



## Response to Visigothic Symposium 3: Circulation & Communication

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This Visigothic Symposium manages, by way of the selected themes and the variety of backgrounds of the authors, to illuminate a few similar subject areas treated with different shades of light. My comments will at first address some points among the first two papers on religious matters where I see commonality, then for the remaining papers I will adopt a primary focus of interesting ways in which the subject matter relates to the monetary issues which I address in this forum and elsewhere.

Liubov Chernin demonstrates the rough equivalence of forced converts to freedmen status, and with it both the reasons for the juridical progression surrounding that status as well as the inherent problem it posed. In this tackling of the complex issue, the seventh-century program regarding Jews ran counter to the unifying objective by separating the target group. From one perspective, since Jews were already separate, it might be claimed that the interior contradictions created for this population were even greater. What must be kept in mind, as is made clear from Chernin's sifting of the freedman status of Jews and the very basis for it, is that the core issue was formal and not full conversion. "True Christians" who were formerly Jewish were not the ones subject to punishment. Thus, I stop short of full agreement with the purported contradiction – apart from the legal irregularity for treatment of theoretical Roman citizens – within the reigning mentality of the kingdom's political and religious



leadership. While the anti-Jewish measures can be seen as unfair, they had an essential consistency in so far as they continued the pursuit of a uniformly Christian, and therefore non-Jewish, population – however elusive that remained not only in terms of forced converts’ enduring attitudes but also what must be deduced as a reluctance or even refusal of some native Christians to enforce the infringements. Recognition of crypto-Jews in the Visigothic society had its own problem, that of determining who was a “bad” Jew, a matter left to local Christians.<sup>1</sup> But the principle remained that of the original intent, eradicating Jewish practice.<sup>2</sup> By its strictures, the freedmen-like status imposed on recalcitrant Jewish converts does not seem to have been a legal contradiction, at least in the sense of creating an incentive toward persevering in the old religion, rather if anything it provided a spur to adopt the new religion more deeply. It can be seen as one more coercive layer to eradicate Judaism in the Visigothic realm, just like the taxes and heavy fines I mention in my contribution to this Symposium.

Alberto Ferreiro’s piece on the bishops of fifth-century Hispania and their interaction with Pope Innocent I treats a similar concern: correct religion and the unity that entailed. The seeking of unity only highlights the historical problem, what Chernin points to as a contradiction, that is, the half-accepted status of subjects coerced into the dominant confessional category. Yet from another point of view the concern was well placed. Forcing conversion and yet permitting only a partial freedom may have been a violation (Isidore and others of the Church thought so), but the fact that many Jewish

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<sup>1</sup> Liubov Chernin, “Visigothic Jewish Converts: A Life in Between,” *Visigothic Symposia* 3 (2018): 14.

<sup>2</sup> Helpful on the fuller social context of Jewish treatment, discussed in a review of recent scholarship, is Rachel Stocking, “Early Medieval Christian Identity and Anti-Judaism: The Case of the Visigothic Kingdom,” *Religion Compass* 2.4 (2008): 642-58. On the specifically religious context, wherein baptism and canonical strictures are viewed as channels of Christian differentiation, see the discussion and bibliography in Andrew Kurt, “Lay Piety in Visigothic Iberia: Liturgical and Paraliturgical Forms,” *Journal of Medieval Iberian Studies* 8.1 (2015): 1-37, at 10-12.

converts continued their old ways is recognized, a situation those pursuing severe anti-Judaism found compromising. The fears of bishops in the fifth century about former Priscillianists are not so different; one major distinction is that the Priscillian-leaning clerics insisted theirs was the authentic version of Christian doctrine. These issues in fact bear relation to many other religious questions of the Middle Ages. Pope Innocent I's role in the contest was one of imposing consistency and unity where inconsistency had reigned. One difference worth noting in this case is that Rome was not involved in the reprisals against Jews and unwillingly converted Jews. Ferreiro is right to strongly qualify Geoffrey Dunn's statement, "I argue that nowhere did Innocent assert apostolic authority or any notion of Petrine primacy over Spain [...]. Nowhere in it [the letter] does he assert himself as the successor of Peter or make claims about what Petrine authority meant. The most he claimed about Rome was that it was; 'the bosom of faith' and an apostolic see."<sup>3</sup>

It may be worthwhile pondering in this case how the Donatist and Arian controversies were somewhat comparable, although far more than a short paper would be needed to develop the correlations in proper depth. One may wish to refer to an earlier work by Ferreiro on this broader issue.<sup>4</sup> The paper hints at but leaves open to further consideration the communication between cities and rural places, between bishops and the mostly rural, and by many counts less Romanized, people of Gallaecia. As in separate administrative questions, including monetary matters, that I address below, Gallaecia's peculiarity is noteworthy.

