Castro of Puig Rom (photo: M. Pfeiffer, Wiki).

one that served as a bastion to the last Gothic defenders in 711 and would later be known as the church ‘of the burned ones’.²¹⁴

The account of the prince’s surrender made by Gregory of Tours seems to point to Reccared as a collaborator of his father, although, as Hillgarth already pointed out, all responsibility falls on the king alone.²¹⁵ More interesting is it that the Bishop of Tours seems to allude to a supposed transfer of Hermenegild to the royal city. In fact, in another paragraph, where he deals with the kings of Galicia, Gregory insists on Hermenegild’s captivity being in Toledo: ‘Leovigild captured his son Hermenegild and took him with him to Toledo, then sentenced him to exile, but could not rescue his wife from the hands of the Greeks’.²¹⁶

From both accounts, it seems clear that Leovigild would have taken Hermenegild to Toledo before banishing him to Valencia and that, once in the royal city, the prince would have suffered the punishment reserved for usurpers.²¹⁷ It is possible that this was the case since the crime of *maiestas* carried with it penalties of the utmost severity for the transgressor. According to Imperial legislation, the punishment for the usurper included public humiliation in a procession that mockingly simulated the triumphal pompa of the emperors. This legal practice was followed in the cases of Argimundus (590 CE) and the dux Paulus (672 CE), but

²¹⁴ García Moreno 1991: 279; 2007: 435 ff; 2008: 160 ff. See *Chronicle of the Moor Rasis*, 3; Al-Maqqari (IV 3) states that it was a very solid construction and that it was located to the west of the city, and this is backed up by Archbishop Rodrigo Ximénez de Rada (*De reb. Hisp.* III 23); Gayangos 1850: 69 ff. The mixed temple-fortress character of this basilica explains the desecration of Agila narrated by St Isidore (HG 45; Mommsen 1894: 285).

²¹⁵ Hillgarth 1961a: 26, n. 11.

²¹⁶ Greg. Tur. 6 43: ‘*Leuvichildus vero filium suum Herminichildum coepit et sicum usque Toletu adduxit, comdenans eum exilio uxorem tamen eius a Grecis erepere non potuit*’ (Krusch - Levison 1951: 316).

²¹⁷ García Moreno 2008b: 161 ff. Remember that this interpretation is tainted by the assumption that it was Goisuintha who had instigated Hermenegild to rise up in rebellion, which is not supportable (see above).

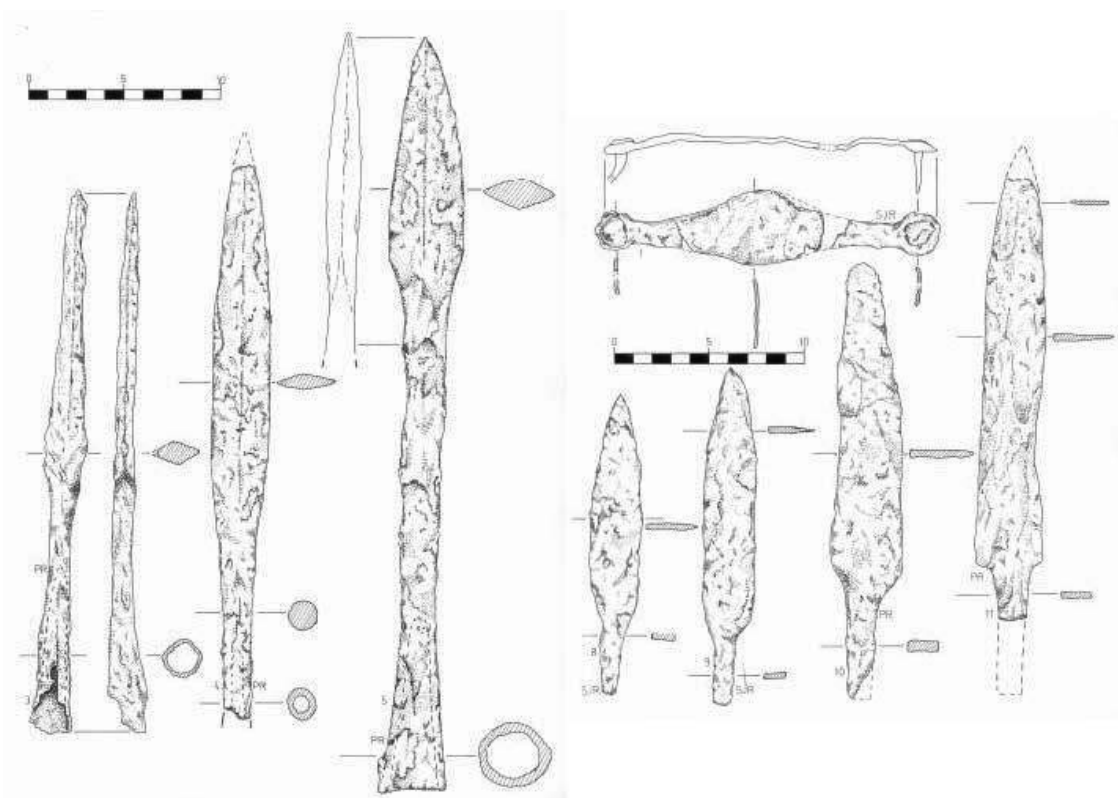


Fig. 19. Puig Rom (Rosas). Weapons (García - Vivó 2003).

there is no evidence that prior to the reign of Reccared it had been carried out in Spain, much less that this was the case for Hermenegild, where particular circumstances concur and which in any event would explain an exception to the rule.²¹⁸

Certainly, it is difficult to accept that if Hermenegild had been paraded in triumph through the streets of Toledo that no other chronicler would have echoed it. The dramatic effect produced by the image of a prince humiliated by his father in defence of the true religion would not have gone unnoticed by a chronicler such as Gregory the Great or, surely, by Gregory of Tours himself. Moreover, if one reads carefully the first account of Gregory of Tours, the most detailed of the two, we observe that the author does not explicitly state that Hermenegild was taken to Toledo, but only that, as was customary after each military campaign,²¹⁹ Leovigild returned to the royal city along with the servants (*fideles?*) of Hermenegild,²²⁰ while he sent his son into

²¹⁸ Iohan. Bicl. Chron. to. 590.3; Iul. Tol. HWR 30. In both cases they were shorn bald and, at least in the first case, the right hand was amputated. See García Moreno 1974a: no. 19 (34 ff) and no. 111 (65-68). It seems that among the Germans this punishment was concluded with the amputation of the right hand in cases of usurpation, as it was considered that the prisoner would then be incapable of leading an army and, therefore, of exercising sovereignty: Iohan. Bicl. 588? 1 (Segga) and 590? 3 (Argimundus); Isid. Hisp. HG 57 (Liuva II) (Mommsen 1894: 218-220, 290). Cf. LV VII.5.1. Thompson 1969: 102; King 1981: 110s; Barroso - Morín - Sánchez, 2015: 15-18. If Hermenegild suffered the infamous 'penalty of triumph', he would hardly have escaped having his right hand amputated, something that literary sources also do not report.

²¹⁹ This is stated in John of Biclaro when narrating the successive campaigns carried out by the monarch to restore the kingdom.

²²⁰ In our opinion, it seems clear that the 300 men who accompanied Hermenegild to Cordoba were undoubtedly the king's *fideles*. Gregory of Tours' allusion to the fact that, once Hermenegild was subdued, Leovigild took the prince's

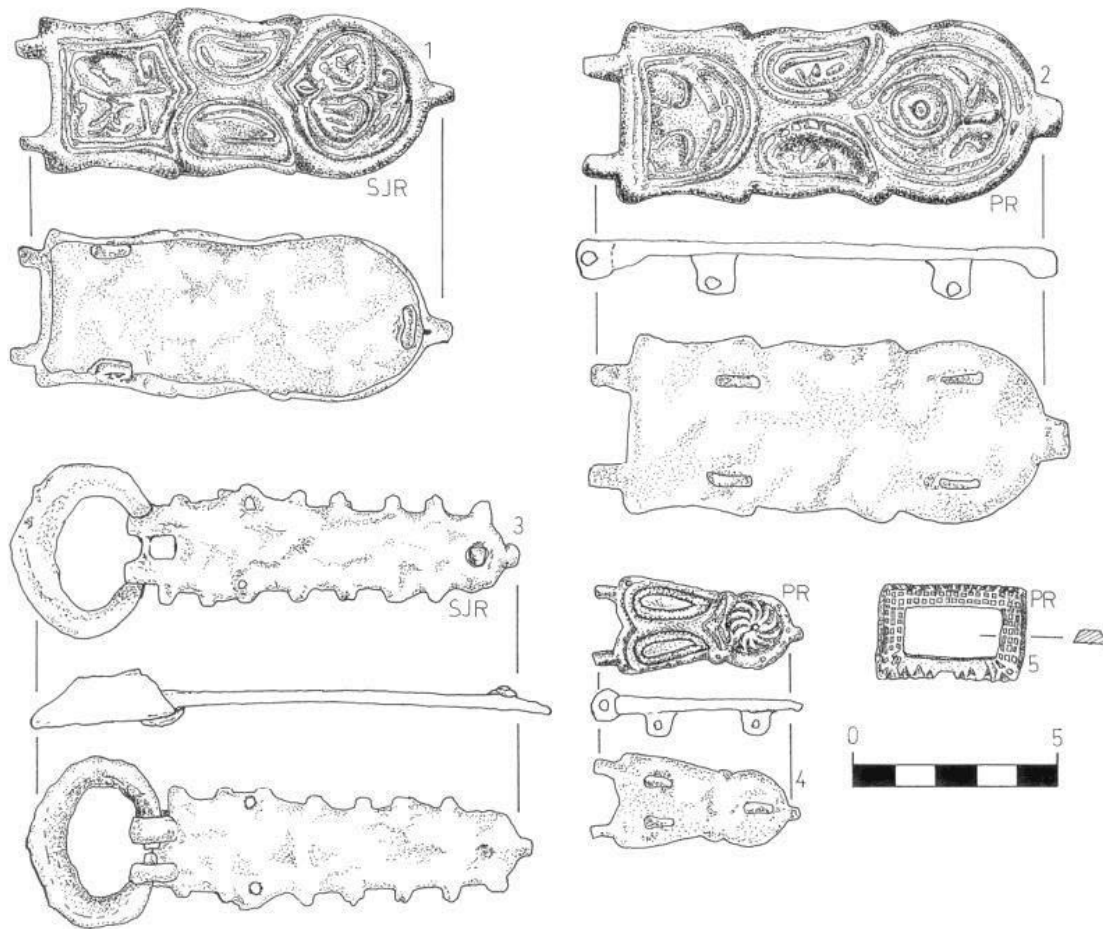


Fig. 20. Puig Rom (Rosas). Lyriform belt buckles from the 7th century (García - Vivó 2003).

exile. It is in another place, and only as a passing comment, it not being relevant to the story he is telling (i.e. Gregory is dealing with the affairs of Gallaecia), that the Turonensis reports that the king would have taken his son to Toledo.

In addition, we have already seen that John of Biclaro simply declares that the prince was banished to Valencia and that later he was transferred from that city to Tarraco, where he would be executed. The Biclarensis, therefore, does not indicate at any time that Hermenegild was exhibited in Toledo and this omission contrasts clearly with the detailed narration of the fate of the rebel Argimundus, who dared to rise against Reccared a few years later. It is possible that the silence of John of Biclaro can be explained by the desire not to delve further into a wound that was still far from being healed at the time he was writing his chronicle. But the silence on this by our main source of information may perhaps be due to the fact that, indeed, the prince had not been taken to Toledo.

servants (*latispueris*) to Toledo, while he was exiled to Valencia, must be put in relation to these *fideles*, nobles linked to Hermenegild by an oath of fidelity. They had accompanied the prince in his escape from Seville. Some of them would be forgiven and would be integrated within Leovigild's military staff, but they would be removed from the theatre of operations where the rebellion had developed.

On the other hand, based on the narration of Gregory of Tours, García Moreno assumes that once in Toledo the Gothic army would have split into two, with one part heading towards Galicia, commanded by Leovigild himself, to solve the crisis posed by the usurpation of Audeca, while the rest would march towards Valencia, led by Reccared. The latter would have taken Hermenegild with him for fear of leaving him in Toledo, where Goisuintha still enjoyed strong support among the aristocracy of the royal city.²²¹

It is a plausible interpretation based on what the Turonensis has to say, although in our opinion a somewhat complicated one and not very compatible with what we know from other sources. Actually, the transfer of the prince directly from Cordoba to Valencia fits well with what we suppose was the sequence of historical events.

Indeed, we think that part of the Visigothic army would have accompanied Leovigild to Toledo to celebrate the war triumph and prepare his campaign against the Suevi. In such a situation, taking Hermenegild to Toledo would have carried a certain risk for the prince's life, as it would

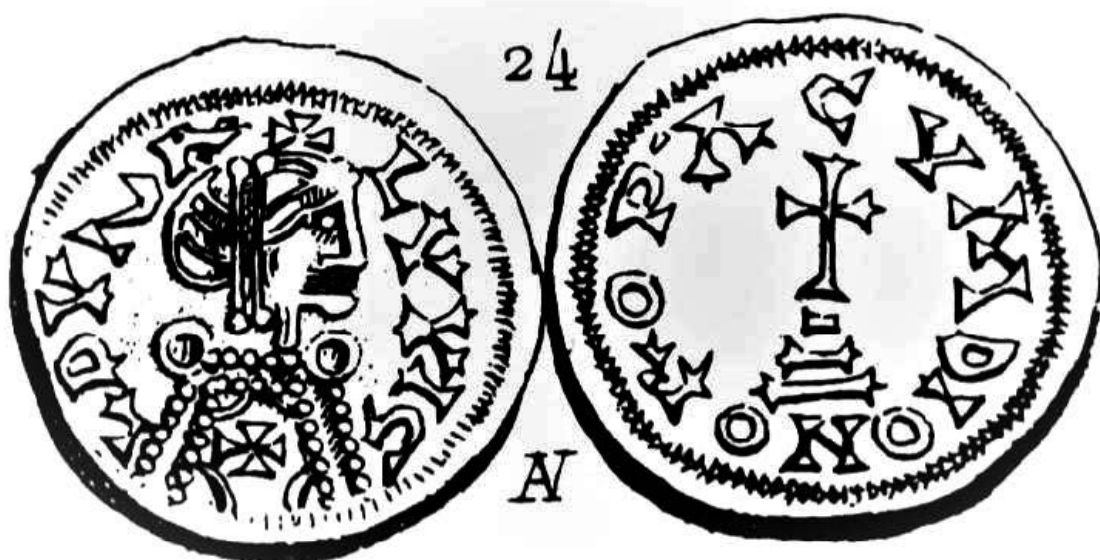


Fig. 21. Tremis of Leovigild, Roda mint, with Legend CVM DEO RODA (Heiss 1872).

leave him at the mercy of Goisuintha. With Leovigild out of Toledo and marching against the Suevi, it is difficult to think that the young Reccared could have imposed his will on the queen. As we pointed out in the presentation, we must not forget that we are dealing with a family drama. In view of the king's conduct after the surrender in Cordoba, it is evident that Leovigild did not want the prince's death: the logical thing after parading him in triumph would have been his execution, or at least amputation, not his exile. After all, Hermenegild was his firstborn and not Goisuintha's.²²²

²²¹ García Moreno 2008b: 161-165.

²²² That was the end reserved for Argimundus and his henchmen. Arguments that Paulus was forgiven by Wamba are surely not valid: by then the act of royal anointing had made royal power sacred and the tonsure was enough to prevent any future machinations of a former usurper. In a way, the tonsure was equivalent to a civil death, as Wamba himself had the opportunity to verify. Díaz y Díaz is surprised by the relative lightness of Hermenegild's punishment and suggests that Reccared would have taken him with him to Valencia (Díaz y Díaz 2004: 18).

In our opinion, it is much more feasible that the king would have left Reccared in command of part of the army in Cordoba for two important reasons: the first, to guard the deposed prince and keep him away from the court and, especially from Goisuintha; and secondly because the pressing thing at that moment was to prevent the princess Ingundis and her son Athanagild from finding refuge in the court of Brunhild. In this case, the presence of Hermenegild next to Reccared could certainly be useful for the king's interests.²²³

The imprisonment of Hermenegild in Valencia and then in Tarragona, added to the news of an attack by Childebert II on the territory of Narbonne, indicate that in Cordoba the Visigothic army would already have been divided into two forces. Following our hypothesis, the army led by Reccared would have marched directly from Cordoba to Valencia, going up the road that leads to Castulo and the Levante, and then from there, following the via Augusta, would have gone up to Tarragona.²²⁴ In this situation, the issuance of currency with a triumphant legend in Rosas, as J.N. Hillgarth has defended with good arguments, is better understood. Rosas is a mint that must be related to the important fort of Puig Rom, a strategic point for the control of the strata francina (the road to France), and a site that has provided abundant archaeological material, including a considerable quantity of weapons.²²⁵ Puig Rom is located on top of a hill that dominates the city of Rosas, and featured a circumvallation wall equipped with a means of access protected by flanking towers. The excavations carried out at the site, directed by L. Pericot and P. de Palol in the 1940s, documented important living structures and provided material from the 7th-8th centuries that, as indicated, include a good number of weapons and military equipment (daggers, knives, shield handles, spear and javelin points, axes, ferrules, arrow points, elements of horse harness, etc.). Not far from Puig Rom is the archaeological site of San Julià de Ramis, which, like the former, has also provided abundant military equipment from the period. Both sites indicate the strategic importance that this road had in relation to the border with the Franks.²²⁶

Furthermore, within that same context of any persecution of Ingundis and Athanagild, we must include the news transmitted by Gregory of Tours of the attack carried out by Visigothic troops on a monastery dedicated to St Martin between Sagunto and Cartagena.²²⁷ This is an interesting

²²³ Goffart 1957: 107 ff; García Moreno 1991: 278-280; 2008: 162-168; Vallejo Girvés 2012: 252-256.

²²⁴ Iohan. Bicl. Chron. a. 584? 3: '*Leovegildus rex filio Hermenegildo ad rem publicam commigrante Hispalim pugnando ingreditur, civitates et castella, quas filius occupaverat, cepit et non multo post memoratum filium in Cordubensi urbe comprehendit et regno privatum in exilium Valentiam mittit*' 585?4: '*Franci Galliam Narbonensem occupare cupientes cum exercitu ingressi. in quorum congressionem Leovegildus Reccaredum filium obviam mittens et Francorum est ab eo repulsus exercitus et provincia Galliae ab eorum est infestatione liberata. castra vero duo cum nimia hominum multitudine unum pace, alium bello occupat. castrum vero qui Hodierno vocatur tutissimus valde in ripa Rhodani fluminis ponitur, quod Reccaredus rex fortissima pugna aggressus obtinuit et victor ad patrem patriamque redit*' (Mommsen 1894: 217).

²²⁵ Mateu y Llopis 1946: 12 ff; Hillgarth 1961a: 38 ff, 46 [= 1966: 501-503]. García Moreno (2008: 123) assumes that this issue has to do with Hermenegild's rebellion – not with this campaign of 585 CE but with a previous one carried out by Leovigild as soon as Hermenegild's uprising began (in which case, as we have said above, the king would have acted in a manner similar to Wamba against Paulus). Either of the two options seems equally possible to us and it is a problem that archaeologists and numismatists will have to tackle, although today we think Hillgarth's interpretation is more accurate. In any case, the news of Hermenegild's captivity in Tarragona supports the itinerary of Reccared's army proposed here.

²²⁶ García - Vivó 2003.

²²⁷ Greg. Tur. In gloria confes. 12: '*In Hispaniis autem nuper factum cognovi. Cum Leuvioldus rex contra filium suum ambularet, atque exercitus eius, ut adsolet, graviter loca sancta concuteret, monasterium erat Sancti Martini inter Sagonthum atque Cartaginem Spartariam. Audientes autem monachi, quod hic exercitus ad locum illum deberet accedere, fugam ineunt et se,*

development because no similar action has been recorded since the times of Agila. Even when Hermenegild took refuge in a church in Cordoba, Leovigild did not order the temple to be assaulted, but, on the contrary, the king agreed to enter into negotiations with the prince. The attack on a monastery, even if it were a Catholic one, is undoubtedly an exceptional event in the history of Leovigild's reign (as evidenced by the fact that the king himself took care to compensate the monks later) and can only be related to the imperative to capture the princess Ingundis and her son Athanagild.²²⁸

As noted, the *Turonensis* places the monastery of St Martin on the Augusta route 'between Saguntum and Carthago Spartaria'. M. Vallejo Girvés proposed to locate it either on the island of Portitxol, on the cape of San Martín, near Denia, or on the Island of Cullera.²²⁹ For our part, elsewhere we have argued that this monastery must have been the site of El Monastil de Elda, the future episcopal seat of Elota. As we have seen at Puig Rom and San Julià de Ramis, El Monastil is also a site located on an elevation. In fact, it is an enclave on a fortified hill with a small acropolis. Archaeological excavations have documented a city of some relevance in the area between the 5th-7th centuries that had a walled enclosure equipped with two monumental gates, prestigious buildings, including a rectangular church with a horseshoe-shaped apse and an adjoining baptismal area. Its location on a fortified hill, and on the very border of the Byzantine domain, made this site a prominent one in the Byzantine defensive system of the area, as it would also later be for the Visigothic military when dealing with *Ilici* (Elche). Its use as a *ribāṭ* in the Arab period also speaks for its strategic value.²³⁰

From Elota/Elda, Reccared's army would march towards Valentia (Valencia), the place of exile of the prince. It is possible that Hermenegild was guarded not in Valencia itself, a city with a predominantly Catholic population, where his cause could have many sympathisers and where a Byzantine attack would be feasible, given the superiority of the imperial navy, but in the nearby site of Valencia *la Vella* ('Old Valencia'), a *castrum* very suitable for accommodating an army on campaign. The *castrum* of Valencia *la Vella* is located in Ribarroja de Turia, c. 15 km from the city of Valencia, but inland, and was sufficiently sheltered, therefore, from a possible attack by Imperial forces. It is again a *castellum*-type settlement on a rise in the terrain and with at least one walled enclosure flanked by square towers (3 m x 3 m in plan), and allowing control and quick access to Valencia. The various archaeological interventions at the site have provided late-chronology material (ARS ceramics, Late Eastern amphorae, Late Roman

relicto abbate sene, in insulam maris abscondunt. Advenientibus autem Gothis ac diripientibus res monasterii, quae sine custode remanserant, abbatem senio incurvatum, sed sanctitate erectum offendunt. Extractoque unus gladio, quasi amputaturus cervicem eius, resupinus ruit ac spiritum exalavit. Reliqui vero haec videntes, timore perterriti fugierunt. Quod cum regi nuntiatum fuisset, cum testificatione praecepit omnia quae ablata fuerant monasterio restaurari ' (Krusch 1885: 305). Vallejo Girvés 2012: 255 ff. An attempt has been made to identify this monastery with a foundation of Bishop Justinian in honour of the martyr St Vincent: Juan - Rosselló 2003: 175-177.

²²⁸ Barroso - Morín - Sánchez 2018a: 33-41. In the case of Cordoba, if the church were, as seems very likely (see above), the martyr basilica of St Acisclus, Leovigild would undoubtedly have in mind the precedent of the desecration of Agila and its disastrous end (Isid. Hisp. HG 45; Mommsen 1894: 285). Let us remember in passing that, given the aspect of a religious war that the conflict had acquired, Leovigild was not interested in this kind of sacrilegious action, and even less so when the king himself appeared in public honouring Catholic sanctuaries. An action of this type would be contrary to the policy of apparent tolerance towards Catholics (see above).

²²⁹ Vallejo Girvés 2012: 255 ff.

²³⁰ Poveda 1991; 2007; Peidro 2008a; Barroso - Morín - Sánchez 2018a: 33-41.



Fig. 22. Aerial view of the El Monastil (Elda) (photo: J.M. Martínez Lorenzo, Wiki).

unguentaria, etc.) that allow it to be dated towards the end of the 6th century CE. Unlike the nearby site of Pla de Nadal – a residential villa of aulic type that would have to be related to the almost legendary figure of the *dux* Theodomir – Valencia la Vella, in the words of M. Rosselló, had an eminently military functionality and would constitute a significant link in the military infrastructure created by the Visigoths for the defence and control of the territory bordering Byzantine *Spania*.²³¹

However, despite all the efforts deployed, Reccared did not achieve his goal of capturing Ingundis and Athanagild. On their way to France, both had been captured by Imperial troops and sent to Constantinople. If, as we think, the military action on the monastery of St Martin was carried out in Elota (Elda, Alicante), and under the circumstances described above, it is possible that the princess and the infant had been moved to the Portus Ilicitanus (Santa Pola) for their onward transfer to Byzantium. Ingundis died in 584 at some point on the journey (i.e. in Sicily, if we believe Paulus the Deacon, or in North Africa, according to the version of Gregory of Tours). Athanagild, on the other hand, managed to survive and arrive safely at the court of

²³¹ Rosselló 1996; Ribera - Rosselló 2009; Barroso - Morín - Sánchez 2018a: 148-182. It is currently being excavated under the direction of Albert Ribera. However, if it were Valencia itself, the place of imprisonment would undoubtedly have been the prison of St Vincent, a building near the cathedral and associated with the memory of the martyr from Huesca.

the basileus, where he was held as a hostage. For a few years the emperor used the infant as a diplomatic weapon against the court of Metz.²³²

With Ingundis and the little Athanagild out of the political scene, and the threat of a powerful Frankish army heading towards the Narbonensis, all the focus of attention now fell on the figure of Hermenegild. John of Biclaro tersely gives the news of his death in the city of Tarragona at the hands of a certain Sisbert and immediately afterwards he informs of the entry of the Frankish army into the Narbonensis, where it is defeated by Reccared.²³³ The triumph over the Franks was celebrated with a new coinage with the legend NARBONA FELIX. It is likely that Reccared attributed his victory to the mediation of the martyr Felix of Gerona and that this issue of currency plays with the double meaning of the phrase; this would explain the donation by the prince of a crown to the church of the martyr in this city.²³⁴ As for Sisbert, little more is known. Once King Leovigild had died, and with Reccared already on the throne of the Goths, John of Biclaro barely informs us that Hermenegild's executioner dies a vile death (*morte turpissima*). From the context and the expression used it is logical to suppose that Sisbert was executed.²³⁵

The death of Sisbert shortly after the enthronement of Reccared led to the suspicion that he would have been directly involved in the tragic end of Hermenegild. It is evident that Reccared was the one who gained the most from Hermenegild's death, but this is not proof of his direct involvement in the events.²³⁶ Once again, the exceptional political situation experienced in the Gothic kingdom after the conversion would have hidden the participation of Reccared in the

²³² Paul. Diac. HL 3 21: '*Ingundis vero post mariti et martyris funus de Hispanis fugiens, dum Gallias repedare vellet, in manus militum incidens, qui in limite adversum Hispanos Gotthos residebant, cum parvo filio capta atque in Siciliam ducta est ibique diem clausit extremum. Filius vero eius imperatori Mauricio Constantinopolim est transmissus*' (Bethmann - Waitz 1878: 103 ff). See Görres 1907; Goubert 1944; Goffart 1957: 107 ff; Vázquez de Parga 1973: 34 ff; Rouche 1986: 106; García Moreno 2008b: 161-168; Vallejo Girvés 2012: 255-262. An allusion by Venantius Fortunatus (Carm. 10 8 20-25) reports that he must have died around 586. That same year King Leovigild sent an embassy to the court of Metz to request peace. Greg. Tur. Hist. 8 28: '*Igitur, ut saepius diximus, Ingundis a viro cum imperatoris exercitu derelicta, dum ad ipsum principem cum filio parvulo duceretur, in Africa. defuncta est et sepulta. Leuvichildus vero Herminichildum filium suum, quem antedicta mulier habuit, morti tradedit. Quibus de causis commotus Gunthchramnus rex, exercitum in Hispaniis distinat, scilicet ut prius Septimaniam, quae adhuc infra Galliarum terminum habetur, eius dominatione subderint et sic in antea proficiscerentur. Dum autem hic exercitus moveretur, indecolum cum nescio quibus hominibus rusticis est repertum. Quem et Gunthchramno rege legendum miserunt, hoc modo, quasi Leuvichildus ad Fredegundem scriberet, ut quocumque ingenio exercitum illuc ire prohiberet...*' (Krusch - Levison 1951: 390 ff).

²³³ Iohan. Bicl. Chron. a. 585? 3: '*Hermenegildus in urbe Tarraconensi a Sisberto interficitur*' 585? 4: '*Franci Galliam Narbonensem occupare cupientes cum exercitu ingressi, in quorum congressionem Leovegildus Reccaredum filium obviam mittens et Francorum est ab eo repulsus exercitus et provincia Galliae ab eorum est infestatione liberata. castra vero duo cum nimia hominum multitudine unum pace, alium bello occupat. castrum vero qui Hodierno vocatur tutissimus valde in ripa Rhodani fluminis ponitur, quod Reccaredus rex fortissima pugna aggressus obtinuit et victor ad patrem patriamque redit*' (Mommsen 1894: 217).

²³⁴ García Moreno 2015: 25, n. 23. The crown would later be used by dux Paulus to give a tinge of legality to his attempted usurpation of the throne (HWR 26).

²³⁵ Iohan. Bicl. Chron. a. 587? 4: '*Sisbertus interfector Hermenegildi morte turpissima perimitur*' (Mommsen 1894: 218). This Sisbert was probably the count in charge of the city of Tarraco and an agent of Gosuintha, hence his execution. Sisbert's death must be included within the general context of political instability that followed Reccared's enthronement.

²³⁶ García Moreno 1991: 281 ff; 2008: 166 ff.



Fig. 23. Valencia la Vella. Remains of the ancient walls.

death of Hermenegild, and that, on the contrary, all the blame would fall on the Arian Leovigild. Once again, the reflection made by J.N. Hillgarth on these events is interesting:

‘Apart from the reasons indicated, John of Biclaro, also, wrote during the reign of Reccared. He had to remember the fact that Reccared had sided with his father during Hermenegild’s rebellion and also remember the other fact, generally forgotten, that the peaceful succession and reign of Reccared depended on the previous disappearance of Hermenegild from the scene the year before Leovigild died.’²³⁷

Certainly, the king would bear a greater responsibility in the execution of the prince, as a well-informed Gregory the Great affirms.²³⁸ Gregory of Tours also casually affirms that Leovigild was the one who ordered Hermenegild’s death in a section of text whereby he intends to justify a course of punishment meted out by King Guntram against Septimania.²³⁹ It is even possible that Isidore of Seville alludes to this episode and the exile of Masona; and John of Biclaro when, speaking of Leovigild, he relates that the king ‘...was also perverse with some of his own: because those he saw were more noble and powerful, he beheaded or outlawed them and led them into exile’.²⁴⁰

²³⁷ Hillgarth 1961a: 25 ff. And the author continues: ‘With this I do not want to insinuate that Reccared was responsible for Hermenegild’s death. The responsibility lies with Leovigild (...), but it is obvious today, and it should have been even more so then, that it was Reccared who earned more than anyone else by this event. With Hermenegild alive, the conversion of Reccared and that of his people would have been much more difficult’ (Hillgarth 1961: 26, n. 11).

²³⁸ Let us remember that his sources were ‘*gentes qui ab Hispaniarum partibus veniunt*’, as well as probably that of his friend Leander: Vázquez de Parga 1973: 13; Vilella 1991: 170.

²³⁹ Greg. Tur. 8 28: (cit. n. 232).

²⁴⁰ Isid. Hisp. HG 51. Cit. supra n. 92. If we think that the union of Leovigild and Goisuintha had sealed an alliance between the two conflicting factions of the Gothic aristocracy then this text would not make much sense. Nor do we have any news of dissension among the nobility during his reign, so it is logical to assume that the passage in question refers to what happened during Hermenegild’s rebellion, as well as the exile of personalities such as Masona and John of Biclaro.

Really, the testimony of Pope Gregory in his *Dialogi* provides some important clues we find it interesting to point out to help us better understand the difficult question of the responsibility for the prince's death, a question that has deeply divided historiography for a very long time.²⁴¹

Firstly, Pope Gregory emphasises the remorse that overcame King Leovigild after the execution of Hermenegild; remorse that would have even led him to consider the idea of a personal conversion to the Catholic faith and the abandonment of the *fides gothica* that he had been so keen to promote. The testimony of Pope Gregory agrees with that of Gregory of Tours, in which the latter indicates that Leovigild would have regretted the death of his firstborn and would have converted to Catholicism on his deathbed.²⁴²

Secondly, and this deserves to be underlined, Pope Gregory points out that if Leovigild finally did not dare to take the definitive step towards conversion, it was more out of fear of his people (*sed gentis suae timore perterritus*) than out of his own conviction. However, that the king was persuaded of the true orthodoxy is made clear, according to Gregory the Great, by the monarch's desire for Leander – the same individual actively participating in Hermenegild's conversion and in the alliance with the emperor – to remain as Reccared's tutor. This testimony also agrees with Leander's rapid return to Spain to take care of the negotiations that culminated in the conversion of the Goths in 589. Therefore, it seems evident that Pope Gregory generalises an opinion trend that by no means can be identified with the majority sentiment among the Goths. On the contrary, it has already been commented on that the problem posed by Hermenegild's conversion was to make visible an issue that had been apparent for some time among the upper classes of Gothic society, i.e. the conversion to Catholicism of an important sector of the nobility. The abandonment of Arianism was taking place especially among those Goths who inhabited urban environments and it must have occurred more frequently in the most culturally developed areas, notably Baetica and Lusitania, where important aristocratic contingents had long been established.²⁴³ The weak resistance shown by the Arians after Reccared's conversion – practically restricted to Merida and Toledo and always in very minority

²⁴¹ Greg. I, Dial. 3 31: 'Quem <Hermenegildum> pater arianus, ut ad eandem haeresim rediret, et praemiis suadere, et nimis terrere conatus est. Cumque ille constantissime responderet numquam se veram fidem posse relinquere, quam semel agnovisset, iratus pater eum privavit regno, rebusque exspoliavit omnibus. Cumque nec sic virtutem mentis illius emollire valuisset, in arcta illum custodia concludens, collum manusque illius ferro ligavit... superveniente autem paschalis festivitatis die, intempestae noctis silentio ad eum perfidus pater arianum episcopum misit, ut ex eius manu sacrilegae consecrationis communionem perciperet, atque per hoc ad patris gratiam redire mereretur. Sed vir Deo deditus ariano episcopo venienti exporbravit, ut debuit eiusque ad se perfidiam dignis increpationibus repulit... Ad se itaque reverso episcopo, arianus pater infremuit, statimque suos apparitores misit cui constantissimum confessorem Dei illic ubi iacebat occiderent, quod et factum est. Nam mox ut ingressi sunt, securem cerebro eius infigentes, vitam corporis abstulerunt... Nam coepit in nocturno silentio psalmodiae cantus ad corpus ejusdem regis et martyris audiri; atque ideo veraciter regis, quia et martyris... Pater ver perfidus et parricida commotus poenitentia, hoc fecisse se doluit, nec tamen usque ad obtinendam salutem. Nam quia vera esset catholica fides agnovit, sed gentis suae timore perterritus, ad hanc pervenire non meruit. Qui oborta aegritudine ad extrema perductus, Leandro episcopo, quem prius vehementer afflixerat, Reccaredum regem filium, quem in sua haeresi relinquebat, commendare curavit, ut in ipso quoque talia faceret, qualia et in fratre illius suis cohortationibus fecisset. Qua commendatione expleta defunctus est. Post cujus mortem Reccaredus rex non patrem perfidum, sed fratrem martyrem sequens, ab Arianae haereseos pravitate conversus est, totamque Visigothorum gente ita ad veram perduxit fidem...' (PL 77 289-294; Juan Galán 2010: 184).

