Rome and Byzantium in the Visigothic Kingdom

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Beyond Imitatio Imperii

Edited by
Damián Fernández,
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Table of Contents

List of Figures and Tables

Abbreviations

Aug. De civ. Dei	Augustine of Hippo, *De civitate Dei*, ed. and trans. by R. W. Dyson, *The City of God Against the Pagans* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998)
Avit. Ep.	Avitus of Vienne, *Epistulae*, ed. by Rudolph Peiper, *Alcimi Ecdicii Aviti Viennensis episcopi opera quae supersunt*. MGH Auctores Antiquissimi, VI.2 (Berlin: Weidmann, 1883)
Braul. Ep.	Braulio of Zarazoga, *Epistulae*, ed. by Ruth Miguel Franco and José Carlos Martín-Iglesias, *Braulionis Caesaraugustani Epistulae et Isidori Hispalensis Epistulae ad Braulionem. Braulionis Caesaraugustani Confessio vel professio Iudaeorum civitatis Toletanae*. CCSL 114B (Turnhout: Brepols, 2018)
CCSL	Corpus Christianorum. Series Latina
Chron. Muz.	*Chronica Muzarabica*, ed. by Juan Gil, *Chronica Hispana saeculi VIII et IX*. Corpus Christianorum. Continuatio Mediaevalis 45 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2018)
CILAE	*Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum Augustae Emeritae. Inscriptiones Hispaniae Latinae (CIL II²)*, ed. by Antonio Alvar Ezquerra, Jonathan Edmondson, José Luis Ramírez Sádaba, et al. (Alcalá de Henares: Universidad de Alcalá de Henares, 2019–), https://cil2digital.web.uah.es/
CIPTP	*Catálogo das inscrições palaeocristãs do território português*, ed. by M. Alves-Dias and C. Gaspar (Lisbon: CEC-UL, 2006)
CJ	*Codex Justinianus,* ed. by Paul Krüger, *Corpus iuris civilis*, vol. II, *Codex Iustinianus*. 9th stereotypa edition (Berlin: Weidmann, 1914)
Coll. Hisp.	*Collectio Hispana*, ed. by Gonzalo Martínez Díez and Félix Rodríguez, *La colección canónica hispana*, 6 vols (Madrid: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 1966–2002)
Conc.	*Concilios visigóticos e hispano-romanos*, ed. and trans. by José Vives (Madrid: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 1963)
Cons. Caes.	*Consularia Caesaraugustana*, ed. by Carmen Cardelle de Hartmann, *Victoris Tunnunensis Chronicon cum reliquiis ex Consularibus Caesaraugustanis et Iohannis Biclarensis Chronicon*. CCSL 173A (Turnhout: Brepols, 2001)

CTh   *Codex Theodosianus*, ed. by Theodor Mommsen and Paul
                    M. Meyer, *Theodosiani libri XVI: cum Constitutionibus Sir-
                    mondianis et Leges novellae ad Theodosianum pertinentes*,
                    2 vols (Berlin: Weidmann, 1905)

Fredegar   *Fredegarii Chronicon*, ed. by Bruno Krusch, *Fredegarii
                    et aliorum chronica*. MGH Scriptorum rerum Merovin-
                    gicarum, II (Hannover: Hahn, 1888)

FW   *Formulae Wisigothicae*, ed. by Juan Gil, *Miscellanea
                    Wisigothicae* (Seville: Publicaciones de la Universidad
                    de Sevilla, 1972)

Gai Inst.   *Gai Institutiones*, ed. by Emil Seckel and Gustav Kuebler
                    (Leipzig: Teubner, 1935)

Greg. Mag. Dial.   Gregory the Great, *Dialogui*, ed. and trans. by Adalbert
                    de Vogüé, *Grégoire le Grand. Dialogues*, 3 vols. Sources
                    Chrétiennes, 251, 260, and 265 (Paris: Les Belles Lettres,
                    1978–1980)

Greg. Mag. Reg.   Gregory the Great, *Registrum epistularum*, ed. by Dag
                    Norberg, *S. Gregorii Magni opera. Registrum epistularum*,
                    2 vols. CCSL 140 and 140A (Turnhout: Brepols, 1982)

Greg. Tur.   Gregory of Tours, *Decem libri historiarum*, ed. by Bruno
Decem libri   Krusch and Wilhelm Levison, *Gregorii Episcopi Turonensis
                    libri historiarum X*. MGH Scriptores rerum Merovingi-
                    carum, I.1 (Hannover: Hahn, 1951)

Greg. Tur. In   Gregory of Tours, *Liber in gloria confessorum*, in *Gregorii
gloria confess.   Episcopi Turonensis Miracula et opera minora*, ed. by
                    Bruno Krusch. MGH Scriptores rerum Merovingicarum,
                    I.2 (Hannover: Hahn, 1969)