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<sup>3</sup> Alberto Ferreiro, "The Bishops of Hispania and Pope Innocent I," *Visigothic Symposia* 3 (2018): 31. Ref. Geoffrey D. Dunn, "Innocent I and the First Synod of Rome," in *The Bishop of Rome in Late Antiquity*, ed. Geoffrey D. Dunn (Surrey: Ashgate, 2015), 89-107, at 91 and 106.

<sup>4</sup> Alberto Ferreiro, "Jerome's Polemic Against Priscillian in his *Letter* to Ctesiphon (133, 4)," *Revue d'Etudes Augustiniennes et Patristiques* 39.2 (1993): 309-32, esp. 324-27.

The essay on aqueducts and engineering by Javier Martínez Jiménez is linked to others in part because it addresses transformations across the long period of Gothic occupation of Iberia. It forces us to step back and make assessment of the Visigothic epoch, at least in a significant area of material history and the related state of practical knowledge. Figure 2 shows the number of functioning aqueducts to be predictably consistent in decline (Those wishing to explore the big picture of physical transformation in the peninsula will wish to compare accounts in three recently published works on the archeology of these centuries of Hispania, one of them co-written by Martínez Jiménez).<sup>5</sup>

This technological knowledge and application were already facing decline in the fourth century, so it was not caused by the movement of barbarian groups entering into the Western Empire. Nevertheless, a key feature within the transformational age relates to the diminution of state structures, and what effects this had on government and society. Thus I find it helpful to take into account the author's remarks: "Considering these circumstances, the communication of knowledge and the preservation of engineering skills was very closely linked to state control, even if it existed outside it as a scholarly topic (and not a practical science) amongst the elites [...]. But in the Visigothic period there was not a state-related system which promoted training in engineering, and the gap with the active Roman past was such that the teaching and apprenticeships had broken down."<sup>6</sup> This of course can be associated with a host of other matters such as

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<sup>5</sup> Javier Martínez Jiménez, Isaac Sastre de Diego and Carlos Terejizo, *The Iberian Peninsula between 300 and 850: An Archaeological Perspective* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2017); Pilar Diarte-Blasco, *Late Antique and Early Medieval Hispania: Landscapes Without Strategy?* (Oxford: Oxbow, 2018); and, *New Directions in Early Medieval European Archaeology: Spain and Italy Compared. Essays for Riccardo Francovich*, ed. Saoro Gelichi and Richard Hodges (Turnhout: Brepols, 2015).

<sup>6</sup> Javier Martínez Jiménez, "Engineering, Aqueducts, and the Rupture of Knowledge Transmission in the Visigothic Period," *Visigothic Symposia* 3 (2018): 47.

taxation, monetization, a professional army, and public building projects or repairs, but also reverberations when it comes to the level at which production sites continued in the fifth to eighth centuries in Iberia. One parallel in technological decline in post-Roman Spain can be found in coin manufacture. While a purposeful differentiation from the Roman model has a place in explaining specific developments in typology on the Visigothic gold currency, there is little doubting that those carrying out the die engraving or actual production of gold coinage from the imitative through the “regal” era lacked the skill of contemporary Roman workmanship.

Two articles here on the Visigothic military have ramifications for my own essay. I try to demonstrate that beyond the facts about how coined money moved about – for instance, as known from “snapshots” derived from the distance of place finds from the location of issue – the mint system itself was not at all static. As I have maintained, the best explanation relates closely to movement. Permanent mints are explained by movement of a different sort than the majority of mints, namely, revenues and expenditures in monetary form. These mints were tied to more fixed needs of government and thereby to taxation-revenue streams, but the impermanence (and yet in several cases relatively escalated productivity) of a few dozen other mints begs the question of why they would be put in place.