²⁴² Greg. Tur. HF 8 46: 'Post haec Leuvigildus rex Hispanorum aegrotare coepit, sed, ut quidam adserunt, poenitentiam pro errore heretico agens et obstans, ne huic heresi quisquam repperiretur consentaneus, in legem catholicam transit, ac per septem dies in fletu perdurans pro his quae contra Deum iniquae molitus est, spiritum exalant' (Krusch - Levison 1951: 411 ff).

²⁴³ García Moreno 2009.

environments and close to Goisuintha – is proof of the defection of the Visigothic nobility from what was considered *fides gothica*.²⁴⁴

On the other hand, and unlike Goisuintha, Leovigild was never an Arian fanatic. On the contrary, the king seems to have seen in religion a mere instrument useful to the service of political power. For Leovigild, religion and faith, whether Arian or Macedonian, was nothing more than the ideological component that would allow the Gothic people to be identified from the hated Franks and Byzantines. His irenic policy and the continuous concessions to the Catholic side do not seem to have awakened a vigorous opposition on the part of the Visigoths who were still Arians, which is a sure indication of the lack of enthusiasm that the *fides gothica* produced among the



Fig. 24. Toledo. Cathedral. Inscription of the reconsecration of the church of Santa María in catolico (Barroso - Morín 2007).

Goths themselves. In the same sense, as we have just said above, the relative tranquillity in which Reccared's conversion took place in 587 (private) and 589 (official), with little opposition from the Arian side, and this restricted to reduced power circles without popular support.²⁴⁵

We believe, therefore, that when Pope Gregory highlights Leovigild's fear of his people, he is indirectly pointing to a very specific character whose identity, perhaps for reasons of political prudence, or because he is simply generalising, it is not convenient to reveal. However, it seems obvious that this character can be none other than Queen Goisuintha, the same whom John of

²⁴⁴ Thompson 1985: 50-52 [= 1966: 101-104]. Cf. Barroso 2018: 157 ff.

²⁴⁵ We have analysed this matter in relation to the Argimundus rebellion: Barroso - Morín - Sánchez 2015.



Fig. 25. Valencia. Prison of St Vicent.

Biclaro characterises as ‘always an enemy of the Catholics’ and whom the *Turonensis* directly holds responsible for the persecution of the Catholics ordered by Leovigild.²⁴⁶

In conclusion, and according to what has been exposed above, it is easy to deduce that behind all this complex issue (rebellion, religious crisis, and death of the prince) is hidden the hand of Goisuintha and the deep rejection the queen maintained until her death towards everything Catholic. Within this context, the *factioe Gosuinthae* as a trigger for the prince’s rebellion, and the surprising defensive character that it had while the conflict lasted, is better understood. In our opinion, this would also explain the fact that, after Hermenegild’s surrender in Cordoba, Leovigild entrusted Reccared with the custody of his brother and why the king did not take him with him to Toledo, where Goisuintha’s influence and power were too strong and the danger to the prince’s life too evident. Leovigild’s final repentance and his approach to Catholic orthodoxy – which implies an explicit recognition of the failure of his religious policy – bring to light the deep family drama that hides the tragic story of Hermenegild and which undoubtedly on a personal level affected its main protagonists: Leovigild himself and the princes Hermenegild and Reccared. And so, when the Spanish chroniclers, John of Biclaro and Isidore of Seville, decide to tell the story of Hermenegild, already with Reccared occupying the Toledo throne, they will not be able to avoid the personal implications that each of the actions of their

²⁴⁶ Iohan. Bicl. Chron. to. 589? 1: ‘Gosuintha uero catholicis semper infesta’ (Mommsen 1894: 218). Greg. Tur. HF 5 38: ‘Caput quoque huius sceleris Gosuintha fuit...’ (Krusch - Levison 1951: 244). Although some authors reject Gregory the Great’s narrative as part of the hagiographic genre, it does not seem appropriate to dismiss the Pope’s testimony, especially because he must have had first-hand information through his friendship with St Leander and because he does not show special sympathy for King Leovigild, whom he describes as perfidious, a parricide, and heretic.

protagonists entailed, i.e. Hermenegild's usurpation, the propagation of heresy ordered by Leovigild, and the execution of the prince at the hands of a henchman at the service of Reccared.²⁴⁷ In this complex political context, it should not be surprising that the most complete account of Hermenegild's death has been transmitted to us by a foreign author, Pope Gregory the Great, in his *Dialogi*, a work dedicated to glossing the lives of saints for a not particularly cultured audience.²⁴⁸ Gregory's narration is also the source of later authors, e.g. the Venerable Bede, from where it passed to Florus of Lyon and to the medieval martyrologies.²⁴⁹

According to Gregory the Great, once the prince's surrender has taken place, Leovigild will have tried to win over his son by gifts and threats; however, Hermenegild remained firm and would have refused to apostatise from the Catholic faith. Faced with the prince's perseverance, Leovigild punished him by depriving him of the kingdom and stripping him of his possessions. Gregory the Great does not provide any data that allows this passage to be placed in a specific context, since it is an hagiographic, not historical, account, but it is possible that the pope is alluding here to the parley the king had with his son before his surrender in Cordoba. Later, due to Hermenegild's unshakeable decision not to abjure the Catholic faith, the king would have had him sent to a dungeon, groaning under chains. Nevertheless, the monarch's attempts to achieve Hermenegild's abjuration did not cease. Thus, on the eve of Easter, the king sent an Arian bishop to give him communion, but Hermenegild rejected the false Eucharist. When he learned of this, Leovigild flew into a rage and ordered him to be executed. According to Pope Gregory, the young prince would have been beheaded with a *segur* or axe within the same dungeon he was being held captive.²⁵⁰

One problem posed by this account is the exact date of Hermenegild's death. Gregory the Great states that the prince's beheading would have taken place in the silence of the late hours on Easter eve. For his part, John of Biclaro, who knew the story first hand, and was an exile himself in Barcelona, not far from the place of martyrdom, reports that Hermenegild's death was in the 17th year of Leovigild's reign, a date that corresponds to the year 585 CE. The Martyrologies, however, unanimously place the *dies natalis* on April 13. The problem here is that in 585 Easter fell on March 25 and not April 14, which corresponds to Easter of the year 586.²⁵¹

Actually, the question of this discrepancy can be better understood considering the chronological problems that John of Biclaro's chronicle raise, i.e. from the custom of dating events by years of reign which rarely coincide with the natural year.²⁵² In his day, Juan de Mariana maintained that Hermenegild's death occurred on April 13, 586. The same author, to confirm the chronology of Leovigild's death, used, among other arguments, the famous

²⁴⁷ In fact, John of Biclaro narrates the death of Sisbert (a. 587.4) after that of Leovigild (a. 587.2) and just before the private conversion of Reccared (a. 587.5). The question arises as to whether Sisbert's execution was Leovigild's last wish or Reccared's first government action.

²⁴⁸ Vilella 1991; Laham 2013.

²⁴⁹ García Villada 1932: 54 ff.

²⁵⁰ Greg. I, Dial. 3 31 (ed. PL 77 289-293; Juan Galán 2010: 184). Cit. en n. 240.

²⁵¹ Flórez, ES 6 (1859: 409-411); Mariana 1785: 533-547.

²⁵² Campos 1960: 65.

inscription of consecration *in catolico* of the basilica of Santa María de Toledo, although without fully realising the importance that, in our opinion, this epigraph has in terms of providing the exact day of St Hermenegild's martyrdom.²⁵³

The epigraph in question was carved on a column found by Juan Bautista Pérez in the monastery of San Juan de la Penitencia in 1591, and then moved by order of Cardinal Gaspar de Quiroga to the cloister of the cathedral of Toledo. The cardinal himself commissioned a copy of the inscription to be placed on the pedestal that holds the original column.²⁵⁴ For a time, there were doubts as to the authenticity of this inscription, as only the copy commissioned by Cardinal Quiroga, not the original, was known, although previously I. Velázquez Soriano had provided good arguments in favour of its authenticity. In reality, the original epigraph had always been preserved intact as part of the same monument in the cloister's eastern corridor that uses Quiroga's copy as a pedestal, although the wear to the piece made it pass unnoticed for years.²⁵⁵

The inscription informs of the consecration *in catolico* of the church of Santa María. This consecration would have taken place on the 'first day', on the *ides* of April 'of the first year of the joyful reign of our most glorious lord King Flavius Reccared, in the era 625 (587 CE)':

(CRUX) IN NOMINE D(OMI)NI CONSECRATA ECLESIA S(AN)C(T)E MARIE / IN CATOLICO DIE PRIM[O] / IDUS
A[P]RILIS ANNO FE[LI]CITER PRIMO REGNI D(OMI)NI / NOSTRI GLORIOSISSIMI FL(AU)II / RECCARED[I]R]EGIS ERA
/ DCXXXV

A question raised by the epigraph house in Toledo cathedral is what exactly was meant by the expression '*in catolico*'. The phrase is a *unicum* epigraphic and, therefore, there is no exact parallel of it. However, it is obvious that with the expression '*consecrata in catolico [ritus]*' an exceptional circumstance was intended to be indicated. What this was is disputed. As we have already mentioned, it has been supposed that the inscription is related to the dogmatic declaration of the synod of 580 and the confiscation of Catholic temples by King Leovigild.²⁵⁶ But this proposal must be discarded according to the chronology of the epigraph itself (587 CE) which coincides with the meeting of Reccared and the Arian bishops that preceded the official conversion of 589. Therefore, the most probable is that the epigraph corresponds to this meeting, as well as to the return of the Catholic temples, requisitioned by Leovigild, on the

²⁵³ Mariana 1785: 541-547.

²⁵⁴ The convent of San Juan de la Penitencia is in south-eastern Toledo, next to the cathedral. It was founded by Cardinal Ximénez de Cisneros to serve as a convent for nuns of the Third Order of St Francis and as a school for poor (non-noble) girls between 1511-1514 (Gómez-Menor 1971). The proximity to the *Dives Toletana* and the promoter of the work constitute clear indications of the origin of the column, which must have been taken there, along with the rubble that was used to fill the hillside during the construction work of the convent.

²⁵⁵ Vives 1969 (= ICERV) suppl. 302 (= Hübner, IHC 155). Rivera 1950-1951; Canellas 1979: 277, no 33; Duval 1993: 184, 193; Martínez Tejera 1996: 83-85; Barroso - Morín 2004: 45 ff; Velázquez - Ripoll 2000: 553; cf. Barroso - Morín 2007b: 105-108; Barroso - Carrobbles - Morín 2008: 1454 ff; de Santiago 2009: 318; Velázquez 2011.

²⁵⁶ García Moreno 1983.

orders of King Reccared. We would then be facing a solemn declaration of the agreement that led to the official conversion of 589 CE.²⁵⁷

Another problem also related to the date is the meaning of the expression '*die primo*'. In this case there seems to be little doubt that, as J. Tejada y Remiro deduced in his day, and I. Velázquez later, the formula refers to 'Sunday'.²⁵⁸ This is logical, since in Visigothic times the consecrations of the temples took place obligatorily on Sunday.²⁵⁹ This means that the date of consecration of the church of Santa María must be fixed with no doubt on Sunday, April 13 of the year 587, and that the epigraph very possibly served as a colophon to the ceremonies that surrounded the meeting held by King Reccared and the Arian bishops in order to achieve the conversion of the people of the Goths. But what is truly important for our purpose is that the date of the epigraph coincides exactly with the anniversary of the prince's martyrdom, in what comes to be an implicit recognition of Hermenegild's pioneering work and, in a certain way also, a posthumous rehabilitation of his figure. In fact, it can well be said that the inscription of Santa María, with its dating on the anniversary of Hermenegild's martyrdom, constitutes a shining example of what J.J. Blunt called 'undesigned coincidences'.²⁶⁰ Perhaps the hand of St Leander and the tensions that the prince's uprising generated within the Visigothic court can be seen hidden again in this epigraph.²⁶¹

On the other hand, the last sentence of the Alcalá de Guadaira inscription ('*in cibitatem Ispalim dvcti aione*') marks the end of this whole story.²⁶² The sentence, which can be translated as '[transferred] to the city of Seville forever', probably alludes to the transfer of the prince's remains to the city that had served him as a court. According to Fernández Martínez and Gómez Pallarés, this part of the epigraph could be dated between 587 and 588.²⁶³ Both authors intuit with good logic that the transfer of the relics must have been made at the request of a rehabilitated St Leander, who, after the death of Leovigild, seems to have emerged

²⁵⁷ Velázquez 2007: 97 ff; Barroso - Morín 2004: 45 ff. An inscription found in Merida also reports the return of the *domus* of the martyr Eulalia to the Catholic cult: Rico 2009: 11. The author points out (Rico 2009: n. 6) that the verb *placare*, used in the inscription as *participium coniunctum* (W. Trillmich), reappears in adverbial form precisely in the passage in which John of Biclaro reports the restitution that Reccared made for the injustices committed by his predecessor: Ioh. Bicl. Chron. a. 587? 7: '*Reccaredus rex aliena praedecessoribus direpta et fisco sociata placabiliter restituit. ecclesiarum et Monasteriorum conditor et ditator efficitur*' (Mommsen 1894: 218).

²⁵⁸ Tejada y Ramiro 1850: 214; Velázquez 2011: 275. Around those same dates, Martin of Braga (515-580) urged replacing the old pagan names of the days of the week with the liturgical denomination (*feriae*), as is done to this day in Portuguese (De correct. Rustic. 7-9). Sunday, indeed, is the first day of the week (Mt 28: 1; Mc 16: 2; Luke 24: 1; Jn 20: 1).

²⁵⁹ See Vives 1942. Vives considered that the only exception was the inscription that concerns us here (he accepts Hübner's copy with the reading DCXXX instead of DCXXV), which made him think that it could be a falsification (Vives 1943: 263).

²⁶⁰ Blunt 1869.

²⁶¹ Mellado 2001. This implicit recognition could also be related to the execution of Sisbert, as we referred to a few lines previously.

²⁶² For a discussion of the meaning of this expression, see Fernández Martínez - Gómez Pallarès 2001.

²⁶³ Fernández Martínez - Gómez Pallarès 2001: 655.

strengthened from the political crisis caused by the prince's conversion.²⁶⁴ As with the Toledo epigraph of Santa María, the Alcalá de Guadaira inscription is a valuable testimony to the policy of pacts and negotiations that preceded Reccared's official conversion, but perhaps also the proof of a posthumous rehabilitation of the figure of the martyr-prince among the circles closest to the memory of Hermenegild.

Hermenegild: martyr or rebel?

As we have been seeing throughout these pages, the controversy surrounding the figure of Hermenegild dates back almost to the very moment of his demise. The special circumstances that occurred after the prince's death and Reccared's rise to the throne were not the most conducive to a rehabilitation of the figure of Leovigild's eldest son, especially in the environments closest to the court of Toledo. And although there have always been attempts to reclaim the memory of the martyr, it is undeniable that the rebellion against Leovigild has made it very difficult to create a strong defence case for him. Martyr of faith or rebel tyrant? It is difficult to pronounce on this dilemma considering the disparity of literary sources. After all, which version do we choose? The one transmitted by Gregory the Great or that of John of Biclaro? Dozens of historians have dedicated themselves to elucidating which of the two is correct and, as Hillgarth already pointed out, after centuries of discussion we still cannot reach a scientific consensus. Moreover, the question presents so many angles that, as a good connoisseur of the subject suggested, starting from the same premises, contradictory solutions have been reached, which is surprising:

‘The relations between Leovigild and his eldest son Hermenegild, which led to the political-religious conflict that openly confronted father and son, constitute a problem that has been studied and discussed to exhaustion by scholars of very different times. The question presents a series of dark and contradictory facets that give it the character of a true historical enigma and the few texts we have can be shuffled and interpreted in such diverse ways that they lend an easy documentary basis for the various solutions to which it is intended to arrive, starting from diametrically opposed approaches.’²⁶⁵

It is evident that, after centuries of discussion, research has reached a dead end. Studies, publications, articles follow one another and all practically repeat the same arguments and the same problems. The only certainty is the disparity that exists between Spanish and non-Spanish authors. Apart from that we remain in the same situation as at the beginning: martyr or rebel? At this point it may be necessary to look for answers elsewhere beyond the versions that literary sources offer of this episode.

Indeed, historians often overlook the psychological factors that surrounded the characters they subject to their study. Although it is not evident, the human factor was always there. Research, in its eagerness to do science, tends to take on a somewhat aseptic character that tries to mark a certain distance between the historian and the historical subject. Most of the time, especially in ancient and medieval times, this distance is marked by the scarcity of personal details that

²⁶⁴ Mellado 2001: 24 ff.

²⁶⁵ Orlandis 1962a: 3. Contrary to much modern writing, it is worth noting the objectivity of this historian, a priest of Opus Dei, in addressing a topic that directly affected the standing of a saint of the Catholic Church.

literary sources transmit. The most notable exceptions to this rule are, as we know, the *History of the Twelve Caesars* by Suetonius and the *Secret History* of Procopius of Caesarea. Both works provide a multitude of details and anecdotes, more or less truthful, which, although they do not allow us to form a full judgment on the character of the biographer, at least they provide abundant material to better understand some of their actions. It is no coincidence that both works served as inspiration to Robert Graves for two of his most famous historical novels.

It is obvious that none of the authors who dealt with the history of Hermenegild can be compared to a Suetonius or a Procopius, not even to an Einhard, faithful imitator of the first, but among the news they transmit we may be able to draw some valuable conclusions that allow a better understanding of what, from now on, and following the opinion of Orlandis, we may call 'the Hermenegild enigma'.²⁶⁶

In our opinion, to better understand the problem it is necessary to consider something we have repeated on several occasions and that we believe forms, as it were, the Gordian knot of the question: its character as a family drama. Even above its political implications, Hermenegild's conversion was foremost a tragedy within an aristocratic Gothic family. Thanks to this and the data we have from the literary sources we can get a certain idea of the character of the different protagonists of this high drama, or at least make an approach to certain traits of their personality that might be significant in terms of resolving the problems posed by the historical figure of Hermenegild. In this sense, a review of the list of *dramatis personae* in this tragedy, and the roles they played in it, could well prove very enlightening. In this section we will try to go back to contemporary sources, leaving aside as much as possible the opinions of historians who, from the 17th century onwards, have done nothing but further entangle an already complex issue.

First of all, of course, we have King Leovigild. The chroniclers of the time describe him with a certain admiration for his great military successes in pursuit of territorial unity, something very evident as we have seen in the case of John of Biclano, although after a certain lapse of time his merits are somewhat obscured by the stain of heresy. St Isidore, who writes a generation after the *Biclarensis*, judges him with greater severity when he summarises his successful reign in a clearly condemnatory sentence – 'but the error of impiety obscured in him the glory of so much virtue'.²⁶⁷

Indeed, as soon as he assumed power, Leovigild undertook a policy of territorial affirmation. To this end, he carried out a long series of military campaigns against the Empire and various populations who lived autonomously, or totally outside the Visigothic state. St Isidore summarises his reign as follows:

'In the Era 606 (568 CE), the third year of the government of Justin II, Leovigild assumes the principality of Spain and Gaul and decides to expand his kingdom through war and increase his power. Thus, with the enthusiasm of his army and the good fortune of his victories, he acquired much distinction... Many rebellious cities of Spain also surrendered to his arms; He also defeated the Roman soldiers in several battles and

²⁶⁶ Orlandis 1962a: 8; Vázquez de Parga 1973: 9 ff.

²⁶⁷ Isid. Hisp. HG 49: '... sed offuscavit in eo error impietatis gloriam tantae virtutis' (Mommsen 1894: 287).

recovered fighting several fortresses occupied by them... Finally, he waged a war against the Suevi and with astonishing speed transferred their kingdom to the authority of his nation, gaining dominion over most of Spain, for previously the nation of the Goths was reduced to narrow limits.²⁶⁸

While he was expanding the boundaries of his kingdom, Leovigild also promoted a policy of strengthening royal power that entailed the assumption of Imperial *regalia* in what has been interpreted as an attempt to fully emulate the Empire:

‘He was also the first to enrich the treasury and the first to increase the treasury through the robbery of citizens and the looting of the enemy. [He was the first among his own to wear royal robes and sit on a throne, for before him dress and seat were the same for both people and kings.] He also founded a city in Celtiberia which he called Reccopolis after his son. He also corrected in the laws those things that Euric had established inappropriately, adding many laws that had been omitted and eliminating some that were superfluous.²⁶⁹

Thus, there is practically unanimity in the research around the figure of King Leovigild: an energetic monarch with an ambitious program of territorial, political and legal unification, as well as the adoption of a court ceremonial of a majestic nature, all measures aimed at placing himself on an equal footing with the Empire.²⁷⁰

An energetic king and a brilliant military man, no doubt, but first and foremost a father. This explains his decision to avoid the conflict of Hermenegild and Ingundis with Goisuintha and to remove the young couple from the court before the situation escalated. But also, his condition as a father allows us to better understand other decisions that otherwise seem somewhat disconcerting. Thus, for example, in the face of his son’s rebellion in Baetica, Leovigild does not march directly south, but addresses a campaign in the far north of Vasconia. After finishing his actions against the Basques, he does not head towards Seville, the place of the uprising, but limits himself to calling an Arian council in Toledo, whose purpose seems to be to reach an understanding with the Catholics. Contrary to what might be expected, the king takes between one and two years to react to his son’s usurpation. But not only that: once hostilities are broken and his enemies defeated or bribed, with his son isolated in Cordoba, i.e. when he has everything in his favour, he agrees to parley with him. And when he finally reduces the prince, it does not seem that he subjected him to humiliating treatment in Toledo, nor did he

²⁶⁸ Isid. HG 49: ‘Aera DCVI anno III imperii Iustini minoris Leovigildus adepto Spaniae et Galliae principatu ampliare regnum bello et augere opes statuit. Studio quippe exercitus concordante favore victoriarum multa praeclare sortitus est... Cesserunt etiam armis illius plurimae rebelles Hispaniae urbes. Fudit quoque diverso proelio militem et quaedam castra ab eis occupata dimicando recepti... postremum bellum Suevis intulit regnumque eorum in iure gentis suae mira celeritate transmisit, Spania “magna ex parte” potitus: nam qua manta gens Gothorum angustis finibus artabatur’ (Mommsen 1894: 287).

²⁶⁹ Isid. Hisp. HG 51: ‘... fiscum quoque primus iste locupletavit primusque aerarium de rapinis civium hostiumque manubiis auxit. [Primusque inter suos regali veste opertus solio resedit: nam ante eum et habitus et consessus communis ut populo (genti), ita et regibus erat.] Condidit etiam civitatem in Celtiberia, quam ex nomine filii sui Recopolim nominavit. In legibus quoque ea quae ab Eurico incondite constituta videbantur correxit, plurimas leges praetermissas adiciens, plerasque superfluas auferens’ (Mommsen 1894: 288).

²⁷⁰ Practically the only exception is Arce (2011: 62-72), perhaps indebted to Collins (2005: 48ff), who assumes that this interpretation is flawed because no monarch had a chronicler of the stature of John of Biclaro. In our opinion the author is hypercritical on this point.

summarily execute him, as the law provided for cases of *lèse-majesté*. On the contrary, he was content to strip him of the royal insignia and remove him from the court by banishing him to Valencia and then Tarragona. From what we have been able to deduce from Leovigild's behaviour, the king seems to have entrusted the prince to the custody of his brother Reccared to avoid Goisuintha's wrath. In other words, at all times Leovigild acts with the prudence of a king, yes, but also as a father might towards his rebellious son. This explains the generally positive judgment of John of Biclaro about Leovigild and the absence of reproaches about his behaviour towards the prince.

Very different from the case of Leovigild is that of Queen Goisuintha, probably the most interesting character in this family drama. In contrast to the winds of change being instigated by Leovigild, Goisuintha symbolises the stale air of a Visigothic aristocracy refusing to change. We have already seen that her marriage to Leovigild has the hallmarks of a political agreement in the higher echelons of Visigothic nobility. As the widow of King Athanagild, she possessed extraordinary power, as much, or more, than Leovigild himself, in the form of *fideles* and wealth. It is possible that she was in charge of guarding the main Gothic treasure, the same one Athanagild had recovered in Seville after the death of Agila. It is evident that we are dealing with one of the crucial characters in this story, a woman of real strength and power. It is not for nothing that Gregory of Tours directly points to Leovigild's wife as the main figure responsible 'for all the crimes that took place in Spain' (*caput quoque huius sceleris Gosuintha fuit*). If we take into account what has been said in the previous paragraphs about the agency responsible for the death of Hermenegild, we will better understand to what Gregory was referring. The judgment made by John of Biclaro about the queen is equally negative, in fact the controversial expression '*factione Gosuinthae*' comes to be, in the ambiguous language of the *Biclarensis*, the Spanish translation of the accusation made in the *Turonensis*.

Indeed, if we consider the testimony of the written sources, the long shadow of the queen appears over the entire plot of this story. A furious Arian until the end, Ingundis's refusal to convert to Arianism must undoubtedly have been a hard blow for the proud queen. But that resentment would have turned into open rancour when Hermenegild took the step of converting to the Catholic faith. The prince's conversion was considered a betrayal in every sense. After all, Goisuintha had seen her daughters leave for France when they were no more than girls, not older than Ingundis, and she had also to endure their renunciation of the faith of their elders. Even more so, the queen had to suffer the catastrophe of seeing her daughter Galsuintha murdered by Chilperic and Fredegund, the concubine of the Merovingian king. As so poetically narrated by Venantius Fortunatus, the heartbreaking farewell of the Gothic princess as she left both her mother and the city of her birth, across the bridge over the Tagus, surely aware of the tragic destiny awaiting her in France, is undoubtedly one of the most moving images of Late Antiquity poetry. It engenders in us the feelings of joy ('*cum gaudio magno suscepitur*') that must have overwhelmed Goisuintha at the arrival in Toledo of her granddaughter Ingundis.²⁷¹ If the joy at the arrival of Brunhild's daughter to the Visigothic court was great, no less so must have been her disappointment when the Frankish princess refused to abjure the Catholic faith and embrace the Arianism of her ancestors. In this sense, the story Gregory of Tours tells about the attempt to forcibly rebaptise Ingundis is entirely plausible and provides one of the definitive keys to understanding the problem.

²⁷¹ Ven. Fort. Carm. VI 5 (Leo 1881: 136-146).

Furthermore, if Leovigild's concept of religion were purely irenistic and open to agreement, there seems to be little doubt about the sincerity of the queen's beliefs. And unlike Leovigild, Goisuintha does seem to have been an Arian convinced of her faith. John of Biclaro and Gregory of Tours agree in pointing out this aspect of the queen's personality. Other testimonies insist on presenting Goisuintha as a devoutly Arian woman. We have already pointed out earlier that Gregory the Great seems to allude to the queen when he recounts Leovigild's reluctance to openly convert to Catholicism 'for fear of his people'. In the case of Gregory of Tours, he alludes to it first when he describes the blindness affecting one of his eyes, a sign perhaps of a darkness of mind, in clear reference to the Catholic faith, and then when he recounts the attempt to forcibly rebaptise Ingundis. John of Biclaro, more explicitly, portrays Goisuintha as 'always an enemy of the Catholics'. The *Biclaensis* even accuses her of profaning the Host, i.e. committing the sacrilege of pretending to consume it. It is inevitable that we should compare this passage and Pope Gregory's narrative on the death of Hermenegild, executed for refusing to commune under the Arian species. In fact, this is to be the charge imputed to the queen after the conspiracy she plots with Bishop Uldila to overthrow Reccared is discovered, and which ultimately precipitates her death.²⁷²

In any case, in the queen's stance, one can discern a mentality anchored in a past where Visigoths and Hispano-Romans live apart from each other; each people with their faith and also with their laws, customs, and privileges. Leovigild, as we have seen, personifies the ideals of unification in line with the aims driven by the new political times marked by the Byzantine model: a single kingdom (the old province of Hispania), a single law (a new revised legal code), a same religion (the *fides gothica*, whatever it may be) and a single king. Finally, the monarch's idea that both peoples must coexist under a single king and a single faith was successfully carried out by his son Reccared in a perfected form. Certainly not in the way that Leovigild had planned, but in the only way that was possible, given the circumstances. His final decision to entrust Reccared to Leander implies a recognition of the failure of his policy, but at the same time an affirmation that he was working in the right direction. In this context, the news of a personal conversion of Leovigild is not something that should be discarded, even less so if we consider the remorse he surely had for the responsibility in the death of his firstborn. In summary, in the face of Leovigild's 'modernising' aims, the figure of Goisuintha rises, a woman proud of her Gothic lineage and not inclined to abjure the glorious past of her people.²⁷³

The other female character in this story is also a prominent one. Princess Ingundis belonged to the lineage of Goisuintha and Brunhild, two 'manly' women, as they were described, and like them, Ingundis must also have been endowed with a strong character and deep determination.²⁷⁴ The refusal to abjure the Catholic faith in a strange environment, and being

²⁷² We do not know if the queen is executed or dies at her own hand: the paragraph in question is deliberately obscure. Iohan. Bicl. Chron. a. 589.1: '*Uldida episcopus cum Gosuintha regina insidiantes Reccaredo manifestantur et fidei catholicae communionem, quam sub specie Christiana quasi sumentes proinciunt, publicantur. Quod malum in cognitionem hominum deductum Uldida exilio condemnatur, Gosuintha vero catholicis semper infesta vitae tunc terminum dedit*' (Mommsen 1894: 218).

²⁷³ In the ancient world, and even more so among barbarian populations, women were responsible for preserving popular traditions and maintaining the ancient rites of collective memory. Evidently also among the Germans, women were in charge of transmitting the signs of identity of the group; this obligation would be more accentuated among women of noble birth (Kazanski - Périn 2011: 315-321; Barroso 2018: 53).

²⁷⁴ Valverde 2008.

barely more than a girl, attests to the strength of spirit of the princess and her deep religious convictions. In reality, Ingundis appears in this story as the parallel to Goisuintha: if the queen is the one pulling the strings behind some of the actions of Leovigild, it is the princess who acts behind Hermenegild. Of course, she is responsible for the prince's conversion to Catholicism. For this reason, the phrases historians usually use to describe the dispute between grandmother and granddaughter – and which we have also used here on purpose – do not correspond to reality, or at least are not entirely accurate. Or, to put it in other words: as fanatical as Goisuintha was Ingundis, and as fervent as Ingundis was Goisuintha.

The indomitable character of Ingundis is also corroborated by the influence that, according to Gregory of Tours, she had over Hermenegild, and which was to prove decisive in the prince's conversion. The desperate flight of the princess, along with her young son, to find refuge in the court of Austrasia, from distant Baetica, also indicates the strength and personality of Ingundis, whose life was ended so prematurely: undoubtedly she was a worthy descendant of the lineage of Goisuintha and Brunhild.

Continuing with our review of the main protagonists of this story, there is unanimity in that the major beneficiary of the execution of Hermenegild was his brother Reccared. It is evident that with the death of the prince, Reccared's path to the throne of Toledo was cleared. This circumstance is something that weighed on the memory of this prince, whom a certain sector of historiography accuses of not having been far distant from the tragic end of his brother. That cloud of suspicion would accompany him all his life and probably also colours the judgment posterity has given him. It is curious that Reccared has not had the recognition that the Church granted to other kings who initiated the religious conversion of their subjects. In fact, as far as we know, his is the only case of a monarch involved in an event of this magnitude who was never canonised. We can leave it to Pope Gregory in reference to the death of Hermenegild:

‘... King Reccared, following not the steps of his heretical father, but of his martyr brother, converted from the error of the Arian heresy and led all the people of the Visigoths to the true faith, to the point of not allowing offices in his kingdom to those who feared to be enemies of the Kingdom of God professing heretical perfidy... And it is not surprising that one who is a brother of a martyr has become a herald of the true faith. For also the merits of this one help him to return so many people to the bosom of Almighty God. And it is that in relation to this conversion we must think that all this



Fig. 26. Reccared. Retrato de los Reyes de España (1872):

could not have been carried out in any way if King Hermenegild had not died for the truth.²⁷⁵

It is strange that Reccared has never received the posthumous recognition that a king who did so much for the history of Spain might have expected. There is some unanimity that this was due to comparison of his achievements to those of Leovigild, and his possible implication in the death of his brother. In addition, there is the matter to what extent his irregular union with Queen Baddo might have influenced the moral judgment of ancient historians. Of course, this marriage was a concubinage in the eyes of the Church, and thus a stain on Reccared's record.²⁷⁶ Having said this, however, Reccared was widely recognised in his time as a magnanimous and pious king, the two great virtues that must accompany every monarch. If in his time King Reccared was compared to the great Constantine for having achieved the eradication of heresy and the union of creed between Goths and Hispano-Romans, during the following centuries he will be esteemed as a model of Christian prince.

Isidore of Seville draws a benevolent portrait of the new king in his *Historia Gothorum*, a text that centuries later would serve as a model for medieval historiography. Thus, the Bishop of Seville contrasts the figure of the pious and peaceful Reccared with that of his father, the incredulous and bellicose Leovigild, in a juxtaposition of light and dark that will be much exploited in the future:

'He [Reccared] was endowed with fervour for religion and was very different from the character of his father. Because the latter was incredulous and very willing to war, while he was devout in his faith and credited for his love of peace; his father, by the skills of war, expanded the dominion of his nation, while he with greater glory raised the same nation by the victory of faith. Because at the beginning of his reign he embraced the Catholic faith and after eliminating the sin of his deeply rooted error, he brought all the people of the Gothic nation to revere the true faith.'²⁷⁷

John of Biclaro, for his part, praises the protection that Reccared provided to the Church and the return of assets confiscated by Leovigild. In addition, very significantly, he compares the presence of the king at the Third Council of Toledo with that of the emperors Constantine the Great and Marcian at the Councils of Nicaea and Chalcedon.²⁷⁸

There is no doubt that the Third Council of Toledo marked a turning point in the relations between the Gothic and Hispano-Roman peoples and marked the course of the history of Spain. The intellectuals of the time, all belonging to the ecclesiastical estate, did not hesitate to recognise it as his work, even silencing or hiding passages that could negatively affect his reputation. This has indeed been the main obstacle to a correct understanding of the events

²⁷⁵ Gregory I, Dial. 3 31 (Juan Galán 2010: 183 ff). It is worth remembering, once again, that this paragraph was censored by the author of the *Vitas*, who replaced the words '*fratrem martyrem*' that Gregory uses with '*Christum dominum*' (Vázquez de Parga 1973: 23).

²⁷⁶ See above n. 64.

²⁷⁷ Isid. Hisp. HG 52 (Mommsen 1894: 288 ff).

²⁷⁸ Iohan. Bicl. Chron. a. 587? 7 (cit. supra n. 256) y 590? 1: '*...renovans temporibus nostris antiquum principem Constantinum Magnum sanctam synodum Nicaenam sua illustrasse praesentia, nec non et Marcianum Christianissimum imperatorem, cuius instantia Chalcedonensis synodi decreta firmata sunt...*' (Mommsen 1894: 218 ff).

that crystallised in the solemn profession of faith of 589 CE. The gratitude for the conversion of the Goths and the unification of the kingdom cries out in many of the pages of the *Biclaensis* and the author of the *Lives of the Fathers of Merida*, two of our main sources of information.

In any event, the reign of Reccared was prosperous and relatively peaceful, although not so much in its early period, when the king had to face conspiracies and attempts at rebellion by some sectors of the nobility disappointed or harmed by the new politics and the several purges carried out by Leovigild.²⁷⁹ This is not the most appropriate place to address this problem, which would take us too far from our purpose. For now, we will simply try to elucidate what role he had to play in the drama of Hermenegild. And on this occasion, Reccared had to act as a faithful assistant to Leovigild.

Undoubtedly, loyalty to his father is the trait that best contrasts Reccared to the rest of the protagonists of this story. At all times, Reccared appears next to the king. This loyalty is manifested when Leovigild delivers the rebellious prince into his hands to avoid Goisuintha's revenge. But this same trait is also a stigma that may too often have influenced the judgment that historiography has made of this monarch. Leaving aside the chroniclers of his time, who generally absolve Reccared of all responsibility, understanding that Leovigild was the legitimate king, among the authors of the Baroque period writings and especially in the first modern historiography, Reccared's positioning next to an Arian king was not fully understood, at least not by authors, confessedly Catholic, who lived within the context of a Europe split by Protestant heresy, and who, therefore, analysed Hermenegild's rebellion under the prism of a legitimate uprising against the tyranny of a heretic king. Of course, we do not mean by this that he was judged guilty of the tragedy, but simply that he was sidelined to a secondary role: the leadership fell on the figures of Leovigild and Hermenegild, each in his role as standard-bearer of their respective creeds. Reccared ended by being a symbol of the triumph of religion and, therefore, his figure was somewhat overshadowed by the dramatic leading role that the martyr Hermenegild had had in this enterprise.

But neither has the figure of Reccared come out well from the judgment of the historians of our time, who have often judged him by the parameters of pure political calculation. It must be said that it did not help excessively that he was the one most associated with the death of Hermenegild, and, undoubtedly, he was the figure most interested in his brother's death and the one who stood to gain the most by it. Ultimately, the passage in the *Biclaensis* that comes after the notification of the death of Hermenegild places him near the scene of the crime: Tarragona, indeed, is on the way that leads to the Narbonensis, where the king appears fighting a Frankish invasion.²⁸⁰

However, none of his contemporaries went so far as to accuse the monarch of the horrendous crime of fratricide. And in the texts, even in those written outside Spain, no reproach is found

²⁷⁹ Cf. Isid. Hisp. HG 51: '... nam quoscumque nobilissimos ac potentissimos vidita aut capite truncavit aut proscriptos in exilium egit. Fiscum quoque primus iste locupletavit primusque aerarium de rapinis civium hostiliumque manubiis auxit' (Mommsen 1894: 288). We have already pointed out that the entry could perhaps be interpreted as a veiled allusion to the beheading of Hermenegild and the exile of Gothic-Catholic noblemen, not only the bishops referred to in HG 50.

²⁸⁰ Iohan. Bicular. Chron. 585? 4 (Mommsen 1894: 217). Obviously, faced with the danger of the prince falling into the hands of the Franks, Reccared left his brother in Tarragona, well-guarded, in the rear of the army.

in this regard. Although he was undoubtedly the main beneficiary of Hermenegild's death, it is unlikely that Reccared had any responsibility in it. The silence on the figure of the martyr-prince does not seem to have to do with the monarch's complicity in the crime, but with the support he had shown to Leovigild and with the special situation created in relation to the Arian magnates who had converted to Catholicism.²⁸¹

Be that as it may, the Spanish authors, more or less contemporaries of the king, present a kindly image of him. Isidore, who writes his chronicle just a few decades after the death of the monarch, summarises the reign of Reccared, sketching an excessively benevolent profile:

'He was peaceful, gentle, of enormous goodness, and had such charm in his countenance and so much kindness in his heart that he persuaded the wills of all and even attracted wicked men to the disposition of loving him. He was so liberal that he returned to their rightful owners the goods of the citizens and the properties of the churches that the scourge of his father had incorporated into the treasury. He was so clement that he often alleviated the tributes of the people with the concession of mercy. He also enriched many with gifts, others he elevated to public honours; he reserved his properties for the unfortunate and his treasures for the poor knowing that royalty had been conferred on him for this purpose, that he should enjoy it profitably and achieve a good end after a good beginning. For he increased his true and glorious faith, which he had accepted at the beginning of his reign, through a public confession of repentance at the end of his life.'²⁸²

To what extent this is a real description or an idealised image of the monarch is difficult to pronounce. It is obvious that from the sources of the time we cannot form a complete idea of Reccared's personality. The gratitude for the conversion and the silence on what happened to Hermenegild formed a thick fog that has prevented an objective view of the distinctive traits of his personality. However, there are some aspects that do deserve to be highlighted.

Prima facie, and unlike his father, Reccared seems to have been a convinced Catholic. All authors commend his predisposition towards the Church, materialised in the return of confiscated goods and donations to ecclesiastical enterprises. They also praise the king's favourable patronage to the foundation of monasteries and churches; in particular he promulgated the laws that allowed bishops to share in the taxation of tributes.²⁸³ Ultimately, Isidore highlights Reccared's public penance in the twilight of his days – a solid indication of the sincerity of his conversion. As a brother of a martyr of the faith, the example of Hermenegild must have pursued him for life.

²⁸¹ For an analysis of the special circumstances surrounding Reccared's accession, see Díaz y Díaz 2004: 19-30.

²⁸² Isid. Hisp. HG 55-56: 'Fuit autem placidus, mitis, egregiae bonitatis tantamque in vultu gratiam habuit et tantam in animo benignitatem gressit, ut in omnium mentibus influens etiam malos ad affectum amoris sui adtraheret: adeo liberalis, ut topes privatorum et ecclesiarum praedia, quae paterna labes fisco adsociaverat iuri proprio restauret; adeo clemens, ut populi tribute saepe indulgentiae largitione laxaret. Multos etiam ditavit rebus, plurimus sublimavit honoribus, opes suas in miseris, thesaurus suos in egenis recondens, sciens ad hoc illi fuisse conlatum regnum, ut eo salubriter frueretur, bonis initiis bonum finem adeptus. Fidem enim rectae gloriae, quam initio regni percepit, novissime publica confessione paenitentiae cumulavit' (Mommsen 1894: 290).

²⁸³ III Conc. Tol. c. 18 (Vives, 1963: 131); *De fisco Barcinonensi* (Vives 1963: 54).

All things considered, it is very likely that the crisis triggered by his brother's conversion and Leovigild's concessions made him reconsider his faith even before Hermenegild's death. The Pseudo-Fredegar reports that Reccared would have received Catholic baptism in secret before his official conversion. And although it is a record from a foreign author, and surely inaccurate in detail (i.e. Catholics did not rebaptise those who came from the Arian heresy), it is confirmed by an entry in the *Biclaensis* that places Reccared's conversion shortly after the death of Leovigild.²⁸⁴ The revelation is also confirmed by the address Reccared himself makes before the bishops gathered at the Third Council of Toledo and which recalls how the king was aware of the true religion shortly after the death of his father.²⁸⁵

It has already been pointed out that an important sector of Visigothic nobility was attracted to the Catholic faith before the onset of the crisis. After all, the Arian Church did not have an hierarchical structure, a liturgy, or a doctrine that could be compared to that presented by the Catholic Church. Many Arians must have seen in the latter a firm and prestigious institution that they wanted to be part of. Neither could the cultural influence of the two be compared. As has been said, the names of Masona and John of Biclara, and the pastoral action Bishop Montanus of Toledo demanded of his pupil Turibius in relation to the Goths that settled in the Palentine territory, are only outliers of a phenomenon that must have been much more widespread and that threatened to blur the barriers that separated the subjects of the Visigothic king and those of the Empire.²⁸⁶ The incessant trickle of desertions must have increased as the conflict between father and son became entrenched and theological disputes became more and more common, to the point that it has been claimed that the conversion of 589 CE was nothing but the culminating expression of this process. As Thompson states:

‘In that case the conversion of 589 would seem to have been the culmination of a process that had been gathering momentum during the previous decades. It may be, therefore, that the kings banned conciliar meetings at a time when increasing numbers of their own followers were deserting the traditional faith.’²⁸⁷

And Leovigild's concessions in dogmatic matters would only further aggravate the problem, since, although in principle they were intended to create confusion in the Catholic camp, they finally highlighted the lack of a clear doctrine among the Arians. It is evident that Reccared must have been aware of this, even more so because of his relationship with some prominent elements of Catholicism, particularly with the Abbot Eutropius.

Indeed, elsewhere we have expressed our conviction that the close relationship of Reccared with the abbot of the Servitanus monastery, and the performance of the latter alongside St Leander in the organisation of the Third Council of Toledo, must be explained by the involvement that Eutropius himself had in the personal conversion of the monarch two years

²⁸⁴ Chron. Fredegar. 4 8: ‘*Eo anno Richarid rex Gotorum divino amplectens amore, prius secrecius baptizatur*’ (Krusch 1888). Iohan. Bicl. Chron. a. 587? 5 (cit. en n. 62) Cf. Orlandis 1962b: 306.

²⁸⁵ III Con. Tol. (a. 589): ‘*Non credimus vestram latere sanctitatem quanto tempore in errore Arrianorum laborasset Spania, et non multo post discessum genitoris nostri dies quibus nos vestra beatitudo fidei catholicae cognovit esse sociatos, credimus generaliter magnum et aeternum gaudium habuisse*’ (Vives 1963: 108). Cf. Orlandis 1962b: 302.

²⁸⁶ For this issue, see Barroso 2018: 148-168.

²⁸⁷ Thompson 1969: 38 ff [1985: 52].

before the official abjuration. Certainly, the king's relationship with Abbot Eutropius predates Leander's return from exile, dating from the foundation of Reccopolis and the Servitanus monastery, and will last for several years, to the point when he becomes one of Reccared's most trusted men in his attempts to resolve the difficult Byzantine question diplomatically.²⁸⁸ Already in his time Díaz y Díaz can claim for Eutropius a tutelary role in the conversion of Reccared, parallel to the one Leander undertook for Hermenegild.²⁸⁹

In summary, Leovigild's concessions in religious matters, and Hermenegild's example of tenacity in defence of his beliefs, must have decisively influenced Reccared's personal evolution towards Catholicism. In this sense, there is little doubt that the king's conversion was sincere and profound, as was happening among an important sector of the Visigothic aristocracy. But, in addition, once in power, King Reccared could not ignore the important benefits that a conversion to Catholicism could have for the stability of the kingdom. Thus, the monarch acted with a fine political sense, developing a policy similar to that of his father but with a diametrically different base. Both aspects, political talent and sincere belief, are highlighted in a policy of collaboration with the ecclesiastical estate that will shape the structures of the future Visigothic state.²⁹⁰

A separate issue is that this relationship was not exempt from some friction, especially between the two great extant protagonists: Leander de Sevilla and Reccared himself. During the course of the Third Council of Toledo, both claimed credit for the official conversion of the Goths.²⁹¹ Undoubtedly, both had reasons to achieve this, but here the religious question was not the only thing at stake: the shadow of Hermenegild and the decisive influence that Leander had had in the outbreak of the crisis hovered in the air, impacting on the relationship between the monarch and the metropolitan of Seville. It is true that in the inscription of consecration *in catolico* of Santa María of Toledo one can see the hand of Leander through the hidden posthumous homage to Hermenegild. But that happened in 587, when the negotiations that led to the official conversion were still going on, and both sides were forced to compromise. When the time came, Reccared arranged for Abbot Eutropius to be the organiser of the synod along with Leander himself. This strange duality – strange because Eutropius was then a simple abbot – reveals the existence of the two parties that had taken part in the negotiation. Then, once the conversion was made, Leander disappears from the political stage, somewhat eclipsed by the emerging figure of Eutropius. The latter, elevated to the bishopric of Valencia, takes care to organise a powerful pressure group, somehow linked to the Servitanus monastery, in order to resolve peacefully the conflict with Constantinople. It is significant that Leander, whose friendship with Pope Gregory has been repeatedly pointed out, does not assume a relevant role in a matter of such importance and that in some way also affected the Papacy.²⁹²

²⁸⁸ For this topic, see Barroso - Morín 1996a: 161; Barroso - Morín - Sánchez 2018a: 49-52; Barroso 2019: 110-113.

²⁸⁹ Díaz y Díaz 2004: 21 n. 43.

²⁹⁰ Navarro 2000.

²⁹¹ Mellado 2000; 2001.

²⁹² Greg. I, Epist. 9 229 (Ewald - Hartmann 1899: 225s).

On the other hand, Reccared, like his father, was a highly competent military man. He had ample opportunity to demonstrate this at the time of the crisis caused by Hermenegild's uprising, the attempts at Frankish invasion over the Gallia Narbonensis, and the rebellion of the *dux* Argimundus in the newly conquered Gallaecia province.²⁹³ In addition, in this military field he knew how to surround himself with effective leaders of men, figures such as Duke Claudius, an Hispano-Roman general to whom the Goths owe one of their most resounding military triumphs. Reccared's military competence also shows in his ability to transform Visigothic troops into a competent army in the old Imperial Roman style. This explains the superiority that from then on the Goths showed with respect to their Frankish neighbours. In this sense, it must be assumed that the prince's preparation alongside Leovigild in some of his numerous campaigns against the enemies of the kingdom must have been of great help.²⁹⁴

But, unlike Leovigild, at this point Reccared also showed a predisposition towards peace, and, as far as possible, it was always in the king's mind to avoid confrontation. Isidore himself weighs the peaceful character of the monarch in contrast to the bellicose figure of Leovigild.²⁹⁵ The military campaigns on the northern frontier were always motivated as defensive actions against the Frankish invaders or the incursions of the Vasconi. In Gallaecia it was a rebellion that threatened the recent Visigothic conquest in favour of a possible restoration of the old Suevic kingdom.²⁹⁶ In those territories invaded by Imperial forces, Reccared strove to find peaceful solutions through papal mediation and the so-called 'Servitanus group' (especially Eutropius of Valencia and Licinianus of Cartagena). This was a regular strategy, even though the crisis of Hermenegild had highlighted the weakness of the Empire in its peninsular territories and the difficulties in sustaining the Imperial network in the central and western Mediterranean. Only when these peaceful attempts failed did the king take the military route, and then only to respond to the aggressiveness shown by the *magister* Comentiolus.²⁹⁷

The celebration of a preparatory meeting with the Arian magnates before the council once again highlights the monarch's predisposition to peaceful agreement. In fact, the *Biclaensis* explicitly states that Reccared convinced those gathered there 'more by reason than by force'.²⁹⁸

²⁹³ Iohan. Bicl. Chron. 585? 4 (Mommsen 1894: 217). For the situation in Gallaecia, vid. infra n. 295.

²⁹⁴ Isid. Hisp. HG 54: '*Egit etiam gloriose bellum adversus infestas gentes fidei susceptae auxilio. Francis enim sexaginta fere milibus armatorum Gallias inruentibus misso Claudio duce adversus eos glorioso triumphavit evento. Nulla umquam in Spaniis Gothorum victoria vel maior vel similis extitit... saepe etiam et lacertos contra Romanas insolentias et inruptiones Vasconum movit, ubi non magis bella tractasse quam potius gentem quasi in palaestrae ludo pro usu utilitatis videtur exercuisse*' (Mommsen 1894: 289). In this last phrase perhaps one can see an echo of Flavius Josephus when he deals with the training of the Roman legions: 'It is not at all wrong to say that their manoeuvres are like bloodless battles and their battles like bloody manoeuvres' (Bello Iudaic. 3 5 1).

²⁹⁵ Isid. Hisp. HG 55: '*Provincias autem, quas pater proelio conquirit, iste pace conservavit, aequitate disposuit, moderamine rexit*' (Mommsen 1894: 290).

²⁹⁶ Barroso - Morín - Sánchez 2015.

²⁹⁷ Isid. Hisp. HG 54 (Mommsen 1894: 289s). Thompson 1985: 379-381 [= 1969: 332].

²⁹⁸ Iohan. Bicl. Chron. 587? 5 (supra cit. n. 62). Let us remember again that Baddo was united to Reccared through a *Friedelehe*, which in the eyes of the Catholic Church would be classified as *concupinatus*, not a true marriage. This is how the frustrated reign of Liuva II and his deposition by Witeric is understood (Isid. Hisp. HG 57: '*Livva... ignobili quidem matre progenitus, sed virtutum indole insignitus. Quem in primo flore adulescentiae Wittericus sumpta tyrannide innocuum regno deiecit praecisaque dextra occidit...*' (Mommsen 1894: 290)).

The same can be deduced by his adoption of Goisuintha as a mother, a measure that, in the absence of a true consort, placed the widowed queen at the apex of the power of the Visigothic court.²⁹⁹

The conclusion that seems to follow is that Reccared was a king endowed with exceptional political and military talents. Obviously, it is undeniable that his government actions were very notably affected by the crisis originating from Hermenegild's uprising. The shadow that the ill-fated prince cast over his brother was certainly long. Despite all the difficulties, Reccared knew how to reorient Leovigild's policy – the unity of Goths and Romans in the same people – in a different and successful sense. And that is undoubtedly the best compliment that can be paid him.

Finally, to end this succinct review of the characters of the drama, we must analyse the figure of the martyr-prince. Hermenegild is, of course, the central character of the plot. All the figures revolve around him and yet he represents an enigma difficult to clarify. The pall of silence that hangs over the memory of the prince after his death further hinders the lifting of the numerous doubts that his case raises. Contemporary Spanish historians do not hesitate to qualify him as a 'tyrant' and 'rebel'. It is clear that both John of Biclaro and St Isidore consider that Leovigild was the legitimate king and wrote their chronicles from that perspective. The term 'rebel' comes to indicate this position. However, as J. Orlandis already pointed out, the word *tyrannus*, or the expressions *imperiis tyrannizans* and *tyrannidem assumens*, the other terms used by John of Biclaro and Isidore, had a purely technical meaning. The parallel of the prince with the story of Athanagild is significant in terms of understanding the true sense of the narratives of the Gothic historians.³⁰⁰

Yet, and despite the erudition demonstrated by Father Orlandis, it is undeniable that contemporary historians had a negative judgment of Hermenegild's performance. His uprising in Seville was interpreted as a rebellion against the legitimate king, beyond the fact that in his time the term 'tyrant' did not have the pejorative sense it has today. And this is true for both John of Biclaro and Isidore, as well as for Gregory of Tours. The question, then, is to know what kind of rebellion the chronicles refer to. After all, as has been repeated throughout these pages, Hermenegild was a true king: Leovigild had appointed his two sons *consortes regni* and the province of Baetica had been granted to him *ad regnandum*. The *Biclarensis* narrates that when the prince was defeated, he was deprived of the kingdom (*regno privatum*), which clearly indicates that for the chronicler Hermenegild had been a true king.³⁰¹

Could it then have been an attempt at secession in the style of the one later made by Duke Paulus in Septimania? It is unlikely, however, since the initial action of Paulus was not that, but he aspired to the throne of the Goths. The change of strategy was motivated by Wamba's rapid campaign over the Narbonensis, which forced the rebel to moderate his initial objectives and attempt a beneficial agreement in a situation of inferiority. Moreover, there was no need for Hermenegild to proclaim his sovereignty over Baetica, because, as has been said, he was already king by right.

²⁹⁹ Greg. Tur. HF 9 1 (cit. above n. 60).

³⁰⁰ Orlandis 1962a: 6-10.

³⁰¹ Orlandis 1962a: 4-6.

The sought-after ambiguity and parsimony of the Hispano-Gothic chroniclers do not, therefore, clarify the problem. We must, thus, turn to the narration of Gregory of Tours, highlighting the two aspects of Hermenegild's end of extreme interest, as they allow us to analyse the problem from a new perspective.

Firstly, it seems clear that, for the Bishop of Tours, the cause of the royal wrath was none other than Hermenegild's conversion to the Catholic faith. Moreover, and this is important to point out because Gregory condemns Hermenegild's rebellion,³⁰² it is the prince who feels persecuted for his faith (*pro eo quod sim catholicus*). Strangely enough, both things are hidden by the Gothic chroniclers. For John of Biclaro, Hermenegild is clearly a rebel whose uprising causes the greatest misfortunes for both the Goths and the Romans, a phrase that has been interpreted habitually in the sense of a civil war.³⁰³ For the *Turonensis*, however, the rebellion of the prince – without justifying it – is merely defensive, which, it must be said, fits better with the development of events:

‘When he learned that his father was coming to him with an army, he sought ways to repel him and kill him, not knowing, unfortunate, that the judgment of God threatens the one who meditates on such things against his father, even if he was a heretic.’³⁰⁴

The second point is also an expression that Gregory puts in the prince's mouth and that seems very significant to us in terms of understanding the nature of the prince's rebellion: ‘Let my father not march upon me, for it is not permitted for a father to kill his son, nor for a son to kill his father’.³⁰⁵

Both are the only phrases attributed to the prince that have come down to us. And both are extremely interesting: the first, because it attributes the persecution he suffers at the hands of his father to his position as a Catholic; the second, because it establishes a certain parallel with sacred history and, very specifically, with the history of King Saul and David.

Indeed, we have previously referred to the opinion of C. Godoy and J. Vilella that Hermenegild's conversion must have been provided with a special character, something that made it especially fearsome for the court of Toledo. For these authors, Hermenegild would have followed the Roman-Byzantine example of sacralisation of the figure of the emperor. It was precisely this event that would have caused the crisis when it clashed with Leovigild's pretensions. In other

³⁰² Vázquez de Parga 1973: 19.

³⁰³ Iohan. Bicl. Chron. 579? 3: ‘Leovigildo ergo quieta pace regnante adversariorum securitatem domestica rixa conturbat. Nam eodem anno filius eius Hermenegildus factione Gosuinthae reginae tyrannidem assumens in Hispali civitate rebellionem facta recluditur et alias civitates atque castella secum contra patrem rebellare facit. Quae causa provincia Hispaniae tan Gothis quam Romanis maioris exitii quam adversariorum infestatio fuit’ (Mommsen 1894: 215).

³⁰⁴ Greg. Tur. HF 6 43: ‘...<Herminichildum> patrem ad se cum exercitum venire cognovit consiliumque iniit, qualiter uenientem aut repelleret aut negaret, nesciens miser, iudicium sibi imminere diuinum, qui contra genitorem, quamlibet hereticum, talia cogitaret’ (Krusch - Levison 1951: 315).

³⁰⁵ Greg. Tur. HF 5 38: ‘Non ibo, quia infensus es mihi, pro eo quod sim catholicus. At ille, datis praefecto imperatoris triginta milibus solidorum, ut se ab eius solacio revocaret, commotu exercitu, contra eum venit. Herminigildus vero, vocatis Grecis, contra patrem egreditur, relicta in urbe coniuge sua. Cumque Leuvichildus ex adverso veniret, relictus a solacio, cum viderit nihil se praevalere posse, ecclesiam, qui erat propinquam, expetiit, dicens: Non veniat super me pater meus; nefas est enim, aut patrem a filio aut filium a patre interfici. Haec audiens Leuvichildus, misit ad eum fratrem eius; io qui, data sacramenta ne humiliaretur, ait: Tu ipse accede et prosternere pedibus patris nostri, et omnia indulget tibi...’ (Krusch - Levison 1951: 245).

words, it was the religious sanction and theocratic character of Hermenegild's royalty that alarmed Leovigild.³⁰⁶

Agreeing with this judgment in general terms, that special character the act of anointing Hermenegild was vested with must have had a much deeper background. Something that the sources do not quite clarify. In fact, Leovigild had already adopted the Imperial model when he came to the throne, as Isidore of Seville promptly informs us, and that also implies a certain sacralisation of the monarch.³⁰⁷ No, in our opinion, the special nature of the kingship of Hermenegild was something more than the rupture of the Imperial *unanimitas*. It was something never seen before. Or rather, something not seen since the times of the kings of the Old Testament. This was, in our opinion, the distinctive trait of Hermenegild's perception of royalty: the anointing of the prince presented him to his subjects as a new David. The persecution of Leovigild only further highlighted this parallel with the sacred history of David, the chosen one of God, against Saul, the impious king.

Therefore, the key to understanding this entire story has to do precisely with the fact of how the conversion took place: since for Catholics it was not necessary to be rebaptised, Hermenegild's public conversion was limited to the ritual of anointing and the imposition of hands by Bishop Leander, something like a confirmation in faith. With this rite, the prince was consecrated to God, i.e. separated from normal mortals in a way similar to that of priests (and apostles), but very different from that of the ancient Roman emperors, e.g. the model followed by Leovigild. This is what made the conception of kingship assumed by Hermenegild different from that adopted by his father (by usurping the Imperial *regalia*). This conception is what St Isidore would describe years later:

'For just as in baptism the forgiveness of sins is granted, so too, through anointing, the sanctification of the soul is achieved. And this is seen in the old Law, in which those chosen for the priesthood and for royal power used to be anointed, which is why Moses anointed Aaron.'³⁰⁸

Moreover, the *Hispalensis* insists on the same thing a few lines later, introducing a comparison with what was happening in his time:

'Derived from "chrism", he is given the name of Christ, that is "the anointed one". It was mandatory for the Jews to have sacred ointment to be able to anoint those who were called to the priesthood or to assume royal power; and just as today kings wear the distinguished purple garment as a symbol of royal dignity, so among them the anointing with the sacred chrism conferred the name and power of king...'³⁰⁹

³⁰⁶ Godoy - Vilella 1986: 131 ff.

³⁰⁷ Isid. Hisp. HG 51 (cit. supra n. 54).

³⁰⁸ Etym. VI 19 51 (Oroz - Marcos 2004: 606 ff).

³⁰⁹ Etym. VII 2 2 (Oroz - Marcos 2004: 622 ff). Cf. Bango (2011-2012: 750 ff) observes that here Isidore uses 'nunc' for events that occurred in his time, which would mean that then the custom of anointing kings would not yet have been adopted. For a discussion on this topic, see infra the section dedicated to the *ordinatio principis*.

The rite of anointing Hermenegild with sacred oil by the metropolitan of Seville had a clear precedent in the royal anointing of David by the prophet Samuel, something that was more than evident to anyone and even more so to someone of the intellectual stature of Leander of Seville, because there is no doubt that it was he who elaborated the new political theory. The solemn ritual, the Imperial salutations and their corresponding correlate of numismatic emissions and epigraphic legends, which reproduce precisely the *laudes* with which the prince was greeted by the court of Seville, are the irrefutable proof of the new character that Hermenegild's sovereignty had acquired.³¹⁰ In this way, with the precedent of David and the newly inaugurated sacralisation of the monarchical institution in the Christian way, the fear that the prince's conversion caused in Leovigild and Goisuintha, as well as the passive character of the rebellion, is better understood. Because, and this should be emphasised once again, Hermenegild limited himself to resisting his father, he never made any attempt to attack him beyond what self-defence might require.³¹¹ In fact, it is just the opposite: while in the military aspect it is Leovigild who at all times takes the initiative, either by cutting off the military aid that the prince could expect from the Suevi and Franks, or by besieging the cities of Seville and Cordoba, Hermenegild only manifests in a public and notorious way the new concept of royalty that he has assumed: he is an *electus Dei*, a king by the grace of God. His appeal to the Imperial court, which brought him much criticism among ancient and modern historians, seems late and untimely, as can be deduced from the fact that it was Leander, the very one who had anointed him, who headed the diplomatic mission. Thus the chronology of the embassy to the emperor was after Leovigild's offensive had begun, which indicates a high degree of improvisation on the part of Hermenegild.

On the contrary, in the ideological and propaganda war, it is the prince who takes the initiative, while Leovigild tries to counteract the enemy propaganda with measures copied from his antagonist. The king's measures (the meeting of the synod in 580 and the issuance of coins with appeals to the divinity) try to somehow alleviate the advantage of the rebel in this field, but always in the wake of what Hermenegild has done previously (appeals to the divinity in coins and inscriptions). This is logical since it is the new concept of sovereignty that Hermenegild embodies that has provoked the crisis and not a military rebellion as usual. And that is something that the king did not count on when he sent him to Seville to reign.

On the other hand, the character of the anointed one and the sincerity of Hermenegild's conversion are two aspects that should not be separated in this topic. First, of course, the influence of Leander in this new conception of royalty and the role that the new Catholic prince must assume. Actually, it is very possible that in Hermenegild's decision not to attack his father there were religious scruples similar to those that David had in not killing King Saul. Gregory of Tours appears to insinuate it with the words he puts in the prince's mouth: 'Non ueniat super me pater meus; nefas est enim, aut patrem a filio aut filium a patre interfici' (HF 5 38), words in which the echo of those pronounced by David in the Egaddi cave when he had Saul at his mercy

³¹⁰ Díaz y Díaz 1958; Godoy - Vilella 1986: 132. Cf. Vives 1963: 116 ff; 1963b.

³¹¹ Cf. Maldonado 1997: 65s. It may be objected that Gregory of Tours (HF 6 43) censures that the prince sought a way to kill his father and that this would bring him divine judgment. However, it must be taken into account that when Gregory writes, almost a decade has passed since the death of Hermenegild, and it is logical that he interprets the episode from the perspective of divine judgment. But the first part of the passage clearly indicates that it is Leovigild who marches against Hermenegild, so, consequently, the latter is entitled to defend himself.

seems to resonate.³¹² It is no coincidence that the sentence in which David justifies not daring to raise his arm against the Hebrew king is cited on all occasions when the consecrated character of the monarchical institution is mentioned once the sacralisation of kingship had been fully accepted by the Goths. And it is especially significant that this is the result of Canon 75 of the Fourth Council of Toledo (633 CE) for several reasons: first, because it is a synod presided over by St Isidore, the brother of St Leander; second, because the conciliar meeting took place in a complicated political context reminiscent of what happened with Hermenegild, namely, the legitimisation of the usurpation of King Sisenand; and, last and most importantly, because Canon 75 came to define the newly consecrated nature of Visigothic kingship that the martyr-prince had inaugurated: the king is the anointed one of the Lord, and no one can touch him without expecting divine judgment to strike him.³¹³

From our point of view, it is very possible that Hermenegild would have assumed the role of the new David that Leander had proposed to him, to the point of fully identifying with the biblical king. This identification of the Gothic prince with the biblical king is what made the initiative fail, i.e. by not counting on Leovigild to react the way he did, that is, with military force. Certainly, the parallels of David-Saul and Hermenegild-Leovigild are not entirely accurate because Saul had been anointed and therefore was also consecrated, something that was not fulfilled with Leovigild.³¹⁴ However, in his time no one ever doubted that he was the legitimate king, as much as he was nominally Arian: John of Biclaro, Isidore, and Gregory of Tours are explicit in this respect, especially in the expressions they use to define the prince's rebellion. Hermenegild himself recognises Leovigild as a true king, without thereby renouncing his royalty. This is seen in the Alcalá de Guadaíra inscription, where the prince is presented as 'Our lord, King Hermenegild... who is persecuted by his father, King and Lord Leovigild...' In this context, it is understood that, for Gregory of Tours, who writes his story with a rebellion in mind, Hermenegild was nothing but a wretch (miser) who had attracted misfortune to himself and whose enterprise was doomed to failure from the beginning because it went against divine designs (obviously the Turonensis knows this because it was written when the prince had been subdued and executed). Logically we cannot expect a coherent story from the author, and although from it we deduce the defensive character of Hermenegild's performance, it is clear that Gregory considered it a simple rebellion.

Nevertheless, it is plausible that Hermenegild took his conversion and consecration to the extreme of identifying with David, the ideal model of a king in the Judeo-Christian tradition,³¹⁵ and for that reason did not venture to initiate a military rebellion against his father, whom he fundamentally recognised as a legitimate king.³¹⁶ We must insist on this point: both Leovigild and Hermenegild were kings. From this perspective, and as already noted above, it is better understood that Leovigild spared the prince's life, something unusual in cases of high treason,

³¹² On the subject, see Barroso - Morín 2004: 29-31. See also the section dedicated to the royal anointing in this same volume.

³¹³ Con. Tol. IV, c. 75; Con. Tol. XVI, c. 9 (Vives 1963: 217-222, 507-509).

³¹⁴ It is true that David was not Saul's son, but the husband of his daughter Michal. But it is obvious that, in a political sense, that made the king his father.

³¹⁵ Isid. Hisp. Sent. III 49 1 (Campos - Roca 1971: 496).

³¹⁶ It is what Díaz y Díaz calls 'neophyte enthusiasm' (2004: 16), although in our opinion it goes beyond a defence of Catholicism: it is a new conception of kingship.

and judged it convenient to banish him to Valencia under the custody of Reccared and not execute him after having subjected him to public ridicule.

In summary, the anointing of Hermenegild marks a before and after in the development of Visigothic political practice and the concept of royalty itself. Just as the conversion of the Goths, which can be considered the fruit of the prince's martyrdom, the anointing of Hermenegild was also destined to bear abundant fruit. This experience undoubtedly nourished Isidore of Seville's theory of royalty, who, when the time came, will have the opportunity to put it into practice in a delicate moment in the history of the kingdom and, as time went by, it will also be incorporated into the political theory of the Carolingians and other peoples of the Western Middle Ages. We will return to this later in more detail because first we must finish our exposition with the last problem posed by what we have called the 'Hermenegild enigma'.

Indeed, a particularly delicate point in this whole story is the thorny issue of responsibility in the death of the Goth prince. It has already been seen that Gregory the Great openly and unambiguously accuses Leovigild of parricide. According to the Pope, it would be the king who had ordered the execution of the prince after he had refused to receive communion from the hands of an Arian bishop. The news of the pope is corroborated by Gregory of Tours. This opinion constitutes, since it was defended by F. Görres, the *communis opinio* of historiography.³¹⁷ But to what extent can the king be charged with the death of Hermenegild?

Really, the answer to this question must take into account other indications that we consider highly relevant and that go beyond the testimony of the Pope. In this sense, the passage of John of Biclaro that refers to the accusation and death of Goisuintha, after the discovery of her plans to conspire against Reccared, seems especially interesting to us because it opens new paths to elucidate this difficult question.

According to Gregory the Great, Hermenegild had been executed precisely for refusing to take communion under the Arian species. It is curious that this is precisely the accusation that John of Biclaro makes against Queen Goisuintha and that caused her downfall at court.³¹⁸ In fact, the chronicler seems to establish a specular reflection between the two actions, as if they were the obverse and reverse of the same coin. And this parallel between the two, as pointed out by the *Biclarensis* – the accusation of reneging on the Eucharist – is important because it clearly points to the queen as being responsible for the death of Hermenegild.

To put it another way, in our opinion, according to John of Biclaro's story a veiled accusation seems to emerge that it was Goisuintha, and not Leovigild, who gave the order to execute Hermenegild. The reason given to justify the death of the prince – the refusal to receive communion under the Arian species – does tally with Leovigild's slight interest in religious matters as such, but it does suit that of the deeply Arian Goisuintha. Let us remember that we are facing a stepmother who is furious about what she must have considered a betrayal, and who has seen her political plans, and even her own lineage, ruined. It also does not agree with the image we have seen drawn of the king, in a fit of rage, that led Leovigild to order the summary execution of the prince in a filthy dungeon. Leovigild was anything but a convinced Arian. Not only that: the king had made being ambiguous in matters of religion the main tool of

³¹⁷ Görres 1873a: 61.