Jason Osborne focuses on John of Biclar’s recording of Liuvigild gathering an army in 582, when he at last addressed the uprising of Hermenegild militarily.<sup>7</sup> His judicious reading of the situation explores the probabilities of what Liuvigild faced regarding the

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<sup>7</sup> Jason Osborne, “A Call to Arms: Cross-Regional Communication and the Visigothic Military,” *Visigothic Symposia* 3 (2018): 61.

army, and as remarked in my own contribution to this Symposium I believe his argument for the development of a standing force under Liuvigild and his son Reccared is a strong one.<sup>8</sup> We may extend the author's reading between the narrative lines as pertains to Gallaecia in 585. I have proposed in my forthcoming book<sup>9</sup> that the reason for Reccared's victory coinage there is likely due to his presence in those newly conquered territories. Osborne's observations on this episode are significant: two distant conflicts were successfully met within a matter of months, and for the first time Liuvigild was not present to lead the fight but rather delegated to trusted commanders, which may indeed have been required because the king was now frail, as the author supposes. But Reccared's own decision not to directly engage the Frankish incursion himself but rather to send a *dux*, a Hispano-Roman from Lusitania no less, to engage the enemy fits with a possible military restructuring in the kingdom to establish more of a permanent force.

Envisioning the selection of Claudius as commander as a propitious way to help forge unity between regions and among the Gothic and Hispano-Roman population may seem a stretch, but association made with the aspirations of Reccared's conversion and of the Third Council of Toledo adds to the case put forth here. If we also recall that Emerita Augusta was the base for Hermenegild's rebellion just ten years earlier, a sign of restored confidence can be seen in bringing a Lusitanian leader and his armed men into the struggle. Past the miraculous and topological coloring of the way Reccared's

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<sup>8</sup> Strands along these lines in recent scholarship may be brought to bear. A standing army in the kingdom and especially the employment of garrisons is supported, for example, by Fernando López Sánchez, "Moneda civil y moneda militar en Hispania (350-711)," in *Militares y civiles en la antigua Roma*, ed. Juan José Palao Vicente (Salamanca: Universidad de Salamanca, 2010), 227-52, at 248-52, and idem, "La moneda del reino visigodo de Toledo: ¿Por qué? ¿Para quién?," *Mainake* 31 (2009): 175-86.

<sup>9</sup> Andrew Kurt, *Minting, State and Economy in the Visigothic Kingdom: From Settlement in Aquitaine through the First Decade of the Muslim Conquest of Spain*, in press with Amsterdam University Press.

handling of military engagement is described by contemporary historians of the kingdom, we are brought to consider the utilization of the army in a context of unification, which is a valuable insight.

Fernando Ruchesi also invites consideration of the bond of unity through military encounter, this time in the historiographical memory transmitted by ecclesiastical voices of the late sixth and early seventh century interested in fostering the consolidation that Gothic religious conversion could bring. A shared memory of the battle of Vouillé as shaped for the Visigothic realm on the one hand and for the Franks on the other is part of that identity-shaping process. Ruchesi astutely observes that the treasure being taken, as we learn from Gregory but not from Spanish sources, is a part of the story available for partisan rendering. On the other hand, we may doubt whether use of the term *goti* by the Frankish authors had any minimizing intention, since it was used by authors from the Visigothic kingdom as well.

There is validity in the view of the historians' purpose in their specific portrayals of the three battles discussed as partly a message to aristocratic Visigoths encouraging loyalty and reinforcing a victorious outcome on the side of their sovereign. I have attempted to show a similar strain of wartime propaganda in the gold currency produced at several sites following shortly after the king's triumph. In references to the taking of the enemy's treasure there is another link to my own focus on the theme of monetary matters. Treasure is potency of power, among other things the power to create and sustain an army usually by way of payment in gold coin. This, together with its support of a people's cultivated aura as indicated, is why specific mention of its capture often went hand in hand with narration of battlefield victory. Military success was only part

of the goal; a ruler had also to rob the enemy of the force and symbol that treasure carried and assume its favors for himself.<sup>10</sup>