³¹⁸ See above, n. 271.



Fig. 27. Sevilla. Cordoba Gate. Place where Sevillian tradition places the prison of St Hermenegild (photo: J. Morin de Pablos).

his policy towards the union of the two peoples. His concessions as to the divinity of the Son, the cult of the relics of the Catholics martyrs, attendance at Catholic shrines, and the assumption of the name of Catholic, etc. are all actions that do not fit with a fanatical king. We have already seen that Isidore himself unequivocally qualifies him as *inreligiosus* ('unbeliever'). Nor does it suit this end that Leovigild should attempt to prevent Hermenegild from falling into the hands of Goisuintha if what he intended with his transfer to Valencia, as we have argued, was to save him from certain death at the hands of the queen.

Now, if, as it seems, in 585 CE Leovigild was an invalid, but alive, it is not unreasonable to think that it was the queen in person who had assumed all the power within the court. In this way, Queen Goisuintha could do and undo at will, even if it were officially in the name of the king. Vázquez de Parga exonerates

Leovigild from guilt, assuming that the king was in active campaign against the Suevi.³¹⁹ But the *Biclaensis* reports that in 585 the Suevic usurper Malaric had been arrested by the Visigothic dukes and presented to Leovigild. This passage clearly indicates that the king had not personally directed the campaign against the Sueves.³²⁰ On the other hand, we know that Leovigild died the year after the execution of Hermenegild, at some point between 13 April 586 (the death of the prince) and 13 April 587 (the consecration inscription of Santa María of Toledo). Almost certainly the death of Leovigild must have occurred in the latter year, since Reccared himself affirms before the bishops gathered at the Third Council of Toledo that his conversion had taken place 'only a few days after the death of our father'.³²¹

King Leovigild's illness must have provided Goisuintha with a more than propitious occasion to exercise her power, and the queen acted accordingly by ordering the death of the prince. She

³¹⁹ Vázquez de Parga 1973: 33.

³²⁰ Iohan. Bicl. Chron. a. 585? 6: '*Malaricus in Gallaecia tyrannidem assumens quasi regnare vult, qui statim a ducibus Leovegildi regis oppressus comprehenditur et Leovigildo vinctus praesentatur*' (Mommsen 1894: 217).

³²¹ '*...et non multos post diccessus genitoris nostri dies quibus nos vestra beatitudo fidei catholicae sanctae cognovit esse sociatos*' (Vives 1963: 108).

was indeed a faithful Arian and, what is worse, she had plenty of reasons to carry out her desire for revenge on Hermenegild. In fact, we are persuaded that under the story that John of Biclaro makes of the death of Goisuintha for her refusal to commune under the Catholic species lies the idea of a kind of divine vengeance for the responsibility that the queen would have had in the martyrdom of Hermenegild. On the contrary, the chronicler makes shows no reproach in this sense for Leovigild, and that the silence of the author on this suggests absolution of the horrendous crime of parricide. On the other hand, with Goisuintha controlling all the levers of power and the chancellery of the court of Toledo, Leovigild's qualms about making his conversion to Catholicism public, news that, contrary to what has often been maintained, has strong signs of being true, nor the decision to leave Hermenegild under the custody of Reccared after his surrender, are not at all strange.³²²

In aeternum: reigning after death

The special circumstances surrounding Reccared's accession to the throne caused the official conversion to Catholicism to take place at the cost of imposing a shadow of oblivion over the figure of the Prince Hermenegild. The records of the Third Council of Toledo do not allude to Hermenegild at any time. Not even St Leander, his great mentor and prominent protagonist in his conversion to Catholic orthodoxy, will mention him in his magnificent homily. A sepulchral silence surrounded the figure of Hermenegild for almost a century. It is not until the end of the 7th century that we find a new mention of Hermenegild. On this occasion, Valerius of Bierzo includes him among the notable personalities who suffered martyrdom for the Catholic faith, qualifying him as *rex Gothorum*.³²³ The contradiction between silence on the figure of the prince and the surprising testimony of Valerius has been explained as a reflection of a current undercover opinion that worshipped the martyr. We have already seen that Pope Gregory alludes to his information coming from Spanish refugees at the papal court. In any case, this would be a current hidden opinion, alien to the ecclesiastical estates closest to power, probably linked to monastic environments far from Toledo. As we have explained elsewhere, this cult to the memory of the martyr-prince seems to have spread through the north-western area of the peninsula, where the anthroponym Hermenegild and its corresponding patronymic Méndez enjoyed great acceptance for a long time.³²⁴

We find a new reference to Hermenegild in a diploma of the bishop of Lugo from the mid 8th century, which reports that King Alfonso I of Asturias '*erat de stirpe regis Recaredi et Ermegildi*' ('He was of the lineage of Kings Reccared and Hermenegild'). By choosing Hermenegild instead

³²² It is Gregory of Tours who reports Leovigild's conversion before dying. Greg. Tur. HF 8 46 (see above n. 241). The return of the exiles and the closeness of Leander to the Pope, which point to first-hand information for the news of Gregory the Great, make the Bishop of Tours' story more credible. Cf. Thompson 1985: 108 ff [= 1969: 90s]; Vilella 1991: 170-172; Díaz and Díaz 2004: 19; García Moreno 2008b: 172, n. 467. Thompson points out the parallel with King Gundebald of Burgundy. On the doubts raised by the execution of Hermenegild, the successive transfers of the prince, and whether Leovigild was aware of all this, see Maldonado 1997: 68s.

³²³ Val. Berg. De vana saeculi, 4: '*Non solum ex plebeio coetu vulgati conuersioni degentes sed et pontifices, reges, duces atque diversi saeculi potentes. Inter quos quantum nostra nosse potuit ineptia, pauca de plurimis distinguimus nomina. Id est, de pontificali sacerdotii culmine immensus est numerus. De reguli vero fastigio, meminimus cesarem, nomine Crispum, regem gothorum Hermenegildum, regemque barbarorum Aucala, Ippolitum ducem, Georgium comitem, et reginam nomine Alaxandriam*' (Fernández Pousa 1942: 149, in García Rodríguez 1966: 431 ff). Véase Lacarra de Miguel 1973: 52.

³²⁴ Menéndez Pidal 1970: 53.



Fig. 28. Sevilla. Museo de Bellas Artes. Apotheosis of St Hermenegild (Herrera el Viejo).

of Leovigild, it is obvious that the Bishop of Lugo intended to establish a link between the new Asturian dynasty and the founders of the Catholic kingdom of Toledo.³²⁵

After the testimonies of Valerius of Bierzo and the Bishop of Lugo, we will have to wait almost four centuries to find a new allusion to the sanctity of Hermenegild in Spain. Although, very briefly, the *Historia Silense* and the *Historia gothica* of Ximénez de Rada (12th century) relate the version of Pope Gregory.³²⁶

A millennium will have to pass, until 1586, when Pope Sixtus V publicly recognises the martyrial character of Hermenegild. The beatification of the prince was made at the request of Philip II of Spain, who for this reason ordered the transfer of the saint's relics, which were preserved in the monastery of Sigüenza (Huesca), to the dynastic pantheon of the monastery of El Escorial. This is an act of profound symbolism as it implies the intention to link the monarchy of the Habsburgs with

Visigothic royalty.³²⁷ The presence of the relics of the martyr-prince in the monastery of Sigüenza, a foundation closely linked to the kings of Aragon, seems to indicate an early cult to the memory of Hermenegild that could date back to the time of his martyrdom in Tarraco.³²⁸

There were also personal factors that explain Philip II's devotion to St Hermenegild. On 13 April 1578, *dies natalis* of the Gothic prince, his son Philip, the future heir to the throne, was born. We do not know to what extent the personal situation he experienced with his firstborn Prince Carlos might have influenced this devotion by King Philip towards the Gothic prince. In any case, the importance that the king gave to the relics of the martyr is evidenced by the fact that

³²⁵ ES 40 (Madrid 1796: 365); Menéndez Pidal 1992: 332.

³²⁶ Pérez de Urbel - Ruiz Zorrilla 1959: 116. Luc. Tud. 49-50 and Ximénez de Rada, R. *Historia de rebus Hispaniae*, II, 14. The *Chronica Najerensis* (I, 187) includes the John of Biclaro narrative, with some errors.

³²⁷ Díaz y Díaz 2004: 19, n. 35.

³²⁸ Barroso - Morín 1994b: 52-64; Barroso - Morín 2004. Although, in general terms, the historical interpretation that we made of the Adoptionist question seems correct, we must recognise that the interpretation of the artistic testimonies on which we based it is erroneous (see Addendum 2).

it was the king himself who carried in procession the head of the saint along with the relics of St Lawrence himself (the patron saint of El Escorial). It is also significant that the transfer, which took place in 1586, thanks to a Jubilee granted by Pope Gregory XIII, was carried out not on the feast of St Lawrence, titular saint of the monastery, but on that of the martyr-prince. The relics of the latter were kept in a richly adorned reliquary that was stolen from the monastery by French troops during the Napoleonic occupation of 1808.³²⁹

In the same sense of exhibiting continuity with the Gothic tradition, the presence of some relics of the prince in the monastery of the Order of San Juan de Sigena, founded by Doña Sancha de Castilla, wife of Alfonso II of Aragon, c. 1183, must be explained.³³⁰ A letter from Doña Luisa de Moncayo, prioress of the monastery of Sigena, to Philip II dated 8 December 1585, informs of the receipt of the relic by the king:

‘Sacred, Catholic, Royal Majesty:

We received your majesty’s [letter] with the bishop of Vique [Vich] and with Juan Francisco Copones de la Manresana. And by it and the belief they explained, we understood the holy and religious spirit and will of Your Majesty in wanting to take from this house the head of the blessed martyr and prince Saint Hermenegild, the thing that could give us the most feeling, for losing the dearest pledge that Queen Doña Sancha, founder of the house, has left [to us], and for which we have the highest devotion, it has been a great pleasure for us that this was to Your Majesty’s liking. And so, all the “esguart” [cat. ‘council’] and convent have determined to serve Your Majesty, since it is of your royal blood. And this with such good will, that although it is necessary, according to the *motu proprio* of his Holiness, to have a relic to make [pray] for him, we have not wanted to touch or damage any part of it before putting it into the hands of Your Majesty, so that seeing the need that we have for some part of it for the effect that has been mentioned, Your Majesty may order what is most convenient for your royal service.³³¹

Curiously, the royal pantheon of El Escorial only preserves the skull of the prince. This is consistent (or at least does not contradict) with a possible transfer of the rest of the body to Seville, as has been proposed based on the analysis of the Alcalá de Guadaíra inscription. It is not impossible that, except for the head, the ecclesiastical authorities of Tarragona had reserved the rest of the martyr's body until it was finally transferred to Seville at the wish of Bishop Leander.

The transfer of the martyr’s relics to El Escorial meant a renewal of the cult of the prince. From that moment on, we witness a general process of revision of the image of the martyr in which the figure of Ambrosio de Morales will play a fundamental role.

³²⁹ Otero 1964: 40-46.

³³⁰ Flórez, ES 14 (Madrid 1758) 374.

³³¹ Mediavilla Martín - Rodríguez Díaz 2004: 355-364; Cornejo 2000: 32-35.

Morales, chronicler of Philip II, declared himself deeply devoted to the figure of St Hermenegild.³³² As in the case of the king, there was a personal reason that explains Morales' devotion to the Gothic prince: the historian believed that in his youth he had been saved from drowning in the sea by the intercession of St Hermenegild. For this reason, Morales would dedicate much of his efforts and money to spreading the cult of the holy martyr, even going so far as to dedicate a poem in 'heroic verse' to his figure. His influence is also guessed in the desire to found a *Brotherhood of Knights of Saint Hermenegild* with his friend and scholar Gonzalo Argote de Molina – author of the *Nobility of Andalusia*, a catalogue of the main noble lineages established in Andalusia – and a group of Sevillian noblemen. This association joined a brotherhood devoted to the martyr that had been established in Seville in 1248, shortly after the conquest of Ferdinand III. It had its headquarters in the small chapel of the tower of the Gate of Cordoba, considered by local tradition as the tower that would have served as the setting for the martyrdom of the prince.

In 1570 King Philip II visited Seville and was able to see firsthand the success of Ambrosio de Morales' work.³³³ His stay in the Carthusian Monastery of Santa María de las Cuevas allowed him to contemplate the mural paintings of the current chapel of Magdalena, where he is represented flanked by the figures of Ss Leander and Isidore. A second triumphal arch erected at the *Puerta de Goles* represented him between two bronze figures,

'...one the Holy Martyr Hermenegild, King of Spain, with his head split with an axe and his rays of glory that he had, his hands raised to heaven, and a word that said: PERFICE. On the other side was the Catholic King Reccared, his brother, looking attentively with great piety, and another word that said: AUDIO. Both signify the beginning that the holy martyr brother gave against the Arians – he says 'Finish it' – and the end that Reccared gave to the evil sect, answering "I hear it".'

In Seville's cathedral, the monarch was able to admire the representation of the martyrdom of the saint painted by Luis de Vargas a few years earlier on the north facade of the Giralda. A century earlier, Cardinal Juan de Cervantes y Bocanegra (†1453), a tireless seeker of relics of the saint, had erected a chapel in honour of the Gothic prince in the cathedral, which would later serve as a tomb for the remains of the archbishop, and another within the Hospital of St Hermenegild (also called the Hospital of the Cardinal) next to the tower of the Gate of Cordoba, the presumed place of the saint's martyrdom according to the Sevillian tradition.

A relevant point in the propagation of the martyr-cult in Seville was the foundation of the College of San Hermenegildo, of the newly created Society of Jesus, for which the impressive *Apotheosis of San Hermenegildo* (1620-1624) by Herrera the Elder would be commissioned.

The reign of Philip II constitutes the apogee of the diffusion of the St Hermenegild cult, which is especially visible in Seville. In summary, and using the words of F.J. Cornejo-Vega:

'Philip II was the true promoter of the revival of the cult and diffusion of the figure of Saint Hermenegild in the second half of the 16th century, moved, basically, by the

³³² For this topic, the study by Cornejo (2000) is fundamental. We will follow him from now on.

³³³ On this visit, conceived like an ancient Roman Imperial triumph to celebrate victories over the Moors of Alpujarra and the Protestants, see Cornejo 2004.

interest he demonstrated throughout his reign in giving lustre to the medieval conceptions of “chosen lineage” and monarchy of divine origin.³³⁴

In this work, the monarch was not alone, but was accompanied by a group of collaborators, among whom the scholar Ambrosio de Morales stood out, as well as other great personalities of the Sevillian society of the time, e.g. Juan de Mal Lara, Juan de Arguijo, the canon Pacheco or the ‘Divine’ Herrera, author of a poem dedicated to the saint written in Latin titled *To the blessed king Saint Hermenegild*. Within this group, the role played by the Jesuits, an order that contributed not a little to promote and extend the devotion to the martyr, should also be highlighted. Ambrosio de Morales was ‘the one in charge of officially fixing the historical version of the character in accordance with royal interests, that is, turning Hermenegild’s



Fig. 29. Museo del Prado. Triumph of St Hermenegild (Herrera el Mozo).

political uprising against his father (the legitimate king) into a religious struggle against heresy.’ Thanks to the Cordovan scholar and his group of Sevillian collaborators, Hermenegild came to be considered ‘the key to the dawn of the Spanish Monarchy, and the most illustrious ruby that today shines in the diadems of its kings...’ A good proof of this is that in the imposing tomb that Seville erected for the exequys of Philip II, an altar dedicated to the Gothic prince was included, in which, next to his painted image, one could read the gratitude that the saint himself directed to Philip: ‘King Hermenegild, confesses to owe to the King of his nation and family, honour from whom he has received much, and thus he procures divine aid in his exequys, and offers him a crown with glory’.³³⁵

From that moment on, works inspired by the figure of the prince are produced. On 25 January 1591, the drama *The Tragedy of San Hermenegildo*, written by Hernando de Ávila in collaboration with prominent Jesuits such as Fathers J. de Arguijo and Melchor de la Cerda, premiered at the College of San Hermenegildo in Seville. The theme was expressly chosen to

³³⁴ Cornejo 2000: 35.

³³⁵ Cornejo 2000: 35 ff.

underline the character of Spain as a bastion of Catholicism against Protestant heresy.³³⁶ The highest peaks of Castilian poetry found inspiration in the dramatic history of St Hermenegild. Luis de Góngora y Argote (1561-1627) dedicates the poem *Today is the sacred and fortunate day* to him;³³⁷ to Lope de Vega is attributed the drama *The Greatest Crown* (1621), and Calderón de la Barca dedicates the *auto sacramental* *The First Catholic Blazon of Spain* (1661) to him. Later will follow *The Martyr of the Sacrament, Saint Hermenegild* (1692), an *auto* written by Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz; the drama *The First Blazon of Spain and Defender of the Church, Saint Hermenegild*, by Juan Claudio de la Hoz y Mota, in the same century, etc.³³⁸



Fig. 30. Cross and Badge of the Royal and Military Order of St Hermenegild (photo: R. Barroso Cabrera).

The Sevillian artistic core was particularly active in promoting the image of the saint. Considered as the King of Baetica, numerous representations were dedicated to him throughout Andalusia, especially in Seville, a city so linked to the prince. From this period date several paintings on the theme signed by Juan de Roelas (1568-1625), Alonso Vázquez (c. 1575-1645) and Juan de Uceda (c. 1570-1635). In fact, since the reign of Philip II, the figure of St Hermenegild becomes a mandatory reference for the Spanish monarchy in its double aspect of Visigothic legitimism – whose most significant exponent is the work of Saavedra and Fajardo *Corona gótica castellana y austríaca* – and bastion of the Catholic faith. It is not surprising, therefore, that in Habsburg times the representations of the martyr-prince multiplied.

³³⁶ González Gutiérrez 1992.

³³⁷ Castillejo 2006.

³³⁸ The influence of the figure of the saint in the literature of the Spanish Golden Age is well studied in Sáez 2016.

In 1653, upon his return from Italy, Francisco de Herrera el Mozo (1627-1685) signed the spectacular painting *The Triumph of San Hermenegildo* for the main altarpiece of the homonymous convent of the Carmelite fathers (now San José). This is one of the masterpieces of Spanish Baroque, of which, according to Palomino and not without reason, Herrera himself said that ‘that painting was to be put up with trumpets and drums’. Undoubtedly, this work caused a real shock in the Madrid artistic environment of the mid 17th century due to its daring and spectacular staging. The composition is conceived as a true apotheosis of the prince, who ascends in glory to the heavens in a helical movement – like a Solomonic column – before the astonished gaze of Leovigild and the Arian bishop in charge of the deception. Hermenegild is represented holding a crucifix and without the attributes of royalty, i.e. neither crown nor sceptre, which are borne by one of the angels. The underlying idea is that his kingdom is not of this world and that the promised crown and sceptre correspond to his martyrdom triumph.³³⁹

This Herrera el Mozo was the son of the painter Francisco de Herrera el Viejo, with whom he trained in Seville and with whom he had a complicated relationship that must have led to a break. As has been said, Herrera el Viejo is the author of a magnificent *Apotheosis of San Hermenegildo*, painted about thirty years earlier, c. 1620-1624, and which is currently preserved in the Museum of Fine Arts of Seville. Comparing both works, it is not difficult to perceive a point of rivalry between father and son, very appropriate to the theme being represented.

The arrival at the Madrid court of the German Maria Ana de Neoburg, second wife of King Carlos II (1665-1675), meant a further revitalisation of the cult of the martyr Hermenegild. The queen commissioned Luca Giordano to decorate the Madrid church of San Antonio de los Alemanes with an iconographic program that exalted the double Germanic and Spanish origin of the Habsburg monarchy. The Neapolitan painter presents Hermenegild centre stage, dressed in royal robes, although without a crown, as befits his status of uncrowned prince.³⁴⁰ In this picture he follows the principles enunciated by Fray Juan Interián de Ayala in his treatise *El pintor christiano y erudito*, who, apropos of the saint, indicates that one of the reasons why the prince is represented in the frescoes of San Antonio without the sceptre and royal crown is because ‘Hermenegild was only his father’s successor... For this reason, I have observed myself, that they paint him without a sceptre and with that small crown... [which] is not proper of a king, but of a prince’, although he later contradicts himself in another place within the same work and points out that he was a king because his father, angry, stripped him of the insignia when he converted. This opinion is enough to understand to what extent the figure of Hermenegild continued to be controversial and polemical more than ten centuries after his martyrdom.³⁴¹

Obviously, the arrival of the Bourbon dynasty again relegated St Hermenegild to a secondary role. The French origin of the new dynasty did not facilitate the development of devotion for a saint seen as Germanic and, therefore, suspiciously close to the Habsburgs. Despite this, as patron saint of the monarchy, he finds his place among the representations of Corrado Giaquinto (1703-1765) for the Casita del Príncipe de San Lorenzo de El Escorial and in one of the pendentives of the Royal Palace of Madrid. Hermenegild does not appear, on the contrary,

³³⁹ *The Triumph of Saint Hermenegild*. Museo del Prado. Ficha técnica. <https://www.museodelprado.es/coleccion/obra-de-arte/el-triunfo-de-san-hermenegildo/77c47f23-369f-4677-afc8-c56523b4f46d> [accessed 15.11.2024]

³⁴⁰ Gutiérrez Pastor - Arranz Otero 1999.

³⁴¹ Interián de Ayala 1782: 159-161, 232.

among the sculptures of the kings of Spain destined to adorn the royal palace, since, when Fray Martín Sarmiento elaborated the iconographic program of the facade, he limited himself to suggesting that the saint be represented in the chapel because ‘his father Leovigild lived, whom his brother Reccared follows in the series’. The Galician scholar adds that ‘it would be very noticeable that St Hermenegild was not seen in a very expectable place.’ From this same period dates a sculptural group with the theme of the apotheosis of the saint in stuccoed wood attributed to the French artist Robert Michel (1720-1786), and a stone carving on the facade of the cathedral of Murcia attributed to Jaime Bort. The presence of the image of the saint in this cathedral alludes to the legend of the Cartagena origin of Hermenegild’s mother.³⁴²

During the reign of Fernando VII, and again for personal reasons, we find a revaluation of St Hermenegild. Indeed, the Prince of Asturias found in Hermenegild, the prince persecuted by his father the king, a model that justified his situation of rebellion against Carlos IV. From this period dates a Saint Hermenegild in Prison painted by Goya in 1802 and destined for the church of San Fernando de Torrero in Zaragoza. The painting was lost in the War of Independence, although a sketch of it is preserved in the Lázaro Galdiano Museum in Madrid. The scene represents the prince at the moment of being stripped of his royal vestments. Anachronistically, St Hermenegild wears the Golden Fleece, perhaps in allusion to the political situation of the moment, with Prince Fernando facing Manuel Godoy, the all-powerful favourite of King Carlos IV.

The devotion of Fernando VII for St Hermenegild crystallised after the end of the War of Independence (1808-1812), when the king proposed to reward military constancy in some way. Thus, once the conflict was over, Fernando VII instituted, by means of a Royal Decree issued on 28 November 1814, the ‘Royal and Military Order of Saint Hermenegild’. The Royal Decree was preceded by a prior report from the Council of War and Navy proposing the creation of an Order that would reward military valour and would be:

‘Under the advocacy of a saint who has been King of Spain, or to whom the Catholic Religion owes its greatness, as we find the first in Saint Hermenegild, King in Seville, and martyr for having abjured Arianism against the will of his father, King Leovigild, and embracing the Catholic Religion; and the second in his brother the great Reccared who was the first Catholic King of the Goths, entitling it the Royal and Military Order of Saint Hermenegild (or Reccared).’³⁴³

The Royal and Military Order of Saint Hermenegild is the successor to the Medal of the Royal Effigy established by Philip IV in 1664, being therefore one of the oldest among the Spanish Royal Orders, along with that of Carlos III, San Fernando, and Isabel la Católica. It is also the only Spanish Order that has never been abolished since its foundation, nor has it seen its object or insignia modified. It is, finally, the most Spanish of all Orders because qualification for it is reserved for Spaniards.³⁴⁴

³⁴² For the iconography of the saint, see Sampedro 2014.

³⁴³ Otero 1964: 3.

³⁴⁴ On the history of this military order, see Rodríguez Quiñones 2014.

From the institution of the Royal and Military Order of Saint Hermenegild, the figure of the saint will remain closely linked to the military and the monarchy, but with hardly any popular devotion in Spain outside of Seville, the city that one day served him both as a court and as his final resting place.

Hermenegild and the *Ordinatio Principis* in Visigothic Spain

As we have had occasion to verify in the preceding pages, the conclusion that emerges from this history is that Hermenegild did not rise up in arms against the authority of his father. This is important not only because it safeguards the reputation and morality of the prince, against the lapidary sentence of Menéndez Pelayo, for whom only martyrdom would have redeemed Hermenegild from his previous sin of rebellion,³⁴⁵ but because it allows us to solve a problem that has kept historians in suspense for centuries. Although the reading of the sources – especially the Spanish chroniclers and partly the *Turonensis* – seems to indicate the contrary by qualifying Hermenegild as a usurper (*tyrannus*), the development of events points to what has been said before: the prince limited himself to waiting in Seville for Leovigild's reaction without taking any military action against the king. As we have already seen, it was Leovigild who at all times took the initiative in the war, either by cutting off the possible support that the prince could expect from the Franks (the campaign against the Basques) and Sueves (the march on Merida), or by initiating a political-religious offensive by convening a council in Toledo to facilitate the passage of Catholics to the new religion and thus annul Hermenegild's decision to convert to Catholicism. The very stay of Leander in the court of Constantinople must have been subsequent to the anointing of the prince if we consider the symbolic background of the act that points to the Bishop of Seville as the intellectual author of the same and as responsible for the administration of the rite. Logically this also means that Leander must have gone to Constantinople after the military and political-religious measures adopted by King Leovigild and not before. In fact, if the logical order of events is followed, it was Leovigild's reaction against his son that determined Hermenegild to seek the support of the Byzantines through the mission of Leander and not the other way around, which means that the Bishop of Seville was sent to Constantinople to negotiate a defensive alliance against Leovigild, in no case to seek external allies to support a rebellion against the king.

Neither the court of Constantinople, whose finances were exhausted and also had several active war fronts open, was in the best condition to support a military action in distant Spain (as Leander himself would bitterly come to understand once in the Imperial court). Nor was this the *modus operandi* of the Empire when it had been immersed in internal conflicts involving its ancient territories: strangely enough, in its policy of *restauratio imperii* the Greeks always acted in consonance with the legitimacy of the cause they defended, never in favour of the usurpers. This is something that can be seen both in Italy and in Africa, but also in Spain itself, in the case of the rebellion of Athanagild, as we have had occasion to analyse elsewhere.³⁴⁶

³⁴⁵ It is worth remembering that, from the point of view of Catholic morality, rebellion is the greatest of sins, since in itself it is an echo of the *non seruiam* pronounced by Lucifer at the beginning of time and which caused his fall. Hence the seriousness of Menéndez Pelayo's accusation, which had so much influence on Catholic authors.

³⁴⁶ Barroso - Morín - Sánchez 2018a: 13-17. Perhaps the ancient Roman custom of needing a *casus belli* to get involved in wars that did not directly affect Imperial power influenced this way of acting. Or perhaps the Greeks considered that barbarian kings acted by Imperial delegation, hence they minted coins in the name of the emperor. Somehow the Imperial fiction was kept alive even among the barbarian kings.

Thus it is evident that Hermenegild's conversion meant a breaking point between the prince and the court of Toledo. Díaz y Díaz speculated that this rupture would not have been due only to the shock that Hermenegild's conversion to Catholicism caused, but above all to his proclamation as king outside of Leovigild, breaking the *unanimitas* that should govern the kingdom's government.³⁴⁷ Godoy and Vilella, for their part, went further and rightly supposed that this confrontation must have had a special character due to the nature that the sanction of the Catholic Church gave it. In the opinion of both authors, the Church thus came to legitimise and sacralise the power assumed by the prince in the style of the Roman-Byzantine emperors. This special character is what would be reflected in the legend REGI A DEO VITA on the coins minted by Hermenegild. The issues suggest that the prince's proclamation was accompanied by *laudes* or salutations in the Imperial style, as happened later during the conversion of Reccared at the Third Council of Toledo.³⁴⁸ Likewise, the allusion to the fact that the prince, once captive in Cordoba, was stripped of his vestments, as narrated by Gregory of Tours, must be understood in this context: it is not, therefore, the simple act of removing the prince's rich clothing, but the *regia uestes* that in the Imperial ceremonial distinguished the sovereign's clothing from the rest of the nobility.³⁴⁹

Although fundamentally we agree with the opinion of these authors, before proceeding we must remember a couple of important details that should not be overlooked as they add some important nuances to our interpretation.

Firstly, we must emphasise once again that Hermenegild *was already a king* regardless of his conversion to Catholicism. John of Biclaro himself, despite his animosity towards the prince's cause, does not hesitate to recognise Hermenegild's royal status.³⁵⁰ This is important because it means that it was not Hermenegild's exaltation to royalty that caused the break with Leovigild (since this had already happened years earlier, when he was sent to Seville with Ingundis), but the peculiar character of the rite used to materialise the prince's conversion to Catholicism. Considering that the Catholic Church recognised the validity of Arian baptism, the ritual of Hermenegild's conversion must necessarily have been performed by anointing the prince with holy oil. The sanctity of the prince came, therefore, from his solemn anointing before the nobility of Sevilla, not from his proclamation as king.³⁵¹

³⁴⁷ Díaz y Díaz 1958: 266.

³⁴⁸ Thompson 1985: 84. Barbero 1992: 103 ff. Mateu y Llopis 1941; Miles 1952: 24, 67; Hillgarth 1966; Díaz y Díaz 1958; Vives 1959; Godoy - Vilella 1986. In addition to the numismatic testimony, the heading of the Alcalá de Guadaíra inscription IN NOMINE DOMINI ANNO FELICITER SECUNDO REGNI DOMNI NOSTRI ERMENEGILDI REGIS (Vives 1969: 127, no. 364) recalls the appeals to divinity that begin the monetary legends of the last Visigoth kings (*In Dei Nomine*) and is identical to the heading of the epistle of Duke Paulus to King Wamba, when the idea of the consecrated character provided by the royal anointing was already established in the Visigoth court.

³⁴⁹ Greg. Tur. HF 5 38; Barroso - Morín - Velázquez 2008: 492.

³⁵⁰ This was the same case with Leovigild at the time of his co-regency with Liuva and also with other co-regents to the throne in the 7th century (see *infra* n. 356).

³⁵¹ Regarding the anointing, in Visigoth Spain the validity of baptism among heretics is insisted upon, in which the doctrine of St Augustine is followed: Isid. Hisp. Eccl. off. II 5, 9-10; Hild. Tol. Cogn. bapt. 121 and Conc. Ilerd. c. 9 and 14. Ordinarily the rite of anointing by chrism followed that of baptism (Cogn. Bapt. 122) and was given by the bishop or by a priest in his name, although the consecration of the chrism corresponded exclusively to the bishop (Eccl. off. II 27, 3-4; Cogn. bapt. 131; Conc. Tol. I, c. 20 and II, Epist. Montanus; Conc. Brac. II, c. 52). By the anointing of the



Fig. 31. Madrid. Palacio del Senado. The conversion of Reccared (A. Muñoz Degrain).

We must remember that there was an intimate relationship between the rite of the anointing of kings and episcopal and baptismal anointings. In this sense, it is significant that when a century later, with the ritual already perfected by custom, Julian of Toledo describes the anointing of Wamba, he uses the expressions *sanctae unctionis signum*, *sacrae unctionis uexilla*, *signum salutis*, *signum tantae gloriae*, all expressions inspired by the rite of *chrismatio* and referring to the cross that was signed on the forehead of the catechumen.³⁵² In this context, Hermenegild's anointing not only represented an explicit declaration of renunciation of the *fides gothica* – which in itself could be interpreted as a challenge to royal authority, although predictable given the circumstances that had surrounded the expulsion of Hermenegild and Ingundis from the court of Toledo – but above all an explicit declaration of the new religious character with which Hermenegild's monarchy was endowed, which was none other than that of the ancient royalty

chrism, the baptised received the name 'Christian', i.e. 'anointed' (Cogn. bapt. 122), being a distinctive sign of priesthood and royalty: 'Quae unctio primum in Aaron et filios eius in testimonium sacerdotii et sanctitatis insigne ab eodem Mose habetur inlapsa. Deinde in honorem gloriae Reges eodem chrismate ungebantur. Unde por illis dicitur: Nolite tangere Christos meos. In Sacerdotibus autem et Regibus erat haec mystica unctio tantum, qua Christus Rex et Sacerdos futurus figurabatur... Postquam uero Dominus noster Iesus Christus, Rex uerus, et Sacerdos aeternus, a Deo Patre, caelesti et mystico est delibutus ointment... non iam soli Pontifices et Reges, sed omnis Ecclesia sancti unguenti chrismate consecratur, propter quod aeterni Regis et Sacerdotis est sanctissimum membrum' (Cogn. bapt. 123; Eccl. off. II 26, 1-2). The Arian synod assembled by Leovigild in 580 also ruled in the same sense, although here the reason seems to have been to facilitate the incorporation of the 'Romans' (i.e. Catholics) into Arianism. Apart from these practical considerations, the monarch must have kept in mind the traumatic violence used against Ingundis (Greg. Tur. HF 5 38).

³⁵² Teillet 1984: 608.

of Israel.³⁵³ In fact, just as happened with the Old Testament precedent and the episcopal anointing, the royal anointing in Visigothic political theory, as later established with Isidore of Seville and Julian of Toledo, had a double value: a declarative value that publicly conferred the royal title on the candidate chosen by the nobility and a constitutive value of that royal power.³⁵⁴ Undoubtedly, this was more than Leovigild could tolerate.

Indeed, everything seems to point to the fact that it was the ritual used by Hermenegild that set off all the alarms in Toledo. And this for two reasons that were intimately linked. The first, as Vilella and Godoy already pointed out, because it meant the sacralisation of the figure of the prince at a time when the Gothic royalty had lost the ancient sacred character provided by the pagan origins of the lineage of the Balts. In this sense, Hermenegild's anointing came to establish a dangerous precedent, especially because it came from the Catholic field – that of the Hispano-Romans, the majority of the population, but also that of an increasingly large number of Goths – and because it left Leovigild without an external charisma that reinforced his royal authority.

However, it is worth highlighting here an essential difference between the sacred character assumed by the Gothic prince and that held by the Roman-Byzantine emperors, a difference that constitutes the second nuance we want to introduce: while the emperor presents himself to his subjects as an *isapostolos*, i.e. someone similar to the apostles and, therefore, as a member of the sacerdotal college, Hermenegild was anointed in the image and likeness of the kings of ancient Israel and more specifically according to the model that the Prophet Samuel had used with David. Hermenegild, therefore, inaugurated a new model of royalty based on the monarchs of the Old Testament. More than 1500 years later, Leander and Hermenegild resumed a sacramental practice that vested the sovereign with a sacred character that exalted him above the nobility and the rest of the people without the need to imitate the Imperial protocol. Later we will have the opportunity to see how some Hispano-Gothic political theorists, such as Isidore of Seville and Julian of Toledo, used the Old Testament precedent and Christian anointing rites to construct a relationship of continuity between the Church and the Visigothic kingdom, on the one hand, and the history of ancient Israel, on the other, according to which the Gothic monarchs were assimilated into the ancient Hebrew theocratic kings.³⁵⁵ In fact, throughout the 7th century, the rite of anointing became, above the election and elevation to the throne that accompanied the royal inauguration, the constitutive act of assumption of full sovereignty by the candidate chosen by the nobility.

The close parallel that could be established between the new situation created by Leander's anointing of Hermenegild and the story of David and Saul is the second of the reasons (the first obviously was the abjuration of the *fides gothica*) that we consider put the court of Toledo on

³⁵³ For a discussion on the topic of the royal anointing among the Goths we refer to our previous works, Barroso - Morín 2004; Barroso - Morín - Velázquez 2008: 501 ff.

³⁵⁴ 'Les deux aspects du sacramental chrétien - signe extérieur et réalité intérieure - reproduisent ainsi les deux onctions successives de l'Ancien Testament, l'une secrète, ou onction constitutive, et l'autre publique, ou onction déclarative' ('The two aspects of the Christian sacramental - external sign and interior reality - thus reproduce the two successive anointings of the Old Testament, one secret, or constitutive anointing, and the other public, or declarative anointing') (Teillet 1984: 609).

³⁵⁵ Teillet 1984: 610.

alert. Logically, this is not something that happened immediately, but it became more evident as events unfolded that showed Hermenegild as a prince unjustly persecuted by his father. It is at this point that Leovigild made a big mistake.

The royal couple had been sent to Seville probably with the intention of controlling their movements, since that city had been the power centre of the lineage of Goisuintha. However, the court of Toledo had not supposed that the situation in Baetica would have changed greatly since the times of Athanagild. The province was the most Christianised of the entire kingdom and the one with the most developed ecclesiastical and episcopal organisation. It was also the



Fig. 32. : León. Cathedral. Antiphony. Anointing of David.

one with the greatest cultural and urban development and where the influence of the ancient Roman Empire could still be felt with some force. To all this would have to be added the desire for autonomy that was enjoyed in Baetica since the end of the Imperial administration and prior to the consolidation of Visigothic power. In this rarefied panorama, it is not strange that towards the last third of the 6th century a large part of the Visigothic nobility of Baetica had apostatised from Arianism to

convert to the Catholic faith, undoubtedly the gateway to a prestigious culture. In this context, the Visigothic monarchy represented by Leovigild – after all a barbarian monarch – could offer little to a Baetic nobility, which, religiously and culturally, had its eyes set on the model of Constantinople and the ancient Roman Empire, not on the one offered by the Toledo of Leovigild and Goisuintha. The king’s offensive against Hermenegild, who had been appointed co-regent by Leovigild himself, only made things worse, because, apart from alienating him

even more from the Baetic nobility, it was too reminiscent of the reaction that King Saul had had with the young David.³⁵⁶

Therefore, it is pertinent to pause for a moment on this famous episode of religious history. As is known, once Saul was rejected by God for having disobeyed his commands, the Prophet Samuel, following a divine order, anointed the youngest of Jesse's sons, David, as the new king of Israel. The rest of the story is well known: young David challenges the Philistine giant Goliath and defeats him with divine help, armed only with a simple shepherd's sling. In this way, Jesse's son became the champion of the Israelites and the people's favourite. Saul himself offered him the hand of his daughter Michal – which would make David his own son – and appointed him general of his armies. However, David's popularity among the people would eventually arouse Saul's hatred and resentment, who did not hesitate to persecute him fiercely and force him to seek refuge among Israel's enemies. It is worth noting that, despite the unjust persecution he was subjected to, David at all times showed loyalty to the king of Israel, and on every occasion God put Saul's life in his hands, David refused to kill him because he considered him 'the anointed' (*christos*) of the Lord and, therefore, recognised his consecrated character: no one can touch God's anointed without falling into *anathema*.³⁵⁷

Seen in this way, the parallel of Hermenegild's rebellion with the story of Saul and David is astonishing and more than evident, and it becomes even clearer when Leovigild decides to march on Seville to fight his son without him making any gesture to defend himself from the king's attack. It is at this moment that Hermenegild presents himself not only as an *electus Dei* ('a chosen of God'), but as a son persecuted by his father, as the inscription of Alcalá de Guadaíra demonstrates. The parallel with the story of David also explains why Hermenegild did not act against his father when he had everything in his favour; a decision difficult to explain in political and military terms but not from the point of view of a convert who has made the Hebrew king his model of prince. In this sense, the testimony of Gregory of Tours is very significant and makes it very clear what Hermenegild's intentions were. The anointing of Leander, and the sacred connotations that the ritual endowed, only served to remind more and more of the biblical story of Saul and David. In this way, Leovigild, like Saul, was in the eyes of Hermenegild the legitimate king and in the paradoxical decision not to attack his father must undoubtedly have weighed religious scruples analogous to those that led David to spare the life of one whom he considered the legitimate king of Israel. This is the reason why Bishop Gregory attributes to the prince the enigmatic phrase that '*Non ueniat super me pater meus; nefas est enim, aut patrem a filio aut filium a patre interfici*' ('My father will not come upon me, for a father must not kill his son or a son his father') (HF 5 38), a sentence that, far from being an exhibition of cynicism, as some historians have interpreted, clearly expresses the prince's

³⁵⁶ Leaving aside the testimony of John of Biclaro and the epigraph of Alcalá de Guadaíra, we have the valuable testimony of the numismatic coinages of the second half of the 7th century, where the co-regents appear titled as such, and participating in the court iconography alongside the reigning monarch. Both monarchs hold in unison the cross that embodied the idea of sovereignty (Barroso - Morín 2004; Barroso - Morín - Velázquez 2008: 498-501). The chronology of the reigns was also counted from the time of election as co-regent, as seen in the famous inscription of San Juan de Baños and others similar (Gil 1978b: 86-92).

³⁵⁷ Vid. infra. n. 370.

refusal to rebel against his father and the idea that his conduct did not deserve paternal punishment.³⁵⁸

Thus, as J. Orlandis already suspected, Hermenegild was not the traitor or the rebel that many authors – following the testimony of the John of Biclaro and an incorrect interpretation of the chronicles of his time – have taken for granted, but a victim of his own historical circumstance: as happened with the anointing by Samuel of David, the conversion to Catholicism had proscribed him against his will, as the royal anointing provided the prince with a new and powerful charisma that the reigning dynasty undoubtedly lacked, whose ties with the ancient sacred lineage of the Balts, if they existed, were very remote and debatable.³⁵⁹

In addition, times were definitely changing and ancient paganism, like Visigothic Arianism, hardly possessed the importance it had had in its time. Now the pattern was marked by the new political models imported from the court of Constantinople, and at that point King Leovigild had been an advanced precursor, as St Isidore would remember in a famous passage from his *Historia Gothorum*, which in itself is a summary of the monarch's political program.³⁶⁰ His mistake, perhaps the greatest of his entire successful reign, was not to realise in time that a conversion to Catholicism would have provided the sacralisation of his power – probably in the Byzantine way, as would happen later when his son Reccared acceded to the throne – and therefore a stable ideological and theological basis to maintain his lineage. However, due to his interest in marking the differences with respect to the Empire and the Franks, Leovigild was forced to base his policy on maintaining Arianism as the main sign of Gothic identity at all costs. Only when Leander anointed Hermenegild with the holy oil before the assembly of Sevillian nobles did Leovigild realise his great mistake and try to follow a middle path that ended up not pleasing anyone. After the execution of Hermenegild, and on the verge of his own death, Leovigild must have understood – as evidenced by the testimonies of Gregory of Tours and Pope Gregory and there is no objective reason, in our opinion, to doubt them – that a radical change in politics of the court of Toledo was necessary. That is why he left everything ready for his son Reccared to take the initiative to open negotiations with Leander himself and the sector of the nobility that had supported Hermenegild, or who sympathised with Catholicism, in order to start a new phase in the history of the Visigothic kingdom.³⁶¹

³⁵⁸ Cf. I Sam. 24:7 and 26:9-11. The phrases spoken by David to justify his refusal to kill Saul will be remembered on the occasion of the IV Council of Toledo (see below).

³⁵⁹ According to Jordanes (Get. XIII 7-8), the early Gothic kings descended their lineage from gods called Anses, and perhaps this double inheritance, Christian and pagan, can still be recognised in the episodes of the column of smoke and the bee flying over the king's head at Wamba's anointing. In fact, there seems to exist a relationship between the ethnonym Goths and the god Gaut, one of Wotan's names. See Barroso - Morín - Velázquez 2008: 506, n. 40, and the bibliography cited there. Cf. López Quiroga 2011: 172. However, the disappearance of Theodoric's lineage had broken the ancient sacredness of Gothic royalty.

³⁶⁰ HG 51: *'primusque inter suos regali veste opertus solio resedit: nam ante eum et habitus et consessus communis ut populo, ita et regibus erat. fiscum quoque primus iste locupletavit primusque aerarium de rapinis civium hostiumque manubiis auxit condidit etiam civitatem in Celtiberia, quam ex nomine filii sui Recopolim nominavit. in legibus quoque ea quae ab Eurico incondite constituta videbantur correxuit, plurimas leges praetermissas adiciens, plerasque superfluas auferens'* (Mommsen 1894: 288).

³⁶¹ Díaz y Díaz 2004: 19.

The Third Council of Toledo, held in the cathedral basilica of Santa Maria in 589 CE, marks the final point in the history of the conversion of the Goths. Although it partly collects some of the political achievements initiated with the anointing of Hermenegild in Seville, the notion of royalty established by Reccared recalls more the Byzantine models than the proclamation of Hermenegild. In this sense, his reign can be seen as a continuation of his father's under the protection of the Catholic Church (what has been called the 'Reccaredian turn'), but fundamentally not very different from what Leovigild had in mind. With the death of Hermenegild, the political situation had changed drastically and Reccared could now present himself as the undisputed and sole king. In addition, his conversion had been of a private nature

and had occurred two years before the synod meeting, so the anointing did not have the symbolism that his brother's had enjoyed. This made the royal inauguration of Reccared acquire totally different features to those that Hermenegild's conversion had adopted. Indeed, the council of 589 exhibits an imitation of Imperial political uses without any trace of the practice of royal anointing initiated by Hermenegild. It is not surprising, therefore, to see how the acts of the council record the acclamations that the nobility and bishops made to the king (a Byzantine practice that by the coin legends we know had already occurred at the anointing of Hermenegild), but above all it is interesting to underline how these same acts present King Reccared seated in the midst of the bishops present there as a new Constantine or a new Marcian. Thus, like the Byzantine emperors, Reccared shows himself to the Visigothic clergy and nobility as one similar to the apostles, not as the theocratic king that Hermenegild had been.³⁶²

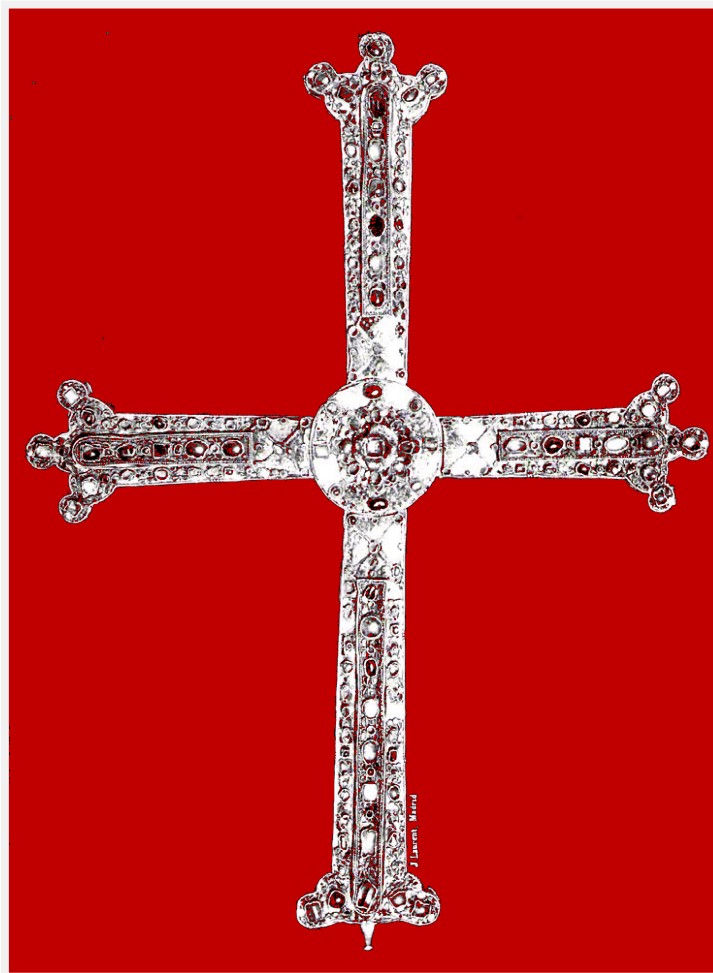


Fig. 33. Oviedo. Cámara Santa. Cross of Victory (before its last restoration).

It is clear that Bishop Leander played a principal and decisive role in the evolution of the political thought of the Goths, as evidenced by the choice of rite and the moment chosen. It is

³⁶² III Con. Tol.: *'sed quum die octavo iduum maiarum in unum coetum Dei sacerdotes adessent et oratione praemissa unusquisque sacerdotem competenti loco residissent, ecce in medio eorum adfuit serenissimus princeps...'* (Vives 1963: 108). Thompson 1985: 114 [= 1966: 95 ff].

also clear that Leander was fully aware of the profound symbolism that the anointing of Prince Hermenegild before the nobility would have in the context in which it was developed. In this sense, and although it is true that the circumstances – the existence of consort kings and the anointing of Hermenegild – helped to interpret the new situation through the mirror of sacred history, it is no less true that it must have been Leander who would underline this parallel before Hermenegild and the nobility and clergy of Seville. Gregory the Great and Isidore confirm the importance that Leander had in this story, even though they mask his role as the intellectual responsible for the elevation of Hermenegild as the simple author of the conversion of the Goths. It is difficult to think that the state of affairs could have been achieved without the prestige and intellectual depth of the Bishop of Seville.³⁶³ After all, Hermenegild was not the first king to adopt the Catholic faith and, on the other hand, his conversion had not presupposed an act of military rebellion against the king. The prince, in fact, could have remained as king subordinate to Leovigild even despite his Catholicism, as happened shortly after with the Suevic kings once they were subjected by Leovigild. Once again, we must reiterate that it was the intransigence of Goisuintha that precipitated the events.³⁶⁴

The circumstances that surrounded Reccared's accession to the throne were very different from those experienced a few years earlier with Hermenegild. Reccared was the only king, undisputed heir of Leovigild, at least within the family environment.³⁶⁵ On this occasion, Reccared also had several points in his favour: he was the son of a king, he was of a suitable age to accede to the throne, and he had shown himself to be an excellent military man under his father's orders. Apart from military prestige, Reccared had revealed himself at all times as a loyal, tolerant, and prudent man. Converted two years before the meeting of the Third Council of Toledo, his anointing, probably at the hands of Abbot Eutropius of Servitanus, did not have the solemnity or the special character that his brother's had had in Seville. In these circumstances, and as his father had done, Reccared was forced to seek his political references in the court of Constantinople and the ancient Imperial ceremonial. This is how we have seen

³⁶³ It is the general opinion, although the responsibility of Leander in the conversion of the prince is only known to us by foreign writers: Pope Gregory in his *Dialogi* (Greg. M. Dial. 3 31): '*...Hermenegildus rex Leuuigildi regis Visigothorum filius, ab Ariana heresia ad fidem catholicam, uiro reuerentissimo Leandro Hispalitano episcopo, dudum mihi in amicitia familiariter juncto, praedicante, conuersus est*, and implicitly in the dedication of his *Moralia*' (Epist. 1), where Gregory states that Leander was at the court of Tiberius I as an ambassador *pro causis fidei Wisigothorum*. See also Paul. HL 3 21 (Bethmann - Waitz 1878: 103 ff): '*Qui Herminigildus praedicatione Leandri episcopi Hispalensis atque adhortatione suae coniugis of him [Ingundi] ab Arriana heresi... ad catholicam fidem conuersus fuet.*' As far as the Spanish authors are concerned, John of Biclaro limits itself to highlighting the role of Leander in the organisation of the Council of 589, while Isidore points out only in a generic way that, thanks to his zeal and his faith, Leander was the promoter of the conversion of the Goths, as well as writing two small works against the Arian heresy (*Vir Illustr.* 28): '*composuit duos aduersus haereticorum dogmata libros, eruditione sacrarum scripturarum ditissimos, in quibus uehementi stilo arrianae impietatis confodit ac detegit prauitatem; ostendens scilicet, quid contra eosdem habeat catholica ecclesia uel quantum distet ab eis religione uel fidei sacramentis*' (Codoñer 1964: 150). Leander is also responsible for the *De laudibus et triumpho Ecclesiae ob conuersionem Gothorum* included in the acts of the Third Council of Toledo. Given the situation created after the civil war and the conversion of Reccared, the omission in both cases is not strange.

³⁶⁴ Iohan. Bicl. Chron. a. 583?, 584.2 (Mommsen 1894: 216).

³⁶⁵ The plots against Reccared are framed within the pro-Catholic politics of the king and the opposition of Goisuintha, or as an attempt to secede from Gallaecia (as we have defended in the case of Duke Argimundus), but within his lineage there was never an alternative candidate. On this, see Barroso - Morín - Sánchez 2015.

him appear as a new basileus before the bishops gathered at the Third Council.³⁶⁶ In this sense, Reccared limited himself to developing and putting into practice to the last consequences the political guidelines that King Leovigild had designed, although from the new faith that he had just adopted.³⁶⁷ Obviously, Reccared maintained the sacred character of royalty because it was an element that, by highlighting the different status between king and nobility, contributed to give a certain stability to the throne. This can be seen quite clearly in the way in which John of Biclaro accounts for the conspiracy in which the *dux* Argimundus had plotted to overthrow Reccared. For John of Biclaro, Argimundus's rebellion was a *nefanda* ('nefarious') and *impia machinatione* (an 'impious machination'), both terms that in the language of the time have a very clear religious connotation and suggest the rupture of a sacrament. To leave no room for equivocation, the chronicler contrasts both terms with the title of *orthodoxus rex* with which he had previously described Reccared.³⁶⁸

However, we have already said that the sacredness of the figure of the king acquired different nuances in the cases of Reccared and Hermenegild: the former was content to imitate and adopt the ceremonial of the Imperial court almost as Leovigild had done, while the latter had initiated a totally novel formula that resurrected a ritual of the Old Testament hitherto forgotten. The Byzantine influence must have been maintained by inertia during the reigns following the death of Reccared. His son and successor, Liuva II, marked with the stigma of illegitimate birth, could hardly enjoy the delights of the throne for in the near future. Witteric (603-610), who dethroned him and who had already conspired previously against Reccared, does not seem to have had many religious scruples. With Gundemar (610-612) and Sisebut (612-621) tranquillity returned to the kingdom, but they conformed to follow the example of Reccared and the model imposed by the Imperial court because it was already fully consolidated in Toledo.

Surely the Visigothic monarchy would have followed the Byzantine formula if it were not for an event that would change everything, and with protagonists who, in a certain way, reminded us of what had happened in Seville half a century earlier. Around the year 630/631, the successor of Sisebut, Suinthila, decided to associate his son Riccimir with him on the throne, a measure that had already been adopted by other kings before him (e.g. Reccared and Sisebut himself) and that like his own elevation had not met with the approval of the whole nobility. On this occasion the association of Riccimir also did not meet with the approval of the Gothic nobles,

³⁶⁶ Some authors have argued that Reccared was anointed at the time of being elevated to the throne, thus making the conversion of the Goths official: García Moreno 1998: 256, n. 28, following Sánchez Albornoz 1962: 14-16. But neither the minutes of the synod nor the chronicle of John of Biclaro allude to it. Nor are there explicit allusions to the monarch as the Lord's anointed, as we will see happened in the case of Sisenand. Furthermore, as has already been pointed out, the circumstances were very different from those of his brother, since the official conversion of 589 was preceded by another personal one two years before that was limited to the private sphere (Greg. Tur HF 9 15: '*...Richaredus... se catholicae lege subdidit et, acceptum signaculum beatae crucis cum crismatis unctione...*') Therefore, Reccared's anointing in 587 would not have had the political character of that of his brother and, for this reason, A. Barbero rejects the establishment of the rite with this king (Barbero 1972: 67 ff), thinking that it is only a matter of confirmation in the new faith. Furthermore, the controversial nature of Hermenegild's anointing and the political crisis it had unleashed did not provide an example worth emulating. Even so, we insist that the acclamations to the king at the Third Council must be understood according to the precedent of Hermenegild recorded on his coins and the later *Laudes Regiae* of the Frankish monarchs (Díaz and Díaz 1958; Godoy - Vilella 1986). On the relationship between King Reccared and Eutropius of Servitanus, see Díaz and Díaz 2004: 21, n. 43; Barroso - Morín 1996a.

³⁶⁷ Navarro 2000.

³⁶⁸ Ioh. Bicl. Chron. to. 590, 1 and 3. See Galán 1998: 59. For this conspiracy, see Barroso - Morín - Sánchez 2015.

and a significant number of them, under the command of the *dux* of Septimania, Sisenand, rose in arms against the king with the support of Dagobert I of Neustria. The immediate consequence was the overthrow of Suintila and the enthronement in his place of Sisenand. Suintila and his family were granted their lives in exchange for accepting deposition and exile on quite fair terms. However, the new king did not have the support of the whole Gothic aristocracy at least that is deduced from the fact that just two years after his triumph over Suintila he was forced to convene a new general council – the first after the conversion – that would oversee the thorny issue of the succession to the throne of the Goths.

The context in which the celebration of the Fourth Council of Toledo is framed is one of kings (Reccared-Liuvia II, Sisebut-Reccared II, and Suintila-Ricimir) who were determined to make succession a dynastic issue once the prestige granted to the ancient lineage of the Balts had faded and a nobility willing to dispute that royal prerogative. This situation provoked new attempts at usurpation by sectors of the Gothic aristocracy who were discontented with the election of the new candidate, which in turn translated into a dangerous situation of political instability for the kingdom. The Fourth Council of Toledo, held in the year 633 under the presidency of Isidore of Seville, convened with the idea of putting an end once and for all to the situation of insecurity that threatened to destroy the entire framework raised as a result of the great political pact that had led to the conversion of 589.

In a way, as we have already said, the situation that arose with the uprising of Sisenand presented a certain parallelism with the episode concerning Hermenegild fifty years earlier, although this time Sisenand had achieved the goal of being enthroned in Toledo, something that does not seem to have entered the plans of the martyr-prince. However, the question that presented itself to Isidore and the bishops gathered there was in a way similar: how to legitimise the power of a usurper when the legitimate king continued to live. Obviously, there are two ways to do it: by sheer force, which in a context of a divided nobility could end in war, or through a mechanism that sanctioned the king above the rest of the nobility. At that moment, it must not have been difficult for Isidore to remember what had happened half a century before in Seville, when his brother Bishop Leander had anointed Prince Hermenegild with the sacred oil as a new David. We do not know exactly what happened at the Fourth Council because the minutes are limited to expressing the political terms of the agreement and do not describe the details, but the reading of them suggests that Isidore applied the example of Leander and Hermenegild and anointed Sisenand as king before the nobility and the episcopate gathered in Toledo. From that moment, the formula of royal anointing must have been fixed as the essential and constitutive element of royalty among the Goths. In fact, from that date it is quite common to see literary sources granting the Visigothic monarch the title of *minister Dei*.³⁶⁹

Saying this, the silence of the sources, and particularly the *Historia Gothorum* of St Isidore, seems to be against our hypothesis, but we lack for this time (between the end of the 6th and the middle of the 7th century) a documentary source of sufficient detail that compares to that of Julian of Toledo at the end of the seventh century, which narrates the crowning of Wamba and the rebellion that gave rise to it. In both cases, however, the silence of Isidore is more than understandable given that in his inner court the Bishop of Seville must have understood that

³⁶⁹ King 1981: 68, n. 146. See also Sánchez Albornoz 1981: 16 ff; Barroso - Morín 2004: 31-35.

both pretenders – Hermenegild and Sisenand – shared backgrounds of illegitimacy that might be expected to have had a negative bearing on the chosen model of kingship. However, the explicit allusions to the history of David and Saul made by the fathers of the Fourth Council, and the very fact that among important ecclesiastical sectors there was already a favourable inclination towards linking the barbarian monarchies with Davidic kingship, leave little room for doubt.³⁷⁰

As has been said, it was the Acts of the council itself that support this reading. Canon 75 of the synod unequivocally expresses the new theocratic nature of the king by appealing to the scriptural testimonies relating to David and Solomon that underlined the sacramental character of the rite: *'tulit igitur Samuhel cornu olei et unxit eum in medio fratrum eius et directus est spiritus Domini in Daud'* (I Sam. 16: 13); *'et unguat eum ibi Sadoc sacerdos et Nathan propheta in regem super Israhel et canetis bucina atque dicetis uiuas rex Salomon'* (I Reg. 1: 34). Moreover, in an attempt to emphasise the consecrated and inviolable character of the king, the conciliar fathers recalled the well-known passage of the encounter between David and Saul in the cave of Engaddi: *'noli tangere christos meos; Quis, inquit, extendet manuum suam in Christum Domini et innocens erit?'* (I Sam. 24: 7). Isidore and the fathers of the council also recalled other parallel passages of Scripture that underlined the new sacred and inviolable charisma with which the Gothic monarch was endowed and which aimed to give stability to the kingdom in the delicate matter of the succession to the throne: *'...quis enim extendit manum suam in christum Domini et innocens erit... ne extendam manum meam in christum Domini'* (I Sam. 26: 9-11).³⁷¹

In other words: the testimony of the Acts of the Fourth Council conclusively proves that the Visigothic monarch was already considered as a *Christos* ('Anointed') of the Lord, which constitutes a sure indication that Sisenand was effectively anointed by the council, probably by Isidore himself, since he was the one who presided over that synod and was also the most influential character of his time. From this perspective, there are few doubts that the idea of the anointing came again from the Bishop of Seville. Only later, as the prestige of the dignity of the metropolitan of Toledo increased, does the anointing of Visigothic kings seem to have been the preserve of the bishop of the *urbs regia*. This is evidenced by the fact that Wamba decided to delay the anointing until his return to Toledo, and also there is the example of the usurper Suniefred and Bishop Sisbert. However, although convenient in the case of legal election, it was not a completely necessary element in exceptional situations, especially if there were a rebellion or usurpation during the process, as we know that the usurper Paulus was anointed in

³⁷⁰ García Moreno 1986: 257, n. 64, based on the testimonies of Gregory the Great (Reg. Past.) and Isidore of Seville (Sent. III 49 1; Campos - Roca 1971: 497), and the later one of Gregory of Tours (HF 4 20). Among the pagan Germans, the conception of the divine origin of the monarchical institution was common, which would favour its adaptation to the Christian political culture: Oakley 1980: 85 ff and Barbero 1992: 57, 64 ff, who does not rule it out for the Visigoths (71).

³⁷¹ Conc. Tol. IV c. 75: *'Illi ut notum est in memores salutis suae propria manu se ipsos interimunt, in semetipsos suosque reges proprias convertendo uires, et dum Dominus dicat: Nolite tangere Christos meos: et Daud: Quis, inquit, extendet manum suam in Christum Domini et innocens erit?... Quod si diuinam iracundiam uitare uolumus et seueritatem eius ad clementiam prouocare cupimus, seruemus erga Deum religionis cultum atque timorem et usque in mortem custodiamus erga principes nostros pollicitam fidem atque sponsonem... Quiquemque igitur a nobis uel totius Spaniae populis qualibet coniuratione uel studio sacramentum fidei suae, quod patriae gentisque Gothorum statu uel obseruatione regiae salutis pollicitus est, temptauerit aut regem nece adtractauerit aut potestatem regni exuerit aut praesumptione tyrannica regni fastigium usurpauerit anathema sit in conspectu Dei Patris et angelorum, atque ab ecclesia catholica quam periurio profanauerit...'* (Vives 1963: 217-219).

Septimania, as would Roderic be years later when he was irregularly elevated to the throne in Cordoba.

The sacredness of the monarch defined in the Synod of Toledo of 633 will be remembered in later councils and in various literary testimonies on the occasion of the attempts at usurpation that periodically shook the agitated life of the Visigothic kingdom. A very significant example of this is what happened at the Sixteenth Council of Toledo, a synod convened in 693, shortly after the failed attempt at usurpation by the noble Suniefred against King Egica. As far as we know of the conspiracy, a dark episode in the history of the Visigothic kingdom, the noble Suniefred was able to take control of Toledo and, in order to legitimise his usurpation, was anointed there by the hands of the metropolitan Sisbert. The punishment that the council imposed on both leaders once the uprising was quelled indicates the importance that was given to the rite of royal anointing among the Goths and the importance that the Bishop of Toledo had acquired by then.³⁷²

Likewise, the consecrated character of the Visigothic monarchs is implicitly shown through the epithets used to designate the kings. We have seen this previously in the case of monetary coinages of Hermenegild with appeals to the divinity, but it is also evident in the titles adopted by the kings of the 7th century, whom the sources, both literary and numismatic, describe with epithets like *religiosus*, *orthodoxus*, *pius*, or their superlative variants.³⁷³ In this sense, it is significant that shortly after the middle of the 7th century, Julian of Toledo describes the rite of anointing Wamba with expressions such as *sanctae unctionis signum*, *sacrae unctionis vexilla*, *signum salutis*, *signum tantae gloriae*, etc., all expressions inspired by the rite of confirmation and referring to the cross that was signed on the forehead of the catechumen/candidate.³⁷⁴ The term *religiosus* is especially pleasing to St Julian, surely because of the importance that the bishop attached to the rite of anointing within the ceremonial of the sovereign's investiture, since his work had been composed precisely to avoid episodes like those led by the *dux* Paulus and with a view to achieving a general agreement among the different factions of the Gothic

³⁷² Conc. Tol. XVI c. 9: '*...Ita consequens bonum est post Deum regibus, utpote iure uicario ab eo praelectis, fidem promissam quemque inuiolabili cordis intentione seruare et nulla contra eum occasione quicquam nocibilitatis excogitare nihilque nequius definire, dicente Domino: Nolite tangere Christos meos, et iterum Dauid: Quis enim extendet manum suam in Christum Domini et innocens erit?, item ipse cuidam conminans: Quare non timuisti mittere manum tuam ut occideres Christum Domini?*' Immediately afterwards, Canon 10 literally repeats the condemnation of Canon 75 of the IV Conc. Tol. (Vives 1963: 509-512). For an analysis of this conspiracy, see Barroso - Morín - Sánchez 2018a: 120-130.

³⁷³ Already the III Conc. Tol. had greeted Reccared as an orthodox prince and, around that time, John of Biclaro had called him most 'Christian' and 'orthodox' (Ioh. Bicl. Chron. Ann. 590? 1 and 3), but even more significant are the words that Julian of Toledo dedicates to newly anointed Wamba: Iul. Tol. HWR 2: '*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*. HWR 3: *... tamen dilato unctionis tempore usque in nono decimo die, ne citra locum sedis antiquae, sacraretur in principe*'; (HWR 9-11: '*Illo tunc tempore, cum haec intra Gallias agerentur, religiosus Wamba princeps feroces Wasconum debellaturus gentes adgrediens, in partibus commorabatur Cantabriae... Ipse tamen religiosus princeps cum multiplici bellantium manu praecedentes subsequeretur... Princeps uero religiosus praedictorum castrorum subiugato exercito...*'; HWR 21: '*Heu! peccauimus in caelum et coram te, sacratissime princeps*' (Levison 1910: 507-519).

³⁷⁴ Teillet 1984: 608.

nobility who were at odds with each other, i.e. in a context similar to the one Isidore had faced half a century earlier.³⁷⁵

On the other hand, the descending theory of power elaborated by Christian thought and which goes back to the Gospels and the apostle Paul, and which in Visigoth Spain had been developed by St Isidore,³⁷⁶ will find an explicit exposition in several synodal and legal provisions of this period.³⁷⁷ The idea that guides the fathers of the Hispano-Gothic Church is always the same: to achieve the stability of the kingdom through the sacralisation of the figure of the monarch. The king must be placed on a different plane from the rest of the nobility and not as a simple *primus inter pares*, more or less accepted. The conception of Visigothic royalty as an institution of divine origin will be reaffirmed through a pact signed between the king and the nobility, and expressed in the form of an oath of fidelity, first demanded of the notables of the kingdom and then extended, from the reign of Egica (687-702), to all the population in general. It is important to underline that, according to Visigoth canonical legislation, the breaking of this oath brought upon the transgressor not only the consequent penalty of *lèse-majesté* inherent to the political condition of an act of tyranny, but also attracting to the guilty religious condemnation and divine judgment (*anathema maranatha*), which is appropriate for an act of a religious nature.³⁷⁸ It is evident that this religious penalty was due to the fact that, through the rite of anointing, the Visigothic monarch had been elevated to the same consecrated state as the priest: by the anointing of the chrism, the baptised received the name 'Christian', i.e. 'anointed', distinctive of the priesthood and royalty.³⁷⁹ In reality, given the similarities and the object of the rite, it is very likely that the development of the Visigothic process of royal anointing was inspired by

³⁷⁵ On the subject, see Teillet 1984: 606 ff; García Herrero 1998. For the terminology used to refer to the Visigoth kings, see Vives 1963: 342 (Reccesuinth); 217-222, 268-277, 344 (Wamba); 415, 507-512 (Erwig); 449 (Egica). Note that the emperor is also designated as *pio et religioso principe* (p. 442).

³⁷⁶ Jn. 19: 11; 1 Pe. 2: 11-19; Rom. 13: 1s; Isid. Hisp. Sent. III 48-49 (Campos - Roca 1971: 494-497).

³⁷⁷ XVI Conc. Tol. c. 9: '*...post Deum regibus, utpote iure uicario ab eo praelectis; LV II.1.7 [Égica]: cum diuine uoluntatis imperio principale caput regnandi sumat sceptrum, non leui quisque culpa constringitur, si in ipso sue electionis primordio aut iurare se, ut moris est, pro fide regia differat aut, si ex palatino officio fuerit, ad eiusdem noui principis uisurus presentiam uenire dessitat. Si quis sane ingenuorum de sublimatione principali cognouerit et, dum discussor iuramenti in territorio illo accesserit, ubi eum habitare constiterit...*' (Zeumer 1902: 52 ff).