Tomás Cordero Ruiz's contribution, "At the Center and the Periphery of Lusitania: The Evolution of the City of Egítania and its Territory (4th-8th centuries)," fits very nicely in this Symposium's themes about the interrelations of communities, as it looks at the evolution of the city of Egítania in the long late antiquity as well as its position within the wider region within Lusitania. The vast shrinkage in settlement areas in the late Roman centuries and the lingering questions concerning the administrative pattern of rural sites when we come to the era of Suevic and Visigothic occupation in some ways mirror the elusiveness of minting sites which I address in this forum and in my forthcoming book. Aside from what I have further advanced as Visigothic military mints established more or less temporarily in theaters of warfare, we still cannot say definitively why certain cities and towns apart from the major ones were chosen as centers for the production of gold currency, nor can we fix the locations of several certain places of minting, as Figure 8 of Cordero Ruiz's article indicates. This reminds us of the importance of continuing the many lines of research which, when brought together, could enable us to propose answers on solid footing. The mentioned discovery of tremisses at fortified sites of Monsanto and Penha Garcia serve in yet another way to bring the southern parts of the former Suevic kingdom into a curious monetary pattern that makes western and northwestern Iberia distinct. Finds at aristocratic sites may be a reflection of elite usage of high-value currency, although what they more securely denote is circulation of this coinage beyond the cities. The larger region under

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<sup>10</sup> On the transporting of at least a part of the royal treasure when a king went on expedition, in large measure to spend on the costs of battle, see Pablo C. Díaz and M. R. Valverde, "The Theoretical Strength and Practical Weakness of the Visigothic Monarchy of Toledo," in *Rituals of Power From Late Antiquity to the Early Middle Ages*, ed. Frans Theuvs and Janet L. Nelson (Leiden: Brill, 2000), 59-93.

discussion is mainly peculiar for having so many places of issue but with low production on the whole. Egítania's known coins show the mint there to have been much more productive and sustained across most reigns, suggesting a modest administrative role related to tax gathering and outlay. While the mapping of the region's mints in my own article here (see Andrew Kurt "Visigothic Currency in its Making and Movement: a Varying State of Circumstances," Figure 1) differs slightly from Ruiz's, and although I have not attributed Lusitania's minting to auriferic supply from the Tagus River network, a categorical denial that this could have been the motive for some of the gold issues cannot be made. Such localized examinations, as long as they do not contradict evidence for a more obvious scenario, offer refreshing possibilities.

Pablo C. Díaz plows the fairly rich autobiographical source material of Valerius of Bierzo to discuss social relations in his time. Besides insights on Valerius and the communities with which he deals, we can cull points of interest for economic and monetary history. One is that the site of Bergidium (probably Castro de Ventosa or very nearby) which figures into the story of Valerius saw at least brief mint activity, though well before Valerius in the time of Sisebut. This mint – Bergio on the tremisses – is probably related to the military frontier formed at that precise time,<sup>11</sup> but an administrative connection remains a possibility. As Díaz reminds us of private churches such as that of the *inlustrem vir* Ricimer, "they were the religious core of the estate's dependents, they may even have served as an attraction for other faithful from the area, and they always stood in a blurred line between a pastoral role and a status as local

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<sup>11</sup> Ruth Pliego Vázquez, *La moneda visigoda*, v. 1 (Sevilla: Universidad de Sevilla, 2009), 140.

income collection centers.”<sup>12</sup> It is possible that these sorts of sites, whether in conjunction with a troop concentration or separately, go some way in helping to explain the beguiling problem of Gallaecia’s web of mints. At the very least, the complex mesh of relationships described played a role in the issuance of gold currency that is still indeterminate but holds the prospect of increasing clarity.

A fascinating study by Luís Fontes sheds light on work of great significance being done in the Braga area. While the Gallaecian difference is an outstanding feature from Roman times until now, and the region has long presented challenges to understanding basic social, political, economic, and religious circumstances during the Suevic and Visigothic periods, the sense of isolation of the northwest is pierced by the curious influx of holy men from afar. Fontes sets the insertion of foreign churchmen and ecclesiastical architecture within the framework of the mobilizing force of Christianization. I would highlight here the commercial and monetary ramifications. As I maintain in my contribution and much more extensively in my forthcoming book, travel, building projects, Church activity and intellectual pursuits could not be done without recourse to coined money. Even an apparently remote and supposedly unsophisticated region was looped into the currency system not only by way of mints – including a long-running one at Braga – but by actual use of money. This is suggested by a rather wide range of finds of tremisses and copper-based pieces particularly in nearby northern Lusitania<sup>13</sup> and southern Gallaecia.<sup>14</sup> What emerges from the data of find places and location of mints, where the two are known, is that like other parts of

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<sup>12</sup> Pablo C. Díaz, “Sociability and Sense of Belonging,” *Visigothic Symposium* 3 (2018): 121-22.