³⁷⁸ Conc. Tol. IV c. 75: '*Sacrilegium quippe esse, si uioletur a gentibus regum suorum promissa fides, quia non solum in eis fit pacti transgressio, sed et in Deum quidem in cuius nomine pollicetur ipsa promissio.*' See also V Conc. Tol. c. 5; VIII Conc. Tol. c. 2; X Conc. Tol. c. 2; XII Conc. Tol. c. 1; XVI Conc. Tol. c. 9 and 10. As in the case of the royal anointing, knowledge of the details of the ceremony of the oath of fidelity is something we owe to García de Villada. Father Villada was successful in reconstructing this ceremony from the 'Order to Bless the King when One is Elevated to the Throne by the Clergy and the People' as transcribed in the *Ritual of Cardena* (García de Villada 1932: 85). As the title itself indicates, this ritual took place when the nobility and the high clergy had jurisdiction in the royal election, something that only happened in the Visigoth period. Sánchez Albornoz (1962: 7) warns us that the date of this ceremonial is late however (9th-12th centuries), and that it is a faithful reproduction of the *Ordo ad regem benedicendum* used by Franks, Germans, and Anglo-Saxons, but he admits that it may be based on an older Visigoth formula (1962: 32). Bango (2011-2012) is essential for this. On the oath, see García y García 1981: 105-123.

³⁷⁹ Cogn. Bapt. 122: '*Quae unctio primum in Aaron et filios eius in testimonium sacerdotii et sanctitatis insigne ab eodem Mose habetur in lapsa. Deinde in honorem gloriae Reges eodem chrismate ungebantur. Unde por illis dicitur: Nolite tangere Christos meos. In Sacerdotibus autem et Regibus erat haec mystica unctio tantum, qua Christus Rex et Sacerdos futurus figurabatur... Postquam uero Dominus noster Iesus Christus, Rex uerus, et Sacerdos aeternus, a Deo Patre, caelesti et mystico est delibutus unguento... non iam soli Pontifices et Reges, sed omnis Ecclesia sancti unguenti chrismate consecratur, propter quod aeterni Regis et Sacerdotis est sanctissimum membrum*' (Cogn. bapt. 123; Eccl. off. II 26, 1-2).

the liturgy of episcopal ordination plus some added elements taken from the history of David and Samuel.³⁸⁰

From our point of view, there are few doubts that, from the time of the Fourth Council of Toledo, the anointing in the *sedes regia* had already become the main constitutive act of Visigothic royalty. This explains why, in the year 672, once elected in Gerticos by the nobles gathered around the corpse of King Recceswinth, Wamba decided to wait for his return to Toledo – nineteen days after his election – to be anointed in front of all the nobility and the people of the Goths.³⁸¹ In case there were doubts that this was not a novelty forged *ad hoc*, Julian of Toledo himself emphasises that Wamba was anointed king of the Goths following the custom (*ex more*). In no case, then, is it a new ritual introduced by this king as some authors have supposed, but a tradition already established in Julian's time.

Towards the last third of the 7th century, the evolution towards the sacralisation of royal power among the Goths was already established and accepted by the nobility. The *Historia Wambae Regis* presents the Gothic sovereign as predestined by God to govern the kingdom and his people (*patria ac gens Gothorum*). The very title of *religiosus princeps* with which Julian of Toledo repeatedly greets King Wamba comes to encompass, beyond the Old Testament notion of shepherd-king, the consecrated character of the monarch and the divine filiation in origin of royal sovereignty. In this sense, it is more than significant how an author such as Julian, well versed in apocalyptic hermeneutics, establishes clear opposition between the *religiosus princeps* (King Wamba) and the powers of evil stirred up by Satan, incarnated in the person of the *tyrannus* and *filius perditionis* (the usurper Paulus).³⁸²

Moreover, Julian of Toledo provides details of how the rite of anointing was carried out in the times of the Goths, at least as it would be in the second half of the 7th century CE. Although there is no earlier source that allows us to affirm this with certainty, we do not believe that before that date the development of the liturgy of the rite of anointing was very different from that which Julian narrates for the royal inauguration of King Wamba, that is if the importance given to the officiating bishop varied at all, a responsibility that was practically monopolised by the Metropolitan of Toledo, a dignity increasingly relevant within the power structures of the Visigothic kingdom³⁸³.

According to Julian, the anointing ceremony of Wamba took place in the praetorian basilica (i.e. military church) of the Holy Apostles Peter and Paul (*'At ubi uentum est, quo sanctae unctionis uexillam susciperet, in pretoriensi ecclesia, sanctorum Petri et Pauli'*). Once inside the basilica,

³⁸⁰ Teillet 1984 : 61.

³⁸¹ HW 3: *'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'* (Levison 1910: 502).

³⁸² Teillet 1984: 606. Once again, an echo of the Luciferian *non serviam* must be noted.

³⁸³ It is true that Roderic was not anointed in Toledo, but in Cordoba. But that anointing (like others of the style carried out in the final years of the Visigoth kingdom) occurred in a context of usurpation of the throne. Since he only reigned for one year, it cannot be assigned as an example contrary to what is defended here. The theory indicated that the anointing was imposed by the Bishop of Toledo. Furthermore, the example of Wamba, who delayed his anointing until he reached Toledo, seems conclusive to us. This also explains the seriousness of Suniefred's usurpation during the reign of Egica, because the nobleman had the support of the Metropolitan Sisbert.

the monarch knelt before the altar and received on his head the sacred ointment and the blessing of the metropolitan, who signed his forehead with a cross.³⁸⁴ Beyond this, we do not know with certainty how exactly the ritual was developed, though, as could not be otherwise, the example of David's anointing by the Prophet Samuel must have been the chosen model.

Although, as already mentioned, we do not have contemporary testimonies, at the beginning of the last century, and using early medieval documents that could be taken to apply to the Visigoths, Father Z. García de Villada reconstructed the Gothic royal anointing ritual. According to Father Villada, at the time of the solemn anointing of the prince, the Metropolitan of Toledo proclaimed a formula in which the precedent of Samuel and David was expressly mentioned:

'Let these hands be anointed with the holy oil with which kings and prophets were anointed, as Samuel anointed David when he consecrated him king, so that you may be blessed and constituted king in this kingdom over this people that your Lord God gave you to rule and govern, which He Himself deigned to grant you.'³⁸⁵

The *Officium in Ordinatione Regis* of the Legionary Antiphony, which also relates the ancient Visigothic tradition, insists on this characterisation of the king as a new David by citing the words of the psalmist: '*Inueni Dauit seruum meum oleo sancto unxi eum*' (Ps. 89/88, 21).³⁸⁶

On the other hand, the spatial framework where the anointing was performed was an important element of the ritual. The basilica of the Apostles Peter and Paul was undoubtedly a particularly relevant scenario on the symbolic and ideological plane because of the intimate link that united the temple with the court and the army. Indeed, as we have argued in previous studies, the praetorian basilica was located in front of the palace of the Visigothic kings, approximately in the place that today occupies the Hospital de la Santa Cruz, within the palatine citadel that the Arabs later called Al-Hizam ('belt', i.e. walled enclosure, citadel) and that formed an urban area separated from the rest of the city. It was, as has been said, a military and palatine church separated from the royal palace by a wide esplanade dedicated to the various ceremonial activities, military, civil, religious.³⁸⁷ We suppose the latter because here took place another important ritual that also required a certain scale – the ceremony involving the parading of the cross before a military campaign – and because this urban space maintained the same role in medieval times.³⁸⁸

After the royal anointing, once invested with the sacred character that it conferred, the Visigothic king presented himself to his people not only as their military leader, who until then

³⁸⁴ Iul. Tol. HWR 3: '*...ungise tamen per sacerdotis manus ante non passus est, quam sedem adiret regiae urbis, atque solum peteret paternae antiquitatis, in qua sibi opportunum esset et sacrae unctionis vexilla suscipere, et longe positorum consensum in electione sui patientissime sustinere*'; HWR 4: '*At ubi uentum est, quo sanctae unctionis uexillam susciperet, in praetoriensi ecclesia, sanctorum scilicet Petri et Pauli, regio iam cultu conspicuus ante altare diuinum consistens, ex more fidem populis reddidit. Deinde curbatis genibus oleum benedictionis per sacri Quirici pontificius manus uertici eius refunditur et benedictionis copia exhibetur, ubi statim signum hoc salutis emicuit*' (Levison 1910: 502 ff).

³⁸⁵ García Villada 1932: 88. Regarding the date and origin of this rite, see n. 377 above.

³⁸⁶ Brou - Vives 1959: 450.

³⁸⁷ Barroso - Morín 2007a: 108-113; Barroso - Carrobbles - Morín 2011: 54-60; Barroso *et al.* 2015: 30-36.

³⁸⁸ Barroso - Carrobbles - Morín 2009. For the urban topography of Toledo, see Barroso - Carrobbles - Morín 2013c.

had characterised royalty amongst the barbarian kings, but above all as *electus Dei*, defender of the faith and leader of the *milites Christi*, hence the transcendental importance that the ceremony of parading the cross among the Goths came to acquire. In this way, the cross – probably due to the popularity that the apocalyptic cross, with the letters alpha and omega hanging from the crossbar, had in the art of the time – acquired in Gothic Spain a sense in every way similar to that which the *labarum* of Constantine had had in the Christian Empire.³⁸⁹ Undoubtedly, this cross was the relic of the *lignum crucis* kept in the *ecclesia principalis* of the city, referring not to the cathedral, as usually supposed, but to its relationship with the *princeps* (the monarchy), or, in other words, the praetorian church of the Holy Apostles Peter and Paul.³⁹⁰ This same relic would be delivered by the Mozarabs of Toledo to King Alfonso III of Oviedo in a clear act of legitimisation of the Asturian kingdom as a continuation of Visigothic sovereignty, i.e. a symbolic act that confirmed the *translatio imperii* from Toledo to Oviedo. It is probably the same relic that is currently venerated in the monastery of Santo Toribio de Liébana (Cantabria).³⁹¹

After the anointing of King Wamba, and at his behest, we know that his successor Erwig was also anointed.³⁹² As is known, Erwig (680-687) had gained the throne irregularly through a palace conspiracy that had deposed Wamba and reduced him to a role within the clerical state.³⁹³ This illegitimacy of origin made the anointing of the new king, by Bishop Julian of Toledo, especially necessary and urgent. Even before Erwig, during the rebellion of the Narbonne, the *dux* Paulus had also tried to disguise his usurpation using this same legalistic clothing.³⁹⁴ Other late sources report the anointings of Egica and, what is more interesting for our study, of Wittiza in the year 700, still within the lifetime of his father and after several attempts at usurpation had been aborted.³⁹⁵ The Asturian chronicles also cite the anointing of Roderic (710-711), which is important because the Asturian royal tradition derived directly from this monarch and not from the lineage of Wittiza.³⁹⁶

³⁸⁹ Barroso - Morín 2004.

³⁹⁰ García Moreno 2015: 26-28.

³⁹¹ This is the largest fragment that has been preserved. Regarding the role of the *lignum crucis* as the banner of the kingdom of Oviedo, it is still essential Schlunk 1985.

³⁹² XII Conc. Tol. can. 1: 'Wamba... Ervigium post se praelegit regnaturum et sacerdotali benedictione ungendum... aliam quoque informationem iam dicti uiri in nomine honorabilis et santissimi fratris nostri Iuliani Toletanae sedis episcopi, ubi sub omni diligentiae ordine iam dictum dominum nostrum Erbigium in regno ungere deberet...' (Vives 1963: 386).

³⁹³ XII Conc. Tol. dog. 1 (Vives 1963: 385-387); The Chronicle of Alfonso III indicates that Erwig gave Wamba a poison ('esparto') to drink (Rot. 2; Seb. 2); the Rotensis version (3) adds: 'Eruigius regnum obtinuit qui tyrannide sumsit' (Gil et al. 1985: 118). The author of the *Chronicle of Albelda* explains that Wamba: 'Postea ab Eruigio regno priuatur' (Alb. XIII 30) (Gil et al. 1985: 170).

³⁹⁴ Epist. Pauli: 'In nomine Domini Flavius Paulus unctus rex orientalis Wambani regi autro' (Levison 1910: 500).

³⁹⁵ *Chronica Reg. Visig.*: 'Unctus est autem dominus noster Egica in regno in Ecclesia sanctorum Petri et Pauli pretoriensis sub die viii Kal. Dec. ...era DCCXXV; unctus est autem Vitiza in regno die quod fuit xvii K. Dec. aera DCCXXXVIII' (Zeumer 1902: 461).

³⁹⁶ 'Postquam Uitiza fuit defunctus, Rudericus in regno est perhunctus' (Rot. 7) (Gil et al. 1985: 120).

During the Asturian phase, in the full resurgence of the Gothic tradition, we have evidence of the anointing of Alfonso II in October 781.³⁹⁷ We do not know if the Asturian kings prior to Alfonso had been anointed in imitation of the Visigothic kings, although the reference to Roderic, albeit late, makes it certainly plausible. Taking into account the circumstances that surrounded the foundation of the kingdom of Asturias, it is logical that the Gothic tradition was also followed with regard to the royal inauguration, even if only out of inertia, since this was the known political model and because it was a tradition rooted almost a century earlier. However, it is not entirely impossible that the somewhat irregular way in which Alfonso II came to the throne made them turn their eyes at that moment towards the old Visigothic custom, or that they might have resorted to the most recent Frankish tradition in order to legitimise his power. In any case, we find the first option more feasible, i.e. the continuity of the Visigothic tradition in Asturias, not only because of the citation of Roderic's anointing, but above all because the political theory developed by Alfonso himself must be understood from the famous quote from the *Chronicle of Albelda* (881 CE) that presents the kingdom of Oviedo as a restoration in all ways of what the old Visigothic kingdom of Toledo had represented.³⁹⁸

In summary, everything seems to indicate that from the year 633, with the legitimisation of the usurpation of Sisenand, the Visigothic monarchs adopted the rite of royal anointing. In this way, they established a precedent for other anointings in the medieval period, and especially for the Carolingian dynasty, whose advent was also marked by the stigma of illegitimacy. In fact, in the France of the Carolingians, a phenomenon occurred that, to a certain extent, was similar to that experienced in Visigothic Spain with the usurpation of Sisenand. In 751, after a Frankish embassy to Pope Zacharias on behalf of Pepin the Short, the latter duly deposed Childeric III and was himself crowned in Soissons by Bishop Boniface before an assembly of notables. Three years later, and undoubtedly influenced by Visigothic custom, the same bishop anoints Pepin king.³⁹⁹ Unlike Sisenand, Pepin came to the throne through a palace coup and not through an armed rebellion, but the final conclusion was the same in both cases: the deposition of the legitimate king and the use of a religious mechanism that sanctioned such an anointing by consecrating the new monarch, as Samuel had done with David. Again, the appeal to the example of Saul and David and the consecrated character of the monarch are reflected in the letter of the Frankish episcopate on the occasion of the anointing of Louis the German in 858.⁴⁰⁰

A century and a half after its appearance in Spain, the Synod of Chelsea (787 CE) also documents the rite of anointing Anglo-Saxon kings. On this occasion, Ecgfrith, son of Offa of Mercia, was anointed as king by Archbishop Hygeberht of Lichfield. As we have seen in Spain and France, in

³⁹⁷ 'Hunctus est in regno predictus rex magnus Adefonsus XVIII Kalendas Octobris era quo supra [DCCCXVIII]' (Rot. 21) (Gil et al. 1985: 138).

³⁹⁸ Chron. Albend. XV 9: '...omnemque Gotorum ordinem, sicuti Toletum fuerat, tam in ecclesia quam palatio in Ouetao cuncta statuit.' Alfonso himself had been associated as *comes palatii* following Visigoth practice (Rot. 18-19 and Seb. 19; Gil et al. 1985: 174, 136-138). Barbero - Vigil 1982: 315. Cf. Bango 2011-2012.

³⁹⁹ Annales regni Francorum a. 750: 'Pippinus secundum morem Francorum electus est ad regem et unctus per manuum sanctae memoriae Bonifacii archiepiscopi et eleuatus a Francis in regno in Suessionis ciuitate'; a. 754: 'Supradictus apostolicus Stephanus confirmauit Pippinum unctione sancta in regem' (Kurze 1895: 8 ff). See Sánchez Albornoz 1962: 17; 1981: 17-19; Barbero 1992: 56 ff. The custom will endure among the Frankish kings. Thus, in 816, Pope Stephen IV also anointed and crowned Louis the Pious in Reims.

⁴⁰⁰ Epist. ad Hludowici (Boretius - Krause 1897: 427-441).

England also the introduction of the rite of royal anointing was accompanied by an irregularity in the origin of the candidate, due to the political situation that the island was experiencing, divided as it was into several independent kingdoms. In this case, the irregularity was twofold, as it also affected the officiating bishop, Hygeberht of Lichfield, who had been elected after Archbishop Jaenberht of Canterbury had refused to anoint the candidate. As a reward for his collaboration, the see of Lichfield was elevated to the rank of archbishop by Offa. However, in England, where the royal anointing lasted throughout the Middle Ages, there are few doubts that the adoption of the rite was done in imitation of the Carolingian sovereigns.⁴⁰¹

⁴⁰¹ On this topic and its repercussions on the island's art, see Schapiro 1987.

Conclusions: Hermenegild, King David and the sacralisation of Gothic kings

The civil war that pitted Leovigild against his son Hermenegild, as we know, has been interpreted by most historians as a consequence of the prince's previous rebellion. The generally negative judgments of contemporaries and the interpretations derived from them have turned Hermenegild into little less than a traitor. Only J. Orlandis felt able to argue differently, albeit addressing the problem from a purely technical point of view and focusing the issue within the context of textual criticism.

However, as we have also had occasion to see, a detailed analysis of the events proves that Hermenegild never intended to rise up in arms against the king. In fact, he limited to defending himself from Leovigild's attack when the king decided to opt for a military solution. Obviously, this peaceful attitude of the prince bolsters his morality legacy, so often questioned by historians. The truth is that Hermenegild initiated no offensive against Toledo, nor did he even take advantage of the opportune occasion when the king was far from the court. Even his appeal to Constantinople seems to have occurred after Leovigild's reaction to the prince's conversion. The reason for Hermenegild's apparently strange behaviour could be sought in his singular conversion to Catholicism and the undeniable parallel it had with the fabled history of King David. Anointed by St Leander, as David had been by the Prophet Samuel, Hermenegild respected from his religious beliefs the legitimacy of King Leovigild, just as David had with King Saul, and refused to rise up in arms against one whom, in conscience, he considered a legitimate king. This is demonstrated both by the inscription of Alcalá de Guadaira – where both father and son appear titled as kings – and by the phrase that Gregory of Tours attributes to the prince during the siege the king was subjecting him to, i.e. 'it is not right for a father to kill his son nor for a son to kill his father', words that recall those of David himself in Engaddi cave when he refused to raise a hand against the Lord's anointed.

The moral dimension of Hermenegild's actions has been one of the heated points of historical discussion. Over the centuries, many Catholic authors have argued that, whatever the prince's responsibility at the start of the civil war, his martyrdom would have cleansed his sins. However, we have shown that the reality must have been quite different: the executioner's axe would have done nothing but spell the end of morally irreproachable behaviour. Only in this way is the apparent contradiction of a traitorous son who prefers to die a martyr rather than renounce his faith resolved – a paradox that has always puzzled historians and made the tragic figure of the prince so attractive. In our view, nothing in this story is what it might seem at first glance: neither was Hermenegild a traitor, nor Leovigild a cruel despot, nor Reccared an opportunist. They were only characters trapped in a Gothic family tragedy. Only the women in this story seem to fit well into the roles traditionally assigned to them: Goisuintha proud in her lineage; Ingundis the fervent Catholic.

In light of everything said in these pages, Hermenegild's conversion to Catholicism can no longer be interpreted as a consequence of mere political calculation, but as a sincere act of faith that would have unforeseen consequences for the prince, but which would ultimately serve to

strengthen Gothic royalty by affirming it on a theocratic base and elevating it above the rest of the nobility. Thus, far from being an anecdotal episode, the anointing of Hermenegild in Seville by Bishop Leander marked a before and after in the political evolution of the monarchies of Western Europe. In fact, the example of Hermenegild not only forged a precedent for the sacralisation of the sovereign figure that differed from that elaborated by the Imperial courts of Rome and Constantinople, but it showed itself as a particularly useful mechanism for confirming in power those candidates for kingship whose access to the throne was stained with the stigma of irregularity or illegitimacy. If Hermenegild and Leander contributed to initiating the path towards a new sacralisation of royalty, Sisenand and Isidore made possible – from their practical involvement in the Fourth Council of Toledo – a model to be followed by the European courts of the Middle Ages. Years later, the political theory developed by the Hispano-Gothic thinkers – first by Leander and Isidore, and later by Julian of Toledo – continued within Carolingian France, surely coming from the many Hispano-Gothic clerics who took refuge there after 711, and whose influence on the Carolingian court we tirelessly defend.⁴⁰² Through the example of the Franks, the rite of royal anointing would spread throughout the West, to the point of constituting an essential and characteristic trait of medieval royalty. However, it is important to emphasise that none of this would have happened if, as common sense and logic dictate, a young crown prince had not decided to embrace the Catholic faith on a bright day (in Seville every day is bright) in the year 580 CE.

⁴⁰² Sánchez Albornoz 1981; Barroso *et al.* 2019.

ANNEX 1. On the location of the Monastery of Biclaro

Background

One issue among the many surrounding Hermenegild's rebellion is the location of the monastery founded by Abbot John of Biclaro. From the 16th century onwards, it was common opinion that the monastery was in the territory of present-day Catalonia, with its location mooted between the towns of Guissona, at a site called Fontclara, as proposed by the master Francisco Diago (1603), or in Vallclara, near Montblanc and the monastery of Poblet, as defended by Flemish humanist Jan Was (1552) and Jerónimo Pujades (1609) and accepted by Father Flórez.⁴⁰³

This was, as we say, general opinion until, in 1940, Ramón Menéndez Pidal suggested that the monastery was in Béjar – based on the derivation of the current toponym from an archaic *Biclarum* > **Béjaro* > Béjar:

‘Biclaro is an unknown place. The identification with a Valclara near Tarragona, which Vaseo proposed, is based only on the sound of the two names and is philologically unsustainable. Rather, I believe that Biclaro, through an archaic hypothetical, Béjaro, can be the modern Béjar, an excellent site for a monastery in Lusitania, homeland of John, born in Lusitania.’⁴⁰⁴

Manuel C. Díaz y Díaz, and other authors after him, considers Menéndez Pidal’s argument ‘phonetically irreproachable, while the locations in Catalonia are unsustainable and are based only on the episcopate of John in Gerona’.⁴⁰⁵ The location proposed by Menéndez Pidal has been accepted by most modern authors, or at least has been taken into account as a more than acceptable possibility. We ourselves have considered it correct in previous works, in which, for different reasons, we have dealt with this topic.⁴⁰⁶ Curiously, Manuel A. Marcos Casquero, born in Béjar, accepted Menéndez Pidal’s hypothesis, although he considered that the monastery of Biclaro was in Catalonia. But this opinion was based on attempts to attribute a Visigothic origin to the hermitage of Santa María de las Huertas of Béjar, something that the illustrious Latinist flatly denied.⁴⁰⁷

Precisely the philological argument is, as A. Bofarull acknowledged, the weakest point of the Catalan option due to the difficulty of deriving the toponym Vallclara from a Latin word⁴⁰⁸. Even the corresponding entry of the *Gran Enciclopèdia Catalana* accepts the location proposed by Menéndez Pidal, albeit placing the Salamanca population in León (we suppose it refers to the

⁴⁰³ Campos 1960: 22-25. The history of the research is developed in detail in Miró - Prats 2020. Regarding the old bibliography on this problem, and with some relevant exceptions, we restrict ourselves to these two studies.

⁴⁰⁴ Menéndez Pidal 1940: xxiv, n. 1.

⁴⁰⁵ Díaz y Díaz 1962: 65, n. 26.

⁴⁰⁶ Bodelón 1992-93; Galmés de Fuentes 2000: 57; Barroso - Morín - Sánchez 2018b; Barroso 2018: 168-171.

⁴⁰⁷ Marcos Casquero 1971; Cascón Matas 2009.

⁴⁰⁸ Bofarull 1876: 223 ff.

region of León of the past administrative division), and, surprisingly, adding that of Beja, in the Portuguese Alentejo, perhaps due to phonetic similarity. The geographical nonsense continues when the same Encyclopaedia places a foundation of Count Ramon Berenguer IV to the Premonstratensian monks in Cabacés in the Vallclara of the Conca of Barberá:

‘Monastery founded by the Lusitanian priest John of Biclaro, later bishop of Gerona, whose exact location is unknown. The false Biclaro form, not attested, has led to it being located in Vallclara (Conca de Barberà), a name that, however, was given to this place by Ramon Berenguer IV when he donated the place to the Premonstratensians. Identification with Beja (Alentejo) or Béjar (León) has been considered more probable.’⁴⁰⁹

However, a recent study by J.R. Miró and C. Prats (2020) has again fuels the controversy by locating the foundation named after the Visigothic bishop in another Catalan town of the same name: Cabacés (Cabasser) in Tarragona. The main argument put forward by the authors of the study is precisely the aforementioned donation by the Count of Barcelona and some reliefs in stone of supposedly Visigothic date.⁴¹⁰ Our following comments are intended to clarify some aspects of this study with which we disagree, especially (1) the location of the monastery, and (2) the alleged Visigothic dating of the Cabacés reliefs.

John of Biclaro – some biographical notes

Before beginning, we can remind ourselves of some biographical notes St Isidore of Seville offers of the founder of the monastery of Biclaro. These are important as Isidore was practically contemporary with the Bishop of Gerunda (Gerona), and, in addition, their lives must have crossed on several occasions, with Isidore acting as secretary to his brother, Leander.⁴¹¹

At the time when Isidore of Seville writes his work – between 615-618 CE – John was bishop of Gerona. The *Hispalensis* records that John was of Gothic origin (*natione Gothus*) and a native of Scallabis (the current Santarem, Portugal), in Lusitania. As a teenager he travelled to Constantinople, where he lived for seven years, acquiring his knowledge of Latin and Greek cultures. On his return to Spain he came into conflict with King Leovigild, who exiled him to Barcino (Barcelona). He was there for ten years, during which time, according to Isidore, he had to endure the ‘insidiousness’ of the Arians. John’s stay in the Imperial capital must be dated *c.* 569/570 to 576/577. It is Isidore who reports that, after the exile, John founded the monastery, ‘which they now call Biclaro’, for a community of monks, with John writing the rule that has not been preserved. Likewise, Isidore says that John wrote a continuation of the chronicle of Victor of Tunnuna, covering the period from the first year of the Emperor Justin to the eighth of Maurice and fourth of Reccared (567-590). His biographer also indicates that, as it was said, he

⁴⁰⁹ ‘Monestir fundat pel prevere lusità Joan de Bíclarum, després bisbe de Girona, que hom ignora on era situat exactament. La falsa forma Biclara, no testificada, feu que hom el localitzés a Vallclara (Conca de Barberà), nom que, tanmateix, fou posat a aquest indret per Ramon Berenguer IV en donar el lloc als premonstratencs. Hom ha considerat com a més probable la identificació amb Beja (Alentejo) o amb Béjar (Lleó)’ (Mundó 1971: 544 ff).

⁴¹⁰ Miró - Prats 2020.

⁴¹¹ Fontaine 2002: 99-112, who states that Isidore must have acted as coadjutor of St Leander, hence the family relationship with King Reccared and the subsequent political importance in the reigns of Sisebut, Suintila, and Sisenand. Cf. Díaz and Díaz 2004: 104-106.

wrote many other works, but that he personally had not been able to read. None have been preserved.⁴¹²

The rest of the documentation regarding John of Biclaro is extracted from his participation in the councils of the time plus some brief allusion that can be found in the prologue of his chronicle referring to his status as an eyewitness to the events he narrates. Thus, it is known that John's appointment as Bishop of Gerona must have taken place between the years 590-591, in any case after the Third Council of Toledo (589), which he attended as a mere observer, and before 592, when he already appears as a bishop among the prelates attending the Second Council of Zaragoza. As titular of Gerona, he attended the previously mentioned Synod of Zaragoza, the Council of Barcelona (599), and Egara (614). Apart from attending these, he is also mentioned among the bishops who sign the *De fisco Barcinonensi* (592) and the Decree of King Gundemar (610). He must have died c. 620/621, the year Bishop Nonnitus is documented as his successor to the bishopric of Gerona.⁴¹³

John's life, however, has its hidden corners, i.e. what were his motives for going to Constantinople as a teenager. Certainly there was a ready route – Scallabis was a city well connected to Lisbon's coast and it is known that at that time there were regular communications between the western ports of the peninsula and the eastern Mediterranean.⁴¹⁴

The reasons for his exile to Barcelona are also not clear. Isidore alludes to religious issues related to the Arian controversy. E.A. Thompson assumes that it was because he was a Goth and a Catholic and connected to Leovigild's measures aimed at gaining the support of the Goths for his religious policy. But this would mean that Isidore, who writes his work more than four decades after the events took place, would have mistaken his years of exile, as this could not have begun before 580, when the Arian synod that sanctioned the *novellus error* took place. Until that moment, Leovigild's policy had been one of tolerance towards Catholics.⁴¹⁵ In any case, there are few doubts that John came from an important Gothic lineage (otherwise his exile to Barcelona could not be understood), and therefore, his stay in Constantinople might have aroused in the court of Toledo some suspicions of collaboration with the enemy, especially when his departure practically coincided with the accession to the throne of Liuva I, Leovigild's brother.

Another mystery in John's story, as we are learning here, is the date of the foundation of the monastery of Biclaro. Isidore of Seville places this event right after narrating his exile in Barcelona. According to this, the foundation of the monastery must have taken place shortly after 587 (the death of Leovigild), coinciding with the return of the exiles, and before, and this is important to underline, being appointed Bishop of Gerona.⁴¹⁶ Since John was of Lusitanian

⁴¹² Isid. Hisp. Vir. Illustr. 31 (Codoñer 1964: 151 ff) (cit. n. 85).

⁴¹³ Johan. Bicl. Chron. Prol.: '...nos ergo in adiutorio domini nostri Iesu Christi quae temporibus nostris acta sunt ex parte quod oculata fide pervidimus et ex parte quae ex relatu fidelium didicimus, studuimus ad posteros notescenda brevi stilo transmittere' (Mommesen 1894: 211). Flórez, ES 6 (1771): 353-362; Görres 1895; Álvarez Rubiano 1943: 7-11; Campos 1960: 15-41; García Moreno 1974a: 213 ff, no. 616.

⁴¹⁴ Hillgarth 1961b.

⁴¹⁵ Thompson 1985: 94-104 [= 1966: 80-87].

⁴¹⁶ On the date of King Leovigild's death, see n. 320.

origin, this news seems to rule out the idea, often held, that his foundation must *necessarily* be situated in Catalonia.

On the other hand, the foundation of the monastery has been linked to an entry provided by the chronicle of John of Biclaro in which it refers to the restitution made by King Reccared of the assets previously confiscated by his father, and the patronage exercised by the new monarch over the Church and the monasteries.⁴¹⁷ It is possible that this is the case, although we consider that it is a non-specific allusion that could relate to many other monasteries and churches (i.e. Santa María de Toledo or Santa Eulalia de Merida), and particularly to the possible transfer of a significant part of the Servitanus monastery to Toledo, giving rise to the famous monastery of Agali. This is suggested by the importance that John's chronicle gives to everything that surrounds the foundation of Abbot Donatus.⁴¹⁸ This reference, therefore, is of little interest for the topic at hand.⁴¹⁹

Turning to the problem of the location of the monastery of Biclaro,⁴²⁰ as we have seen, several options have been put forward for this institution founded by John of Gerona:

There is the Catalonia region, and the three suggestions we have looked at above:

1. The first sites it in Guissona (Lleida), c. 45 km west of Manresa. This as the opinion proposed by F. Diago (1603) but it is today practically discarded.
2. The second, defended by Jan Was (1552) and J. Pujades (1609) and later accepted by most authors, places it in Vallclara (Tarragona), c. 8 km west of the monastery of Poblet.
3. The third is the recent theory of J.R. Miró and C. Prats suggesting Cabacés, also in the province of Tarragona, c. 30 km west of Reus.

For the Salamanca province, in the south we have the town of Béjar, on the border of this province with Cáceres. The hypothesis for here, as noted above, comes from R. Menéndez Pidal (1940), based on a suggested phonetic evolution of the toponym, i.e. *Bíclaro* > **Béjaro* > Béjar.

In looking next at the arguments for and against each of the above as the location of the monastery of Biclaro, it has to be said that at present there is no proof one way or the other, but, nevertheless, we are able to weed out some of the clearly erroneous details that have been hanging in the air for centuries, and present a hypothesis of our own that is coherent with the historical, philological, and archaeological data.

⁴¹⁷ Iohan. Bicl. a. 587? 7: 'Reccaredus rex aliena a praecessoribus direpta et fisco sociata placabiliter restituit. ecclesiarum et Monasteriorum conditor et ditator efficitur' (Mommmsen 1894: 218). Miró - Prats 2020.

⁴¹⁸ John of Biclaro himself has three entries related to this famous monastery in a chronicle, that is itself brief: 1) a mention to the Abbot Donatus, possibly alluding to his arrival in Spain (a. 571.4); 2) a reference to the Abbot Eutropius, that must link to his elevation as abbot at Servitanus (a. 584.5); and 3) another note on his preparations for the Third Council of Toledo (a. 590). See Barroso - Morín 1996a; Barroso 2019: 106-111.

⁴¹⁹ On this, see Codoñer 1972: 51; Barroso - Morín 1996a: 161.

⁴²⁰ Campos 1960: 21-25; Tovar 1989: 441.

The etymology of Biclaro

St Isidore provides in his biographical note about John of Gerunda two important details that must be taken into account if we are to eventually clarify the possible location of the monastery. The first is that the monastery had another previous name, which is unknown to us. This can be deduced from the fact that Isidore uses the formula *quod nunc Biclaro dicitur*. The second important detail is that the term 'Biclaro' is a toponym. This may seem obvious, but, as we will see later, it is a fact that contradicts one of the arguments that has usually been put forward in favour of a Catalan location.

Bearing both these in mind, it is very possible that this unknown name referred to an instance of the patron saint of the monastery following a generic formula, i.e. 'name of saint+name of place', used for other monasteries, so that later the toponym would come to replace the first and remain 'fossilised' in popular tradition, which is what Isidore records. This evolution is what we find in several foundations of the Visigothic era, i.e. San Félix in *Tutanesio* (Totanés), the monasteries of San Félix *in uillula Cabensis* (Valdecaba?), the famous monastery of San Cosme and San Damián or Agaliense (*ad Galliense iter*), and Santa María *in Sorbaces* (Guarrazar?), all of which are in the Toledo area.⁴²¹

On the other hand, it has already been noted that St Isidore places the foundation of the monastery after John's exile to Barcelona. This suggests that the monastery was not necessarily close to that city, but rather we should think of some other place John of Biclaro might have returned to after the king had decided to release him from exile. This is also important because one of the arguments usually put forward to place his monastery in the Catalan area is precisely John's connection with Barcelona. Of course, there is also the link with Gerona, but surely this possibility has to be completely ruled out because, as we have seen, John founded his institution *before* being appointed bishop of that city and *after* his exile to Barcino. The most logical thing, then, is that, being a native of Lusitania, John would have returned to his native region after the pardon and that the monastery in question was located in some place associated with the Lusitanian province.⁴²² And it is also logical to think that the monk had some kind of family relationship with this place, justifiable, as the foundation of a monastery implied not only the impetus to erect a complex of buildings, but also the need to endow financially, i.e. for the subsistence and needs of the monks.

Undoubtedly the weakest link in terms of the Catalan option is the etymology. As Menéndez Pidal warned, no matter how hard we try it is impossible to derive 'Vallclara' from the toponym 'Biclaram/Bíclaro'.⁴²³ Although his arguments were actually incorrect (because he confused Biclaro with an anthroponym and not with a toponym) it is something that was already clear to

⁴²¹ Gozávez Ruiz 2007; Barroso - Carroles - Morín 2011: 75-84; Barroso *et al.* 2015: 45-53. The place name may refer to an old family fundus (Totanés<Toda), a phytotoponym (Sorbaces<Sorbas, 'rowan'), or a toponym itself (Cabensis, Agali).

⁴²² John makes a reference to himself as '*Iohannes presbyter Ecclesiae Emeritensis clarus habetur*' (Iohan. Bicl. Chron. a. 578? 5; Mommsen 1894: 215) which reaffirms this opinion (García Moreno 2008b: 61, n. 126).

⁴²³ It is just worth remembering here that in classical Latin words had no accents and, therefore, it is impossible to know whether the noun from which Biclarensis is derived had a proparoxytone or flat pronunciation, that is, if the original toponym it was Bíclaro or Biclaro. Although in the Spanish text we have used the form Biclaro, because it is the one most used by researchers, everything indicates that the pronunciation was Bíclaro (see below).

A. Bofarull, who, however, insisted on locating the monastery in Catalonia, surely due to localist bias.⁴²⁴

Joan Corominas tried to get round this insurmountable obstacle by suggesting that the name 'Vallclara' could be a cultist transformation of the popular name 'Beclara':

'It is worth noting here that they and their brothers from the neighbouring monasteries are responsible for the parallel change they made in the name of the neighbouring town of Beclara. (still popularly pronounced Beklára or Begglára), and coming from the pre-Roman Biclara (from where the sage Biclarensis of Visigothic times), which since then was called (officially only) Vallclara.'⁴²⁵

Surprisingly, Carmen Cardelle de Hartman, to whom we owe an excellent edition of John's *Chronicon*, unreservedly accepts Corominas' opinion:

'The last – and in my opinion – definitive word corresponds to the great scholar of Catalan toponymy, J. Corominas, who has discovered that Vallclara is named in medieval documents, and even today in other neighbouring places, Beg(g)lara. Vallclara is a late and pseudo-etymological form. The original form of the name could therefore have been Biclara, very similar to the Biclaro (or Biclaro, a variant in part of the transmission) of Isidore.'⁴²⁶

However, as Agustí Altisent has already pointed out, Corominas' interpretation is not based on medieval documents, but on a simple oral survey.⁴²⁷ This testimony, therefore, is questionable, to say the least. In fact, as Miró and Prats recognise, 'the fanciful explanations of Corominas, not backed by documentation, aid those who reject the thesis.'⁴²⁸

The methodological deficiencies of J. Corominas are further highlighted by Carme Plaza i Arqué:

'The interpretation of Vallclara is also debatable. Corominas cites the Begglara and Beklára pronunciation collected by himself and states that the real etymology is the pre-Roman (Iberian) name BICLARA. From there the Visigoth writer [the Abbot John] took the name, who would have taken refuge in the Prades mountains, where he would have founded a monastery. And from this assumption begins what is almost a work of fancy: the monks of Poblet were the main people responsible for concealing the original name. To the DECLC [*Diccionari Etimològic i Complementari de la Llengua Catalana*] Corominas had already pointed out – something he does less emphatically – a Mozarabic evolution of the word, which was changed to "the contrariety that led to village interests" (VI, 819a29). It is not strange that after so many allusions Father

⁴²⁴ Campos 1960: 22 ff.

⁴²⁵ 'És onortí ací notar que a ells i a llurs confreres dels cenobis veïns es deu el canvi paral·lel que feren al nom del noble veí de Beclara (encara avui pronunciat popularment beklára o begglára), i provinent del pre-romà Biclara (d'on el savi Biclarensis dels temps visigòtics), que des de llavors s'anomenà (oficialment només) Vallclara.' Corominas Casacuberta 1995, vol. III: 158 (in Miró - Prats 2020); Corominas Madrid 1972: 172 (in Tovar 1989: 441).

⁴²⁶ Cardelle 2001: 126; 2002: 38.

⁴²⁷ Altisent 1989.

⁴²⁸ Miró - Prats 2020.

Altisent responded in an article (Altisent 1989) refuting the thesis of Corominas with the arguments of the false name Biclara for Bíclarum cited by A. Mundó in the GEC [*Great Catalan Encyclopèdia*]. Corominas is right in not trusting the Latinisations of the name presented in the 12th-century documents (*Vallis Clara*), but it is somewhat exaggerated to think of such a strong survival of the substratum in the current pronunciation.⁴²⁹

And the author hammers this home with great common sense: ‘Vallclara is an inverted tracing of Clairvaux, which also appears in other places named Claresvalls’.⁴³⁰ That is to say, like many other monasteries, due to the prestige achieved by St Bernard (1090-1153), the model to imitate was the Abbey of Clairvaux.

Actually, for Miró and Prats, ‘the most solid documentary source that exists so far to identify Biclara with a modern place, is a footnote in Hugo’, referring Charles Louis Hugo’s *History of the Premonstratensian Order*, published in Nancy in two volumes in 1734 and 1736. The translation of this is as follows:

‘Right there, and under the same spot, there existed an ancient monastery that was raised by that most famous abbot Vallclara, later Bishop of Gerona, whose edited work we read in the collection *Scriptorium Hispaniae* (vol. I, p. I, vol. 4, p. 153 and following): “That monastery was destroyed by the Moors, and its primitive denomination was lost long ago among its ruins, and the new one of Amicabescir was adopted after the occupation of the place by the Moors. In the year 1149, out of respect for the saints who the barbarian Saracens in other times made martyrs in Vallclara, because of the ruins, Ramon, Count of Barcelona, built there the abbey, and gave it to Stephen, Abbot of Monteflabon, at that time agent with Walter of Lyon, for the liberation of Lisbon from the hands of the Moors”’.⁴³¹

The donation charter was granted by Ramon (Raymond) Berenguer IV on 25 April 1149. It informs us of the change of name of a place that was formerly called Avicabescer, and that from then on will be called Valclara:

⁴²⁹ ‘És discutible també la interpretació de Vallclara. Coromines cita la pronunciació begglara i beklára sentida pel ell mateix i afirma que l’etimologia real és el nom preromà (ibèric) BICLARA. D’aquí prengué el nom l’escriptor visigòtic, que s’hauria refugiat a les muntanyes de Prades, on devia fundar un monestir. I a partir d’aquesta suposició comença el que és gairebé una novel·la: els monjos de Poblet foren els principals causants de l’ocultació del nom primigeni. Al DECLC Coromines ja havia apuntat – cosa que ara fa amb menys intensitat – una evolució mossàrab del mot, que es va canviar per «la contrarietat que portava als interessos pobletans» (VI, 819a29). No és estrany que després de tantes al·lusions el pare Altisent contestés en un article (Altisent, 1989) refutant la tesi corominiana amb els arguments del fals nom Biclara per Bíclarum citat per A. Mundó a la GEC. Coromines té raó en no fiar-se de les llatinitzacions del nom que presenten els documents del segle XII (Vallis Clara) però resulta una mica exagerat pensar en una pervivència tan forta del substrat en la pronunciació actual.’ Plaza 2012: 15.

⁴³⁰ ‘Vallclara és un calc invertit de Clairvaux, que també ha donat en altres llocs Claresvalls.’ Plaza 2012: 15, n. 10.

⁴³¹ ‘Ibidem, & sub eodem antiquitus extiterat Monasterium ex quo prodiit celeberrimus ille Abbas Vallis Clara, postea Gerundensis Episcopus, cuius opera edita leguntur in collectione Scriptorium Hispaniae. tom. I. pag. I. tom. 4. p. 153 & seqq.’

‘Illud Monasterium a Mauris vastatum est, & in sua strage dudum jacens primitivam amiserat denominationem, & novam d’Amicabescir acceperat à novis loci occupatoribus Mauris. Anno 1149, ob Reverentiam Sanctorum quos Barbaries Saracena Martyres in Valle Clara fecerat olim, illic Abbatiam, ex ruinis excitavit Raymundus Barcinonae Comes & Stephano Abbati Flabonis-montis tradidit, tunc in Hispania Agenti cum Galtero Laudinensi Abbatepro Redemptione Ulisponae de manibus Maurorum’ (Hugo 1736: dcxxxiii-dcxxxiv).

'I give and offer to the Lord God and to the Holy Religion and to the order of Prémontré and to that monastery of Santa Maria of Monte Flabon, and to its venerable abbot Stephen and to the brothers serving God there, present and future, that place which was formerly called Avicabescer, which we now call, by the command and consent of the Lord Raimund Berenguer, Count of Barcelona and Prince of the Kingdom of Aragon and most glorious and victorious of Spain, Valclara.'⁴³²

A further mention of the change of name is found in a document dated 27 December 1158, by which the prior of Santa Maria de Vallclara offers the monastery to the Bishop of Tortosa:

'I, Frederick, out of divine piety and ecclesiastical religion, give to God and to the church of Santa Maria of Tortosa and to you Godfrey and your successors and to the canons serving God there the aforementioned place of Valle Clara, namely, which was formerly called Avincabacer.'⁴³³

But just six days later, on 2 January 1159, in the confirmation of that donation made by Count Ramon Berenguer IV, the name Vallclara disappears again and is replaced by Avincabacer:

'I, Raymond, Count of Barcelona, Prince of Aragon and Marquis of Lerida and Tortosa, (accept) the place of Damicabeser that I had previously granted to Stephen, Abbot of Monte Flabon, and to Brother Frederick his canon, the place already mentioned for the institution of his Order of Prémontré... Thus, I say to the honour of God and to the praise of his name, so that divine offices are celebrated there, I give to God and to the church of Santa Maria of Tortosa and G. to the said bishop and to the canons serving God there and their successors the aforementioned place.'⁴³⁴

From this moment on, the name of Vallclara is only found in two documents (dated 1164 and 1168).⁴³⁵ After these references it completely disappears from the documentation to the point that even in the population charter, dated 9 May 1185, the place is called 'Cabacer', with no mention made of the old denomination of Vallclara.⁴³⁶

As can be easily seen, Miró and Prats give excessive importance to this change of denomination, which they interpret in the light of the note by Ch. L. Hugo:

⁴³² *'dono et offero Domino Deo et Sancte Religioni et ordini de Premost et ipsi cenobio Sancte Marie Flaboni Montis atque ipsius abatii venerabili Stephano fratribusque ibidem Deo serventibus presentibus et futuris, locum ipsum qui antea dicebatur Avicabescer quem modo iussu et consensu domini Raimundi Berengarii, comiti Barchinone regnique principis Aragonie et gloriosissimi victoris Ispanie Valem Claram vocamus'* (Virgili 1997: 60).

⁴³³ *'ego Fridericus divine pietatis et ecclesiastice religionis intuitu, dono Deo et ecclesie Sancte Marie Dertusensis et tibi Gaufride et successoribus tuis et canonicis in ibi Deo servientibus predictum locum de Valle Clara, scilicet, qui antea Avincabacer dicebatur'* (Virgili 1997: 148).

⁴³⁴ *'ego Raimundus, comes Barchinonensis, princeps Aragonensis, Ylerde ac Dertuse marchio, locum d'Avincabacer quem prius donaveram Stephano, abbati Montis Flabonis, et fratri Friderico canonico suo cum iamdictus locus ad institutionem sui ordinis Prat, silicet, Monstrat... Sic inquam ad honorem Dei et ad laudem nominis eius ut divina scilicet ibi officia celebrentur, sic dono Deo et ecclesie Sancte Marie Dertusensis et G. eiused dicto episcopo et canonicis in ibi Deo servientibus eorumque successoribus predictum locum'* (Virgili 1997: 149).

⁴³⁵ Virgili 1997: 191, 240 ff.

⁴³⁶ Virgili 1997: 471.

'It gives the impression that the denomination of Vallclara only made sense if there was a monastery in the place, and when it ceased to function Vallclara changes back to Avincabacer. This is another reinforcement of what Hugo elaborates in a footnote in the second volume of his work so often cited here: if the intention of Ramon Berenguer IV was to restore the monastery of the "Abbot Vallclara" (Iohannes), it makes sense to call the new monastery the same as the one destroyed during the Saracen invasion, and once this new foundation was abandoned, there is no longer any reason to maintain the new denomination that gave name to the place, and "Avincabacer" is used once again.⁴³⁷

But what the donation charter of 1149 says is simply that the old Arabic name (Avicabescer) is replaced by a new one (Vallclara): 'that place which was formerly called Avicabescer which we now call by the command and consent of the Lord Raimund Berenguer... Valem Claram'. The document of 1158 confirms this when it says of Vallclara that 'which was formerly called Avincabacer'. The rest, that is, the identification of this Vallis Clara with the old Biclara, are the speculations of Hugo. In reality, the dance of names simply obeys the fact that sometimes the place is named by the reference population (Avicabescer >Cabacés/Cabasser) and others by the monastery (Vallclara), a phenomenon that is more frequent than the authors cited suppose, as we have seen in the monasteries of the Toledo area.

Another argument put forward by Miró and Prats to defend the location in Cabacés is the name of the Zaragoza Jew, Iusuf b. Ishaq Ibn Biklaris. Ibn Biklaris lived between the 11th and 12th centuries. According to some authors, his nickname or *kunya* would refer to the place of Biclara, as it does not seem to be a Semitic, Hebrew, or Arabic word. Martínez Loscos interprets his *kunya* from the Romance name Biclara, identifying it with Vallclara (Tarragona) and from there deduced that the Hebrew doctor must be from the northeast.⁴³⁸ For the aforementioned authors, this data is important because

'...it can help to nuance the phrase that Saint Isidore writes in his *De viris illustribus*: "*Qui postea condidit monasterium quod nunc Biclara dicitur*". A range of possibilities and unknowns opens up at the same time: perhaps Biclara would only be the name of the monastery, and not the place where it was founded. And there is still another: perhaps "before" the foundation of the monastery the place was not called Biclara, and adopted this name from the work of Iohannes, and hence Isidore remarks that "*nunc Biclara dicitur*". And we must also think, if during the time of Islamic rule, the municipality could have adopted again the name that it supposedly had before the construction of the Visigothic monastery. These are logical questions to ask, but turned

⁴³⁷ 'Da la impresión que la denominación de Vallclara sólo tuviera sentido si en el lugar había un monasterio, y cuando éste dejó de funcionar, Vallclara vuelve a cambiarse por Avincabacer. Esto es otro refuerzo a lo que Hugo expone en nota a pie de página del segundo volumen de su obra tantas veces citada aquí: si la intención de Ramon Berenguer IV era restituir el monasterio del "abad Vallclara" (Iohannes), tiene sentido que se llame al nuevo monasterio igual que el destruido durante la invasión sarracena, y una vez abandonada esta nueva fundación, ya no hay motivo alguno para mantener la nueva denominación que dio nombre al lugar, y vuelve a utilizar "Avincabacer"' (Miró - Prats 2020).

⁴³⁸ Martínez Loscos 1954: 38.

into speculations due to lack of information, with the added problem of the toponym converted into a patronymic of Yusuf b. Ishaq Ibn Biklaris.⁴³⁹

Really, the matter is very different from what is said here. As they rightly point out, the *kunya* of Ibn Biklaris indicates that Biklaris (or Buklaris in other transliterations) is an anthroponym or an appellation, in no case a place name. Nowhere is it stated that the Hebrew doctor was from the northeast: this is something that has been deduced from the equation Biklaris=Vallclara and from his residence in the *taifa* of Zaragoza. But the fact that it is not a toponym does not favour this equation at all. On the contrary, we have already said that in the case of the Visigothic monastery it seems clear that Biclaro would correspond to the toponym that accompanied the name of the titular saint to whom the church of the monastery founded by John was dedicated.

Otherwise, the meaning of Biclaro is unknown; hence it has been assumed that it may be a toponym of pre-Roman origin. L. Silgo, who locates it in Valclara of la Conca del Barberà, proposed hypothetically ‘two castles’ from the Basque numeral *bi* (two) and an Iberian term *kale* meaning ‘castle’.⁴⁴⁰ But, again, this hypothesis rests on two *a priori* assumptions: the location in Catalonia and the derivation of a pre-Roman etymon of unproven significance.

However, we think more of a much simpler solution, such as a derivation from a zootoponym of Latin origin and very common in the peninsular geography: *Apicularium* (‘apiary’). The phonetic evolution from *apicularium* to Biclaro would then be quite simple: *Apicularium*>**Apiclarium*>**Abiclaro*>*Bíclaro*>**Béjar*>Béjar. The phonetic changes produced in the evolution of the name would be the following:

- Loss of the initial a by apheresis and sonorisation of /p/ in /b/ (as in *apotheca*>bodega).
- Normal derivation of the Latin suffix *-arium*>*arium* by metathesis and from there to *aro*>*ar* (as in *olivarium*>olivar).
- Reduction of the group *-cul-* to *-cl-* and later to /j/ (as in *speculum*>especlo>espejo).
- Vocal opening *i*>*e*, very common phenomenon.

From our point of view, this proposal has several arguments in its favour. First, *apicularium* is an etymon that is present in a multitude of toponyms, especially in the western part of the peninsula (in the linguistic domains of Castilian, Galician, Portuguese, and Astur-Leonese), in the form Abelleira/Belleira, Vella/La Vejera and variants (La Bejar, Béjar, Abejar), toponyms that, although they cannot always be derived from the term *apicularium*,⁴⁴¹ on many occasions we do have evidence that it must have been so. Interestingly, Lucio Marineo Sículo (1444-1536) pointed out that ‘not far from the town of Plasencia is the noble town called Béjar, which in another time was called Colmenar (=Apiary)’. Possibly the scholar was referring to the popular etymology that traced Béjar back to *abejar* (a popular word for beehive) and bees, an idea that also appears in the heraldic coat of arms of the town, which is described as five golden bees

⁴³⁹ Miró - Prats 2020.

⁴⁴⁰ Silgo 2013: 95 ff, no. 89.

⁴⁴¹ Sometimes it derives from *Vitularium* (‘stable’), in the form *Vitularium*>*vellar*>Vejar (González de la Peña 2015), but this is not the case here because we know that the intermediate form is Biclaro.

placed in soter on a field of azure. In some way, the idea of a relationship between Béjar and bees has been preserved throughout its history, surely due to homophony, but also because the town is located in a mountainous area especially suitable for honey production. As in other areas with similar characteristics in terms of vegetation and climate of the peninsula (e.g. La Alcarria and the Sierra de Cameros) beekeeping constituted a complementary and valuable resource in the economy and diet of people who were predominantly livestock farmers.

On the other hand, our hypothesis allows us to satisfactorily explain the *kunya* of Ibn Biklaris not as a simple anthroponym – otherwise, undocumented – but as an appellation that designates the nickname or surname by which the family of the Hebrew doctor was known, a very common custom in the Arab period and that has been preserved in rural environments to this day. The name Biklaris is not Semitic, neither Hebrew nor Arabic, therefore the most logical thing is that it derives from a Latin or Romance form, since we are dealing with an author who wrote in Romance language with Arabic characters.⁴⁴² Taking into account that in Arabic there is no letter for *p*, which is transliterated in *b*, the meaning of the *kunya* Biklaris then becomes transparent: Ibn Biklaris would be the son or descendant of the *apicularis*, i.e. beekeeper; thus the nickname could be translated as ‘the beekeeper’ or, more colloquially, ‘the honey man’, an appellation that would be very appropriate for the Hebrew physician who, as is known, was a great specialist in healing herbs and in whose work, as could not be otherwise, there are numerous references to the flora of the Upper Border of Al-Andalus.⁴⁴³

Cabacés: the archaeological material

As a final argument, Miró and Prats analyse four reliefs that are reused in the facade of a building in the town of Cabacés. Part of this construction rests on 14th-century Gothic arches. The building is part of a structure popularly known as ‘the square’ (‘la plaza’) and is believed to have been possibly built on an ancient 12th-century oratory.⁴⁴⁴

Unfortunately, we do not know the exact location of the blocks within the structure or if they are part of the arches or the construction they support, which seems more likely according to



Fig. 34. Coat of Arms of Béjar (Wiki).

⁴⁴² Wexler 1996: 94.

⁴⁴³ For Ibn Biklaris, see Martínez Loscos 1954. According to the author (p. 42), Ibn Biklaris' work ‘sometimes suffers from this sedentary attitude that deprived him of direct personal observation. It has, however, an extraordinary value for the knowledge of the flora of the Upper Border and its therapeutic applications, as well as a high interest from the linguistic point of view’.

⁴⁴⁴ Prats 2020; 2006, catalogue sheet J.002.000 (cit. in Miró - Prats 2020).

the photographs accompanying the text. There is talk of abundant documentary references to the square in the books of the court of the *Batlle General* of the Barony of Cabacés. The problem is that this does not solve the chronology of the building, much less that of the reliefs, whose dating must be carried out exclusively based on stylistic criteria.

As has been said, these are four reliefs with geometric theme decoration executed on stone ashlar:

- The first one is decorated with a double hexafoil enclosed in a circle. The relief has a diameter of 16 cm.
- A piece similar to the previous one, with identical representation. The relief has a diameter of 16 cm.
- Relief decorated with a *tetraskeles* of the *lauburu* or 'drop cross' type enclosed in a circle. The diameter is equal to the previous ones: 16 cm.
- Relief with a 'six-pointed star' motif enclosed in a circle. The diameter is slightly larger than the previous ones, reaching 20 cm.

The authors rightly consider that the reliefs of Cabacés show motifs that are present in the art of all times and that, given the simplicity of their execution, are practically timeless popular motifs of which examples can be found from the art of antiquity to modern times. But, immediately afterwards, they also consider that the border that surrounds the pieces of Cabacés is characteristic of Visigothic sculpture (Quintanilla de las Viñas, San Pedro de la Nave, etc.) and, from there, they postulate a Visigothic chronology for these pieces. In this way, the authors have chosen to analyse the motif of the hexafoil or six-petal flowers – the most common of the three – to support their hypothesis, leaving aside the other two motifs that are represented in Cabacés and which, however, are the ones that allow a better adjustment of the chronology of the reliefs.

It is obvious that the motif of the hexafoil is so universal that it is difficult to postulate a chronology in pieces found outside of archaeological context. Thus, for example, the motif is very well represented in testimonies of pre-Roman times (especially in funerary stelae of the Burgos groups of La Bureba and Lara de los Infantes) and Roman times (particularly in mosaic decoration) and it is also not uncommon to see it flanking the sign of the cross in medieval representations. In reality, it is a motif that we find profusely in medieval art, both in pre-Romanesque and Romanesque (especially in baptismal fonts, such as that of Villega de Aguilar, in Burgos) and in the Gothic art, often in the form of continuous series destined for friezes, fasciae, or cimatiis. It is also very frequently represented in the iconography of the funerary stelae documented by Eugeniusz Frankowski.⁴⁴⁵

Closer geographically to Cabacés are the funerary stelae of Preixana (Lleida), also of medieval chronology, where crosses and hexafoils alternate, which gives a certain idea of the iconographic sense of this symbol which, in these cases, refers to an astral or, rather, celestial sense, very similar to what we will later see reflected in Carmelite heraldry. The motif is so

⁴⁴⁵ Frankowski 1920: Gaviria (fig. 15.1), Estella (figs. 18.1 and 6), Oloriz (fig. 20.1 and 2), Egues (fig. 23.2), Eransus (fig. 27.6), Valcarlos (fig. 31.2 and 6; 32.10; 33.15, 17-19 and 23), Uhart-Cise (fig. 36.2 and 4); Cambo (fig. 41.2); Museo de Lisboa (fig. 46.2); S. Joao dos Montes (47.1 and 5).

universal that it is even profusely documented in testimonies of popular culture, such as cork lunchboxes or cheese moulds used in the pastoral environment.⁴⁴⁶

Of course, the motif of the hexafoil is also represented in the art of the Visigothic period, in churches such as Quintanilla de las Viñas or San Pedro de la Nave.⁴⁴⁷ However, in the particular form in which it is presented in Cabacés – as a motif included in another of larger size enclosed in a circle – it does not seem that it can be compared with the Visigothic specimens. In fact, we do not know an exact parallel for the pieces of Cabacés, but considering the frequency with which the motif appears in the Romanesque, we believe it is more accurate to propose a chronology of this moment or, due to the singularity that the design of the piece of Cabacés presents, even a much later date could be defended, although within the sphere of medieval art. This idea is reaffirmed if we consider the last of the pieces analysed here, as we will have the opportunity to deal with later.

In any case, the motif of the hexafoil appears abundantly in the archivolt of the church of Santa María de Belloc (first third of the 13th century).⁴⁴⁸ Given that there are two specimens with this theme here, it is not ruled out that they belonged to a composition of the theme of the ‘beatific vision’ similar to that of the tympanum of the front of San Martín de Artaiz (Aoiz, Navarra), a Romanesque church from the 12th century, where two hexafoils inscribed in circles flank a chi-rho motif.⁴⁴⁹ In the town of Cabacés itself, we find it in a relief likely of Gothic chronology from the town’s main street.⁴⁵⁰

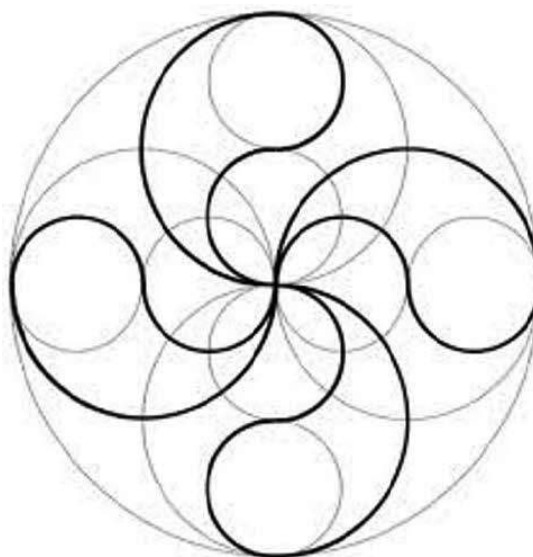


Fig. 35. Lauburu (design).

The second of the motifs, the drop cross or comma cross, popularly known as *lauburu* (‘four heads’) in the Basque-Navarrese area, *cuatro fuellas* (‘four leaves’) or *cruz religada* (‘tangled cross’) in Aragon, is widely spread chronologically and geographically. Although for political reasons it is usually associated with the Basque Country, it is a theme of apotropaic character widely spread throughout the Iberian Peninsula, especially between the 16th and 18th centuries.⁴⁵¹ As in the previous case, it is not uncommon to find it associated with the motif of the cross forming a trinitarian composition.

⁴⁴⁶ Frankowski 1920: 166-169.

⁴⁴⁷ Barroso - Morín 2001; Barroso - Morín 2002.

⁴⁴⁸ Cid 1952: 166.

⁴⁴⁹ https://www.romanicoenavarra.info/album_artaiz.htm [consulted on 28/11/2024]

⁴⁵⁰ Prats 2020: ficha no. K.003.002

⁴⁵¹ Martín Criado 2015.

It is, moreover, a motif well documented in the lands of La Mancha (Villarta de San Juan, Carrión de Calatrava, mill of Pingazorras in La Puebla de Almoradiel), Jaén (with good examples in the basilica of San Ildefonso, the palace of the Condestable Iranzo, the monastery of the Esperanza de Barranco Cazalla, the parish of Santiago Apóstol de Valdepeñas de Jaén or Huelma), the Alto Aragón (Torre de Montes, Sos del Rev Católico, Barluenga, Velillas), in Burgos (Rabé de los Escuderos and Quintanilla de la Mata), etc.⁴⁵² Contrary to what is usually thought, it is not a very common motif in the Basque-Navarrese area prior to the birth of Basque nationalism at the end of the 19th century, which made it its distinctive symbol (like the hexafoil or Sun of the Alps in Padania).⁴⁵³ Actually, in his detailed catalogue, E. Frankowski only documented one specimen in Bidarray from the evidence of that period.⁴⁵⁴

Like the previous example, the motif of the *lauburu* is a geometric theme of compass play typical of stonework and carpentry. But while the hexafoil is a design of easy execution (six circles secant to each other inscribed on a hexagonal template), the layout of the

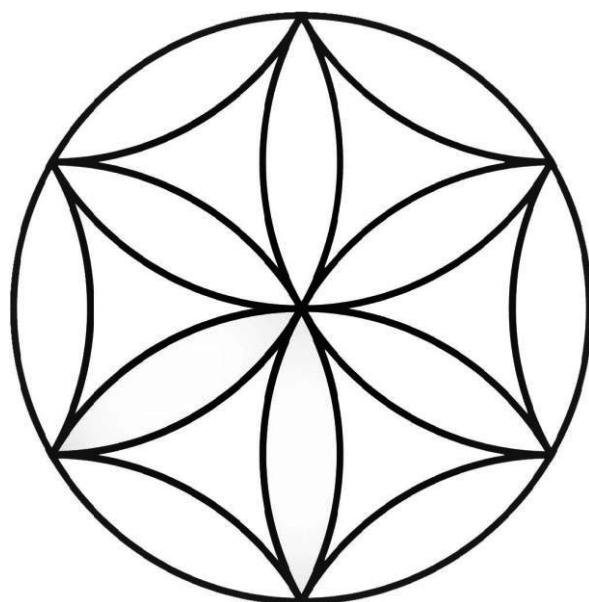


Fig. 36. : Six petal flower (design).

the layout of the *lauburu* is somewhat more complicated to execute and requires some practice and basic knowledge of geometry. In fact, it is a more elaborate variant of the curvilinear swastikas of antiquity, although in the *lauburu* the circle is divided into four perpendicular radii which in turn are subdivided into two equal parts on which two secant circles are then drawn contained in another whose diameter is the radius of the original circle. It is a theme of rather late chronology, usually from the 17th to 19th centuries, with few specimens that can be equated to full medieval times.

As far as our theme is concerned, and contrary to what Miró and Prats defend, the motif of the 'comma cross' or *lauburu* is

totally absent from Visigothic art. Here it is normal to find the motif of the swastika with rectilinear arms, and, above all, that of solar wheels with curved radii. In this sense, the examples adduced as parallels of the piece of Cabacés (friezes of San Pedro de la Nave, carved

⁴⁵² For the case of Jaén, see Fernández Espinosa 2016. For Alto Aragón: Almudévar 2016. For La Mancha: Muñoz 2019 and Arrizabalaga 2020.

⁴⁵³ Pablo 2009: 112. The author's assertion that figures almost or completely identical to the *lauburu* documented in other geographical areas are a mere coincidence in form is obviously unacceptable and can only be understood in an environment that considers this symbol as something uniquely Basque. A simple search on internet pages is enough to realise how frequently it appears in other areas of Spain. Prior to the first third of the 20th century, the symbol was not especially abundant in Navarra and the Basque-French area, rather quite the opposite, as we have noted a few lines above.

⁴⁵⁴ Frankowski 1920: fig. 42.5.

representations of San Juan de Baños, carved relief of Las Tamujas, etc.) are inadmissible because they correspond to this last type and not to authentic ‘comma crosses’.

The third motif of Cabacés is defined by the aforementioned authors as a ‘six-pointed star with rotation equal to the hands of the clock’. It could be better defined as a rosette of pointed leaves. We believe that the design of the leaves responds to an equally late chronology, perhaps already of the Gothic art, and is not found in the art of Visigothic times. As far as we know, it does not seem to be a very frequent motif. The closest parallel we have found is carved in the medallion of one of the braces of the choir of the Collegiate Church of the Holy Sacrament of Torrijos (Toledo). The building is a work from the beginning of the 16th century, although the motif can be considered part of the Gothic decorative tradition, which in Castile, as is known, lasted longer than in other parts of the Iberian Peninsula.⁴⁵⁵ Although to a lesser extent, the piece of Cabacés also bears some resemblance to the central flower of the theme of the ‘beatific vision’ of the south front of the Romanesque church of San Juan de Rabanera (Soria), where it is associated with rosettes of different petals.⁴⁵⁶

We have already said that under these conditions it is quite risky to propose an exact dating for the reliefs of Cabacés. In any case, a Visigothic chronology for them must be completely rejected. Taking into account the cited parallels and the situation within the building, we rather postulate a much later chronology, although, given the circumstances, in the absence of archaeological context and clear parallels, we cannot fix it with accuracy. It could be elements from the end of the 18th



Fig. 37: Torrijos (Toledo). Colegiata del Santísimo Sacramento. Bench arm (photo: J. Morín de Pablos).

or already the 19th century, perhaps in relation to a domestic dwelling of a manorial type, in the style of other mansions in the Alto-Aragonese area such as the Martiné house in Ortilla (Lupiñén-Ortilla) or the house on Barrionuevo street (Barluenga), both in the Hoya de Huesca.⁴⁵⁷ Or they could also be pieces reused from an old late Gothic building from the 14th-15th centuries, an option that seems preferable to us because of the presence in the place of the arches of this style, although the appearance of the drop cross makes us doubt. If this were the case, it is to be assumed that the late medieval arcade and the decorative remains would have been reused in the new structure and that they originally formed part of the remains of the

⁴⁵⁵ Sánchez de Haro 2010: photo 46.

⁴⁵⁶ Vv. Aa. (JLHG) 1999: 1008; Monteiro 2005: 143.

⁴⁵⁷ Ortilla: no. SIPCA: 1-INM-HUE-006-905-003; Barluenga: no. SIPCA: 1-INM-HUE-006-150-090.

oratory on which the building is supposed to have been built. This means that, if the 12th-century chronology for this oratory is confirmed, it would have undergone ambitious remodelling in the 14th century which would later also be included in the current factory.

The location of the Monastery of Biclaro – an hypothesis

Based on the data we have, the only option that can be seriously considered is the hypothesis of Menéndez Pidal. It is true that the etymology we have proposed in previous lines from the Latin word *Apicularium*, due to its generic character, does not confirm the reduction of Biclaro to the town of Béjar in Salamanca. However, there are numerous signs that suggest that the monastery could indeed have been located in the vicinity of the town of Béjar.

First, we must consider the situation of Béjar in the Lusitanian province. Let us remember that the oldest known codex of the chronicle of John of Biclaro comes from the monastery of Alcobaça (Portugal), in Lusitania. This argument, although not conclusive, has been highlighted by other authors as an indication to take into account when considering the location of the monastery founded by John.⁴⁵⁸

Another important argument in favour of an identification with Béjar is that the north of Lusitania is indeed one of the areas of the peninsula where a significant Visigothic settlement is documented.⁴⁵⁹ As we have seen, both factors occur in John of Biclaro, of whom St Isidore details that he was a ‘Goth by nation’ and a native of Scallabis, in the province of Lusitania. Béjar is also located near Jerte, where the *uillula* where King Reccesuinth died, and Wamba was elected, is traditionally located. It has also been assumed that Roderic, the last Gothic king, would have been a native of this region, specifically from Egítania (Idanha-a-Velha), a city not too far from Béjar. Everything suggests that the north of Lusitania must have been a place of settlement for important clans of Visigothic clans, probably in relation to the defence of the Gothic-Suevian border throughout the 5th-6th centuries, as well as with the control of the gold deposits in the area.⁴⁶⁰ It is not impossible, therefore, that the origins of John’s family could be traced back to the area of Béjar, given the importance that this area had in relation to the border with the Suevian kingdom and the communication of the north of Lusitania with the central plain of Iberian Peninsula.