<sup>13</sup> Alberto Martín-Esquível and Cruces Blázquez-Cerrato, “Hallazgos monetarios en el área lusitana situada entre el Duero y el Tajo (siglos IV-VIII),” *Conimbriga* 57 (2018), 139-68, esp. Figures 5, 6, 7.

<sup>14</sup> Pablo Núñez Meneses, “Hallazgos de moneda visigoda en Galicia,” *Anvar: Asociación numismática Val de Ariz*, 11 November 2014 (accessed 5 August 2019), <http://www.anvar.es/2014/11/hallazgos-de-moneda-visigoda-en-galicia/>.

the kingdom significant portions of the gold currency finally deposited there came not only from the surrounding area but also from distant points of Hispania.

Luciano Gallinari uses a comparative examination of Hispania in the late Roman and Visigothic stages to dampen notions of a nationalistic separation of whole areas in Sardinia. In Iberia it is once again the northwest that has a reputation for nearly complete otherness. Debate about levels of integration aside, we are reminded that characterizations based on special interests cannot override historical substantiation. Aspects of the discussion, whether there was a hard border in the Roman north and above all in southern Visigothia, and how Byzantium was viewed by Visigothic leadership, had some major effects on emissions of gold coinage. One would be typological, which I have addressed in this Symposium only in passing. I also pointed out that from what the corpus of known tremisses tells us, output soared in the very areas which abutted the Byzantine areas of occupation. The high level of emissions from 621-636 at Ispali, Cordoba, Tucci, and Mentesa can be explained by the role of those cities on the second line of the Visigothic *limes*, not a strict border line but a military frontier organization of numerous fortified points along a front connected by roads to a few firmly held cities some distance further back.<sup>15</sup> The shape of that southeasternmost line of mints can be seen shifting further to the coasts as Visigothic victories mounted particularly during Sisebut's and Suintila's reigns.<sup>16</sup> While a

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<sup>15</sup> For the assertion of the Visigoths' use of the *limes* following contemporary Byzantine models see J. J. Sayas Abengochea and Luis A. García Moreno, *Romanismo y germanismo: el despertar de los pueblos hispánicos (siglos IV-X)*, vol. 2 of *Historia de España dirigida por Manuel Tuñón de Lara* (Barcelona: Labor, 1982), 330, and Margarita Vallejo Girvés, *Bizancio y la España tardoantigua (ss. V-VIII): un capítulo de historia mediterránea* (Alcalá de Henares: Universidad de Alcalá de Henares, 1993), 243, 291f; see also Jaime Vizcaíno Sánchez, *La presencia bizantina en Hispania, siglos VI-VII: la documentación arqueológica* (Murcia: Universidad de Murcia, 2009), 88-92 (Byzantine) and 92-94 (Visigothic) for a similar adaptation of the *limes* in Iberia.

<sup>16</sup> See Vallejo Girvés, *Bizancio y la España*, 291-96; see Pliego, *La moneda visigoda*, v. 1, 100, 115 and v. 2, 172f, nos. 268 (1,2), 269(c) (1,2), 269(d) (1) for gold currency of the Barbi mint with *VICTOR* or *VICTORIA* on the reverse legend. See also Peter Bartlett and Gonzalo Cores, "The Coinage of the

sharply defined line of defense does not seem to correspond to the reality making up the *limes* of Byzantine Spania, historiographical, monetary, and to some extent archeological evidence points to more than the control of a few coastal urban areas.<sup>17</sup> Sardinia's situation seems less clear on my reading of Gallinari's discussion. This reviewer appreciates the critique Gallinari sets forth of the supposed isolation of both the Iberian Peninsula and Sardinia. Although Spain may not have experienced the same economic vibrancy as under the Roman Empire, modern studies of archeology and numismatics show that such a statement would have to be highly qualified,<sup>18</sup> and the author intimates a similar situation is coming into greater focus with respect to Sardinia.

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Visigothic King Sisebut (612-21) from the Mint of Barbi," *Gaceta Numismática* 158-159 (Sep.-Dec. 2005): 13-21, and Sebastián Corzo Pérez and Susana Sempere Díaz, "La ceca visigoda de Barbi: aspectos historiográficos y arqueológicos," *Numisma* 45.236 (1995): 125-38.

<sup>17</sup> An extremely detailed treatment is available in Vizcaíno, *La presencia bizantina*, 125-227.

<sup>18</sup> Readers especially of my final chapter (seven) in *Minting, State and Economy in the Visigothic Kingdom* will see an integrated review of the Mediterranean cross-currents.

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