On the other hand, the foundation of a monastery involved a significant financial outlay and the need to provide it with certain resources that would make its subsistence completely viable. It is possible, therefore, that John would have chosen for his foundation an old family property in the Béjar area. In this case, a situation analogous to what we will later see documented between the *Deibensi* monastery and Bishop Ildefonsus of Toledo would occur, i.e. the transformation of an old family noble estate into a monastic foundation, a phenomenon that must have been more frequent than the sources of the time indicate and that is widely documented in the Middle Ages.⁴⁶¹

⁴⁵⁸ Campos 1960: 24. According to Mommsen (1894: 166) the codex would be from the end of the 8th century.

⁴⁵⁹ Barroso 2018: 168-171.

⁴⁶⁰ Barroso - Morín - Sánchez 2015.

⁴⁶¹ Barroso - Carrobles - Morín 2011: 73.

There are other indications that seem to point in the same direction. Settled on an old Vettonic fort, Béjar seems to have become the capital of the territory of the valleys of Sangusín and Becedas. Its situation near the Via de la Plata (Silver Route), the need to provide a nucleus that would administer the immediate environment, and the appearance of important gold deposits (El Cabaco) in the area, are factors that explain the relative importance that the area of Béjar had in Roman times. Béjar, moreover, is located in a strategic place for the control of the port that bears its name and the communication between Salamanca and Merida and, therefore, to monitor the circulation of gold from the north-west to the Lusitanian capital. All in all, only one archaeological testimony of the Roman past of the town is preserved with certainty: a 2nd-century CE sepulchral slab found near the church of Santa María de las Huertas.⁴⁶² The presence of Roman settlement and the strategic situation of Béjar near the Via de la Plata (*iter ab Emerita Asturicam*) suggest that the population continued into the Visigothic period. However, the only archaeological testimony that can be attributed with certainty to this period is a fragment of sculpture (perhaps part of a frieze) decorated with a theme of fleur-de-lis inscribed in scrolls that is embedded in one of the walls of the ducal palace.⁴⁶³

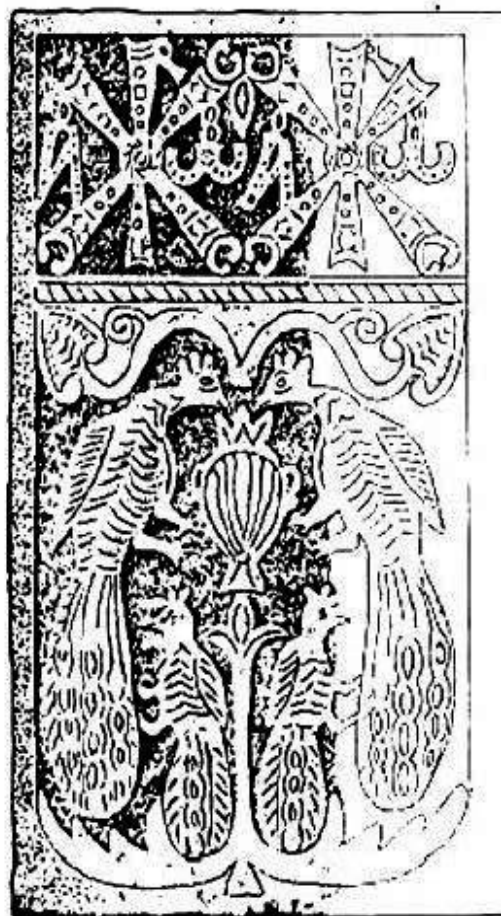


Fig. 39: Salamanca. Museo Provincial. Decorated plaque with peacocks from Salvatierra de Tormes (Schlunk - Hauschild 1978).

On the other hand, if Béjar has barely provided archaeological remains that can be attributed to the Visigothic period, the same cannot be said of its area of influence. Indeed, within a radius of barely 30 km from Béjar, a great wealth of archaeological elements corresponding to the 6th-7th centuries is documented, which suggests that the region had a relative importance in this period.

⁴⁶² Fabián García 2012: 176-180. The funerary monument was erected by a certain Flavius and his wife Valentina in honour of his son Valentinus.

⁴⁶³ Fabián García 2012: 187-189, fig. 103.

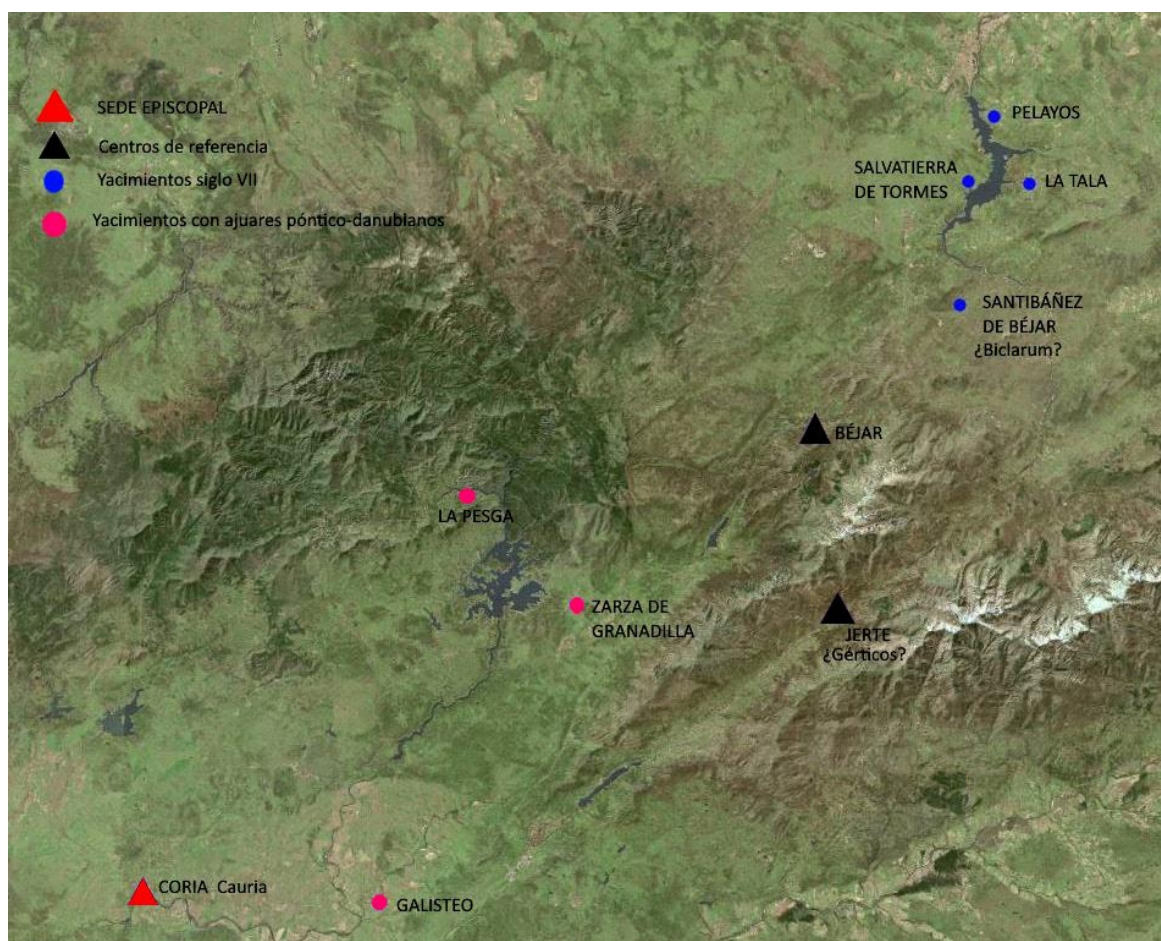


Fig. 37. Salamanca. Visigothic settlement in the surroundings of Béjar.

To begin with, we must point out some finds of personal adornments corresponding to the Danubian fashion that suggest the existence of an important Gothic settlement in the area.⁴⁶⁴ Let us remember that John of Biclaro was a Goth and although Isidore indicates that he was a native of Scallabis, we do not think it impossible that the root of his lineage was precisely in this area of Lusitania. Obviously, this is just a mere hypothesis, as John of Biclaro could also have belonged to that part of the Gothic nobility that from the beginning settled in the cities. It is possible, but we must remember that what the Visigoths were looking for in their peregrination from the Danube were lands where they could settle, and that, once in the west, most of them settled in rural areas of a very specific area, recognisable by the trail of their funerary trousseaux (the Narbonne province, the central plateau and this area located north of Emerita), so it is normal that the Gothic nobility of the 7th century still maintained estates and fundus in those places where their families were originally from. After all, agriculture and livestock continued to be the main source of income for the Gothic aristocracy. As we have seen, this is the case of Ildefonsus of Toledo, of whom we know that he founded a monastery for women on what had been an old family estate that probably has to be identified with the site of Los Hitos,

⁴⁶⁴ Galisteo: Fernández de la Mora 1974; Zarza de Granadilla: Donoso - Burdiel 1970; La Pesga: Río-Miranda - Iglesias 2001. See Barroso 2018: 93 ff, 168 ff.

in Arisgotas (Toledo).⁴⁶⁵ Possibly this was also the case of the uillula of Gerticos (near Jerte, Caceres), a town located just 18 km south of Béjar, to which we have previously referred.⁴⁶⁶ And everything suggests that this could also have been the case with the monastery of Biclaro.

Precisely the proximity of Béjar to Gerticos can be related to the interest of the Visigothic aristocracy in controlling the cattle trails, even after some of these lineages had already settled in urban spaces. This is something we have defended for some monastic establishments linked to the Gothic nobility in the territory of Toledo (such as Melque or Arisgotas) and, with more reason, could also be assumed for Gerticos/Jerte, which, as is known, is located in an important natural corridor that runs through the Sierra de Gredos in a NE-SW direction, and which from time immemorial to the present has been used for the transhumance of cattle. Likewise, Béjar, located on the northern slope of the homonymous mountain range, was the natural contact point between the cattle trail of Avila and the rich pastures of Salamanca through the Via de la Plata. Thus Béjar finds itself at a strategic crossroads connecting the central part of the Iberian Peninsula with Lusitania, and also of great importance for the control of the border with the Suevi, as well as from the economic point of view in relation to transhumant livestock and mining exploitation.

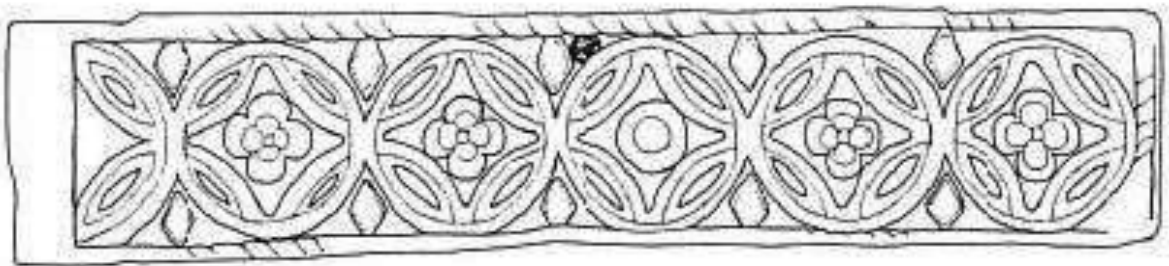


Fig. 38 (Salamanca). Marble frieze (Barroso - Morín 1992).

Another argument in favour of the hypothesis of identifying Bícclarum with Béjar is the extraordinary proliferation of Visigoth-era archaeological sites documented around the Santa Teresa reservoir.⁴⁶⁷ In Salvatierra de Tormes, a town in Salamanca located c. 30 km north of Béjar, an important relief decorated with peacocks around a krater and two chi-rhos with apocalyptic letters was discovered. Undoubtedly it must have been part of the decoration of a religious establishment, most likely a monastic church. In the parish church of this town is embedded a fragment of a frieze decorated with a vegetal theme of scrolls with leaves and solar discs. By its style and theme, the chronology of both pieces can be set towards the end of the 6th century or the beginning of the 7th.⁴⁶⁸

⁴⁶⁵ Iul. Tol. *Elogium. Coenobium quoque uirginum in Deibensi uillula construxit, ac propriis opibus decorauit* (PL 96 43). Barroso - Morín - Sánchez 2011: 75-84. For the Los Hitos site, see Morín *et al.* 2019.

⁴⁶⁶ Iul. Tol. HWR 3 (Levison 1910: 502 ff).

⁴⁶⁷ Regarding the archaeology of the Visigoth period in this area and, in general, for the province of Salamanca, Morín 2002 is particularly important.

⁴⁶⁸ Barroso - Morín 1992.

In the same Salvatierra de Tormes is the archaeological site of Cortinal de San Juan. Despite the difficulties of excavation, the site has provided a good deal of late chronology ceramics.⁴⁶⁹ The Cortinal de San Juan is also one of the enclaves where the greatest abundance of numeral slates has been documented. They can be related to economic activities related to the control of products and agricultural activities.⁴⁷⁰ From the remains that have been found, it seems to be an important Visigoth-era site for which a functionality has been assumed either as a monastic centre or as an aristocratic domain.⁴⁷¹ However, some of the slates documented in the area seem to indicate rather that we are dealing with a monastic establishment.⁴⁷²

Very close to Salvatierra, on the opposite bank of the Tormes river, in the town of La Tala, a geometric-theme frieze was also found carved on an old marble column. It was reused as a lintel and is currently preserved in the Provincial Museum of Salamanca. It is a frieze of secant and tangent circles that form four petal flowers and enclose rosettes. Like the previous pieces, the specimen from La Tala can be dated between the end of the 6th century and the 7th.⁴⁷³

Undoubtedly more interesting is the site of Cuarto de Enmedio, in Pelayos, also located on the right bank of the Tormes river.⁴⁷⁴ Unfortunately, despite promising beginnings in the late 1980s, it is an archaeological site that has aroused little interest in research despite having been the subject of several excavation campaigns and having provided abundant material in slate. All types of slates have been documented here: cursive, numeral, and slates with drawings. From this site also comes a cimatiis decorated with a theme of a pair of birds pecking, very appropriate for a religious environment. Likewise, the excavations carried out in Cuarto de Enmedio uncovered the existence of various dwelling structures corresponding to a centre (village or monastery?) yet to be determined.

Within this context, the presence in Cuarto de Enmedio of a basilica-plan building of considerable dimensions (c. 25 m x 11 m) that presents three parallel naves; the central one (4 m) wider than the side ones (2.5 m) is striking. The construction technique consists of slate blocks arranged dry in walls between 0.8 m and 1 m thick with the corners locked with squared sandstone blocks, a material that is not found in the area. Some larger blocks must have been used as jambs and lintels in the openings of doors and windows. The presence of sandstone voussoirs also suggests the use of arches, which reaffirms again the idea that we are dealing with a prestigious construction. To the north of this building, other structures and walls were also documented that seem to enclose a large open space in the style of a large atrium. On the southern side of this complex, a square structure can be observed that could perhaps be interpreted as a tower or a bell tower associated with the main entrance of the monastic enclosure. In sum, it can be said that the plan of the Cuarto de Enmedio complex is very reminiscent, albeit in a certainly more simplified form, of the reconstruction we propose for the structures documented in the Vallejo del Obispo site in Arcavica (Cañaveruelas, Cuenca), a

⁴⁶⁹ Pérez de Dios - Soto García 2015.

⁴⁷⁰ Díaz - Martín Viso 2011.

⁴⁷¹ Ariño 2011: 269.

⁴⁷² Velázquez 1989: 58 ff, 158 ff.

⁴⁷³ Barroso - Morín 1992: 65 ff.

⁴⁷⁴ Storch 1998: 151-153; Barroso - Morín 1992: 47-49.

complex that we have identified with the Servitanus monastery founded by Abbot Donatus c. 570/571 CE.⁴⁷⁵

It is interesting to note that just opposite Pelayos, although belonging to the municipality of Montejo, on the left bank of the Tormes river, there are two places called El Monasterio and Monasterio, located 3 km and 5 km respectively to the west of the aforementioned town. The first is a hagiotopeponym that refers to the existence in the surroundings of a cenobium of unknown era. The second is an old depopulated area belonging to the vicarage of Salvatierra. As in the previous case, it is possible that it alludes either to an old cenobium located in this place, otherwise unknown, or to some road related to the aforementioned site of Cuarto de Enmedio.⁴⁷⁶

Also, in the vicinity of Cuarto de Enmedio, in the same municipality of Pelayos, is the site of Cañal de las Hoyas.

In surveys carried out in the 1990s, different dwelling structures could be documented with others associated that seem to correspond to corrals and that make up what appears to be part of a village. The archaeological record also documented various ceramic remains typical of the area (common ceramics with incised and stamped decoration, burnished, etc.) and slates with drawings, numerals and texts referring to contracts, sales, lists of names, psalms, etc. One of these records a reference to the reign of King Egica (c. 640-701/3), providing an indication for the occupation date of the site.⁴⁷⁷

Near the Cañal de las Hoyas, c. 2.5 km to the south-east, is the gold deposit of Las Hoyas, which in some way would explain the importance this region had in the Visigothic era.⁴⁷⁸ Elsewhere we have exposed the importance the northern area of the province of Lusitania seems to have acquired for the Gothic nobility. This is suggested by a series of textual comments that relate various Gothic monarchs to this territory (e.g. the death of Reccesuinth and election of Wamba in Gerticos; the possible origin of Roderic; the interest of King Reccesuinth in reorganising the territory between the Douro and the Tagus rivers at the Council of Merida in 666, i.e. 80 years after the conquest of the Suevoian kingdom!; the appointment of a numerarius for the church of

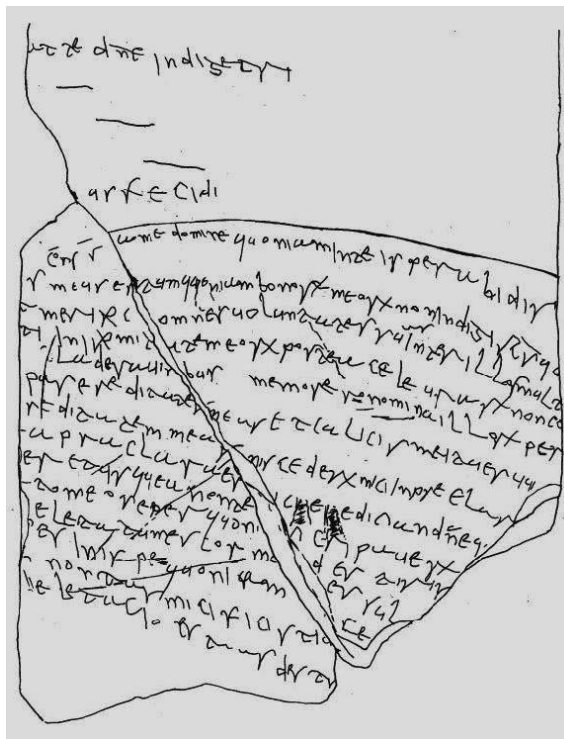


Fig. 41: Navahombela (Salamanca). Blackboard with biblical text (Velázquez 1989).

⁴⁷⁵ Barroso 2020 (based on an idea by Jorge Morín de Pablos and Artemio Martínez Tejera).

⁴⁷⁶ González 1829: 317.

⁴⁷⁷ Storch 1998: 144-156.

⁴⁷⁸ González-Clavijo *et al.* 2018.

Merida ordered by King Wamba) and the relatively abundant Gothic onomastics reflected in the epigraphic record.⁴⁷⁹

Based on the data we have to date, it is possible to deduce that the nucleus of Salvatierra-La Tala was an important reference centre in the environment, one that would perhaps be equipped with civil and religious structures, while Cuarto de Enmedio was simply a monastic foundation that arose from the nucleus of Salvatierra. In any case, there seems to be little doubt that the documentation in slate, abundant in this region of Salamanca, must be related to the establishment of large manorial and/or monastic estates in the area. In our view, it is very likely

that much of the documentation in slate reflects the accounting of agricultural activities carried out on these estates, whether it is deliveries of cereal or other agricultural products, or counting of livestock, possibilities that do not necessarily exclude each other. The appearance of these slates is an indication, anyway, of a relatively sophisticated economic activity that must be related to the existence of archives for the control and registration of agricultural activities. Therefore, we must consider that we are dealing with centres of some social relevance in the central-southern area of Salamanca.⁴⁸⁰

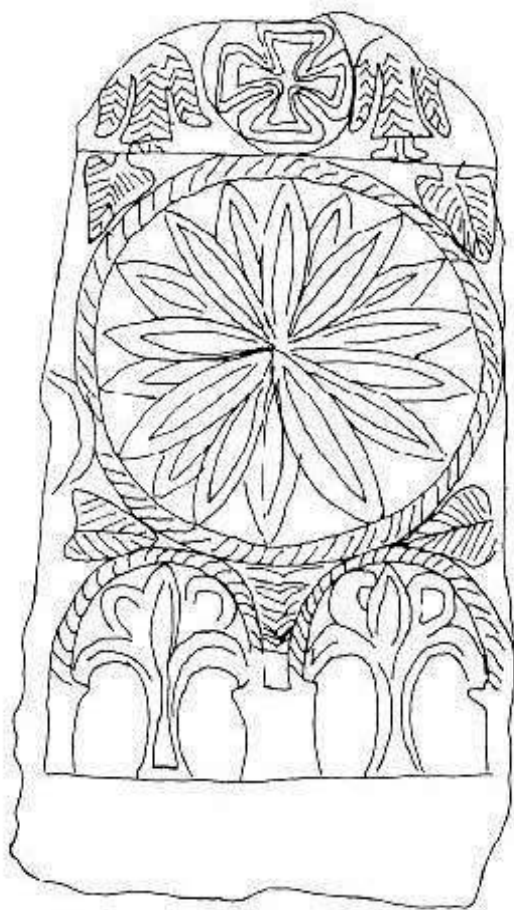


Fig. 42: Santibáñez de Béjar (Salamanca). Decorated plaque (Barroso - Morín 1992)

Further south, halfway between Salvatierra and Béjar, is Santibáñez de Béjar. Santibáñez is located only 15 km north-east of Béjar, on a route that connects the road from Emerita to Asturica with the natural route that, via the port of Congosto, runs through the Sierra de Gredos and leads to Avila and the Castilian plateau. From this town comes a decorated relief from the Visigothic era. It is an interesting piece for its iconography, although of poorer artistic quality than those found in the group of Salvatierra. The decoration of the plaque is organised in two registers: the upper band presents a cross

enclosed in a disc flanked by two winged figures (angels, no doubt) wearing a talar dress. The central band, much wider, presents a large disc decorated with a large rosette or star of 16 points. This large central rosette is supported by two arches that shelter two pointed palmettes in the form of lilies or fleur-de-lis. In the spandrel of the arches is represented a small

⁴⁷⁹ Barroso - Morín - Sánchez 2015; Barroso 2018: 57-59.

⁴⁸⁰ Vv. Aa. 2005

bucranium that seems to support the central disc. Years ago we dedicated a study to the iconography of this important relief and we considered that, for its religious theme and for the appearance of the head of a bull and the winged figures, it must have been part of a group of cancellations that composed the image of the Tetramorph.⁴⁸¹

Although it is risky – because we do not have more data than this simple relief – the name of the population (Santibáñez<Sancti Iohannis) could refer to an old monastery dedicated to St John, an invocation that could be explained in the context of the conversions of important Gothic characters to Catholicism. We have already had occasion to see this in the case of Prince Hermenegild, and the prosopography of the time suggests that he was not the only Arian to accept John as a baptismal name after his conversion to the Nicene faith. Given the years in which the life of John of Biclario (c. 540-621) took place, it is not impossible that he was one of those first Goths converted to Catholicism who chose to change their name at the time of abjuration.⁴⁸²

However, we do not know the antiquity of the toponym Santibáñez, but the proximity to Béjar and the appearance of the relief make it, in our opinion, the main candidate to identify it with the monastery of Biclario. In any case, we have few doubts that the foundation of John of Biclario must have been a monastery close to Béjar, since the phrase nunc Biclario dicitur that Isidore uses when referring to how the monastery was known in his time (nunc) must be interpreted as the reference toponym, i.e. Biclario had displaced the old invocation of the monastery (St John?). This is, as we have seen, a phenomenon that is documented for other similar cases of that same time in the Toledo area (Deibiensi>Yébenes, Tutesio>Totanés, etc.).⁴⁸³

As a final point, and considering all the data we have at our disposal, we think that the most reasonable hypothesis continues to be the one elaborated by R. Menéndez Pidal and that, in the absence of new data that contradict it, the identification of Biclario with Béjar continues to be the most plausible option. This, of course, without forgetting that this is a hypothesis that must be demonstrated with archaeological (and not only indicative) or epigraphic evidence that

⁴⁸¹ Barroso - Morín 1992: 54-58; 1994.

⁴⁸² We do not believe it is a coincidence that several bishoprics from the Visigoth era present a good number of prelates who bear that name at the top of the episcopal lists. Only counting the first positions on the lists, which correspond to a chronology that would not exceed the first third of the 7th century (i.e. the generation of conversion), we have a Bishop Iohannes of Egabrum (García Moreno 1974a: no. 207); another Iohannes of Elepla (García Moreno 1974a : no. 213, who occupies second place on the list); a Iohannes of Mentesa (García Moreno 1974a: 308); a Iohannes of Oxoma (García Moreno 1974a: no. 324); another Iohannes of Dumio (García Moreno 1974a: no. 404); another Iohannes of Viseum (García Moreno 1974a: no. 517); a Iohannes of Dertosa (García Moreno 1974a: no. 601, third on the list); Iohannes of Gerunda himself (García Moreno 1974a: no. 616), and a certain Iohannes of Pampilona (García Moreno 1974a: 634, second on the list). In total nine suspected cases, while in the final total there are only seven other bishops with that name (in contrast, we are witnessing a significant increase in Gothic onomastics among the higher clergy: Orlandis 1966); a truly relevant proportion that is difficult not to relate to the interest of the Gothic nobility in taking over the high ecclesiastical dignities and the policy of promoting the Gothic nobility after the conversion of Reccared. In addition, we have a Servus Dei from Caliabria (García Moreno 1974a: no. 452) which also leads to suspicion of a converted Gothic origin. In such a situation we would also have Renovatus of Mérida (García Moreno 1974a: no. 171), whose Gothic origin is confirmed in VSPE 5.14.4 (Camacho Macías 1988: 77). This would mean that the occupation of episcopal positions by Gothic figures – a phenomenon well documented by Orlandis for the 7th century – would have occurred shortly before 589 CE and was surely one of the factors that would aggravate the crisis unleashed by the conversion of Hermenegild.

⁴⁸³ Barroso - Morín - Carrobbles 2011: 71-74. It is normal, even today, when we talk about a monastery, e.g. Silos (for the monastery of Santo Domingo) or Poblet (for Santa Maria).

unfortunately does not exist – or at least is not conclusive – to date. In other words, the exact location of the monastery founded by John should not be considered a closed issue at all, but a matter that archaeological research still has to elucidate.

ANNEX 2: An image of St Hermenegild from the Visigothic Period? Two rectifications and a new reading of a relief of the Lapidary Museum of Narbonne (or ‘to err is human’)

Years ago, two of the authors of this book made a proposal for the interpretation of a famous decorated plaque belonging to the collection of the Lapidary Museum of Narbonne. The proposed interpretation was part of a more ambitious study on royal anointing and the cult of the cross in the Visigothic kingdom of Toledo. As support for our hypothesis of the existence of an underground cult to the figure of St Hermenegild in the Pyrenean area, we add to this testimony a Romanesque mural painting from the Seo de Urgel. Given that the readings we provided there of the Narbonne relief had a wide echo, we would now like to take advantage of the opportunity that this new study on the figure of Prince Hermenegild offers us to rectify and utter a sincere *mea culpa*. We are referring, of course, to the interpretation of the relief and fresco, and not so much to the historical analysis which, in our opinion, and always in general terms, continues to be valid.⁴⁸⁴

First of all, we must reject outright that the Romanesque painting in the Seo de Urgel cathedral has anything to do with Prince Hermenegild. This reading was based on an incomplete photographic reproduction that appeared in a study on the Visigothic army and on the reading provided by the author (or the editor, we do not know) of the said study. The characters in the Romanesque fresco are identified with Ss Leander and Hermenegild, when in fact they appear to be St Ermengol (Hermenegild), bishop of Urgel between 1010-1035, performing an exorcism.⁴⁸⁵ Thus, we have lost an important artistic argument in favour of the cult of St Hermenegild in the Pyrenean area, but in exchange we have found an onomastic testimony of it, just as we saw happen in the western part of the Iberian Peninsula with the spread of the name Hermenegild and the patronymic Mendez.

Regarding the Narbonne relief, we were confused by the chronology (8th century) that researchers had been accepting at that time. However, there are no well-founded reasons that allow to accurately establish the chronology of this relief in that century except for stylistic criteria and, consequently, it is not impossible that it could be a work from the second half of the 7th century, just as we think today. Furthermore, if it is accepted, as Jean Cassaigneau defends with good arguments,⁴⁸⁶ that the animal represented in the Narbonne relief is a crocodile – a symbol that appears on the Roman coins minted in the city of Nimes – and not a dog, the iconography of the relief may be related to Wamba's victorious campaign against the

⁴⁸⁴ Barroso - Morín 1994b; 2004. The photograph is from Gárate 1983.

⁴⁸⁵ Bertran Orriols 2016.

⁴⁸⁶ Cassaigneau 2013. Once again, we would like to take this opportunity to sincerely thank Mr Cassaigneau for providing us with a copy of his study.



Fig. 43: Exorcism of San Armengol (Bertran - Orriols 2016).

Septimanian rebels in 672, and more specifically to the king's conquest of the city, undoubtedly the most important and decisive episode of the campaign.⁴⁸⁷

If this new reading is accepted, the character who appears enthroned holding the great gemstone cross would be King Wamba himself and not Hermenegild. The appearance of the crocodile should perhaps be understood as a double allusion to Wamba's triumph over Nimes and over Paulus. In this regard, maybe there is an allusion to it in the words that Julian of Toledo dedicates to the latter when he makes public his betrayal and, after gathering his army, rears his reptilian head.⁴⁸⁸

In this way, the meaning of the plaque would then be much clearer: the prostration of the crocodile (Paulus) contrasts with the enthroned figure (Wamba) and is a symbol of the king's

triumph over the rebels.

As for the monk who holds the palm of martyrdom, it is very likely that he must be identified with the martyr St Antoninus of Pamiers, whose cult was already very popular in the southeast of France and who could have been imported to Spain in the reign of Wamba, according to an ancient tradition that archaeology seems to corroborate (e.g. the crypt-martyrium of the Palencia cathedral).⁴⁸⁹ Finally, the strange symbols that appear behind the figure of the monarch would refer not so much to the courtly atmosphere that we assumed earlier, but to the stars that place the action in the wonderful setting of the miraculous appearance of the saint.

In summary, we think that the relief of Narbonne must have been a kind of ex-voto made by King Wamba to the Toulouse martyr as thanksgiving for the victory against Duke Paulus and

⁴⁸⁷ Iul. Tol. HWR 13-26 (Levison 1910: 513-522).

⁴⁸⁸ Iul. Tol. HWR 20: 'Ubi dum circumfusa omnis exercitus multitudo collecta est, vipereum caput perfidiae cum quibusdam sociis Paule ipse in medio adstitit...' (Levison 1910: 506 ff).

⁴⁸⁹ Schlunk 1947: 283 ff.

the Septimianian rebels. It must have decorated a church dedicated to St Antoninus himself, or was perhaps intended to decorate one of the city gates, as we know the king ordered done in Toledo.⁴⁹⁰ In fact, Julian of Toledo relates that, once the rebellion was quelled, Wamba decreed the reconstruction of the cities of Nimes and Narbonne at the expense of the public treasury.⁴⁹¹

In any case, and as happens with the co-regents' coins, the Narbonne depiction constitutes a clear example of how the gemmed cross with apocalyptic letters was a symbol inextricably associated with Visigothic royalty – in the style of what would later also happen in the kingdom of Oviedo, historical heir to the kingdom of Toledo – and which formed a substantial part of the *regalia* that built the image of the monarchy throughout the 7th century. This cross, covered with precious stones, and a receptacle of the sacred relic of the *lignum crucis*, played the important role of sacred *vexillum* of the army, while projecting on the people the image that the sovereign was an electus *Dei* who is intended to govern the destinies of the kingdom.

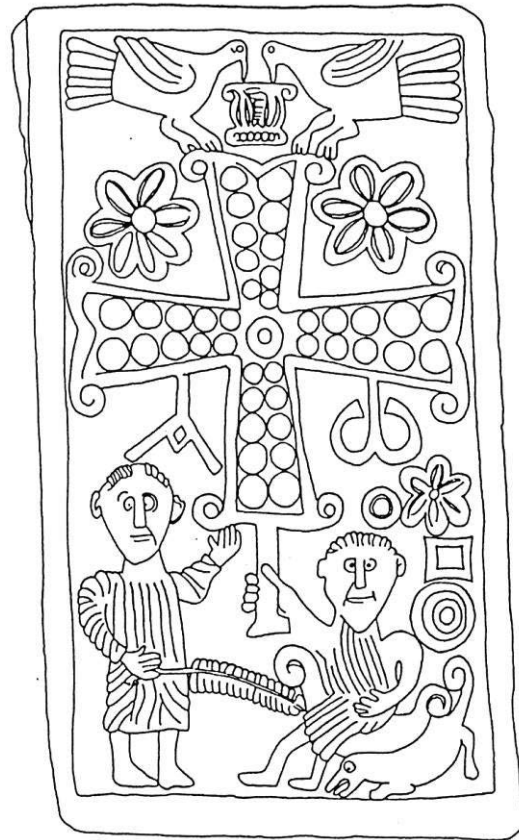


Fig. 44: Narbona. Museo Lapidario. Decorated plaque with courtly scene and martyr (Barroso - Morin 1994).

⁴⁹⁰ Chron. Muzarab. 29 (Gil 1973: 26 ff).

⁴⁹¹ Iul. Tol. HWR 26 (Nimes): 'Paulus tyrannus celebri captus detentione devincitur. Sed post haec religiosi principis animus de reparatione inruptae urbis sollicitus statim murorum cava reformat, incensas portas renovat, insepultis tumulum praestat, incolis ablatam praedam restituens et exulcerata quaeque publico aerario fovens. Iubet tamen thesauria omnem quam ceperant copiam diligentiori servare custodia, non avaritiae quaestud inlectus, sed amore divino provocatus, scilicet ut res sacratae Deo facilius possent discernere et cultibus divinis restitui... Unde factum est, ut vasa argenti quam plurima de thesauris dominicis rapta et coronam illam auream, quam divae memoriae Reccaredus princeps ad corpus beatissimi Felicis obtulerat, quam idem Paulus insano capiti suo imponere ausus est, tota haec in unum collecta studiosius ordinaret discernere et devotissime, prout cuique competebat ecclesiae, intenderet reformare'; 28 (Narbonne): 'Unde comperto princeps... placida progressionem Narbonam contendens, urbem victor ingreditur. Ibi disrupta quaeque Narbonensis provinciae, exessa atque depasta, quae eidem terrae magnis febribus hanelanti depraedatione nostrorum et incursione appulsa sunt, munere placata, dispositione reformat, consiliis instruit; statum quoque rerum mira pace componit' (Levison 1910: 521 ff).

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