Greg. Tur. In   Gregory of Tours, *Liber in gloria martyrum*, in *Gregorii
gloria mart.   Episcopi Turonensis Miracula et opera minora*, ed. by
                    Bruno Krusch. MGH Scriptores rerum Merovingicarum,
                    I.2 (Hannover: Hahn, 1969)

HE   *Hispania Epigraphica*

Hist. Wamb. reg.   Julian of Toledo, *Historia Wambae regis*, ed. by Jocelyn
                    N. Hillgarth, B. Bischoff, and Wilhelm Levison, *Iulianus
                    Toletanus. Opera I. Prognosticon futuri saeculi libri tres.
                    Apologeticum de tribus capitulis. De comprobatione sextae
                    aetatis. Historia Wambae regis. Epistula ad Modoenum*.
                    CCSL 115 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1976)

Hyd.	Hydatius, *Chronicon*, ed. and trans. by R. W. Burgess, *The Chronicle of Hydatius and the Consularia Constantinopolitana: Two Contemporary Accounts of the Final Years of the Roman Empire* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993)
ICERV	*Inscripciones cristianas de la España romana y visigoda*, ed. by José Vives, 2nd ed. (Barcelona: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 1969)
Ildef. De viris	Ildefonsus of Toledo, *De viris illustribus*, ed. by Valeriano Yarza Urquiola and Carmen Codoñer, *Ildefonsi Toletani De virginitate Sanctae Mariae, De cognitione baptismi, De itinere deserti, De viris illustribus*. CCSL 114A (Turnhout: Brepols, 2007)
Ioh. Bicl.	John of Biclarum, *Chronicon*, ed. by Carmen Cardelle de Hartmann, *Victoris Tunnvnensis Chronicon cum reliquiis ex Consularibvs Caesaraugustanis et Iohannis Biclarensis Chronicon*. CCSL 173A (Turnhout: Brepols, 2001)
Isid. De eccl.	Isidore of Seville, *De ecclesiasticis officis*, ed. by Christopher M. Lawson, *Sancti Isidori episcopi Hispalensis De ecclesiasticis officiis*. CCSL 113 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1989)
Isid. De viris	Isidore of Seville, *De viris illustribus*, ed. by Carmen Codoñer Merino, *El 'De viris illustribus' de Isidoro de Sevilla* (Salamanca: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, Instituto 'Antonio de Nebrija', Colegio Trilingüe de la Universidad, 1964)
Isid. Etym.	Isidore of Seville, *Etymologiae*, ed. by W. M. Lindsay, *Isidori Hispalensis episcopi Etymologiarum sive originum libri XX*, 2 vols. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1911)
Isid. Hist. Goth.	Isidore of Seville, *Historia Gothorum*, ed. by Cristóbal Rodríguez Alonso, *Las historias de los godos, vándalos y suevos de Isidoro de Sevilla. Estudio, edición crítica y traducción* (León: Centro de Estudios e Investigaciones 'San Isidoro', 1965)
Isid. Sent.	Isidore of Seville, *Sententiae*, ed. by Pierre Cazier, *Isidorus Hispalensis Sententiae*. CCSL 111 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1998)
LI	*Liber Iudiciorum* or *Lex Visigothorum*, ed. by Karl Zeumer, *Leges Visigothorum*. MGH Leges nationum Germanicarum, I (Hannover: Hahn, 1902)

Lib. Const.	*Liber Constitutionum*, ed. by Ludwig Rudolf von Salis, *Leges Burgundionum*. MGH Leges nationum Germanicarum, II.1 (Hannover: Hahn, 1892)
LRV	*Lex Romana Visigothorum*, ed. by Gustav Haenel (Leipzig: Teubner, 1849)
Mart. De trina	Martin of Braga, *De trina mersione*, ed. by Claude W. Barlow, *Martini episcopi Bracarensis opera omnia* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1950)
MGH	Monumenta Germaniae Historica
Nov. Just.	*Novellae Justiniani*, ed. by Rudolf Schöll and Wilhelm Kroll, *Corpus iuris civilis*, vol. 3, *Novellae*. 4th stereotypa edition (Berlin: Weidmann, 1912)
Oros. Hist.	Orosius, *Historiae adversus paganos*, ed. and trans. by Marie-Pierre Arnaud-Lindet, *Orose. Histoires contre les Païens*, 3 vols. Collection des universités de France. Série latine, 291, 296, and 297 (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1990–1991)
PH	*Pasionario Hispánico: introducción, edición crítica y traducción*, ed. and trans. by Pilar Riesco Chueca (Seville: Universidad de Sevilla, Secretaría de Publicaciones, 1995)
PL	*Patrologiae cursus completus. Series latina*, ed. by J. P. Migne (Paris: Garnier, 1844–1865)
Proc. Bell.	Procopius, *Bella*, ed. by Jakob Haury, rev. by Gerhard Wirth, *Procopii Caesariensis opera omnia*, 2 vols (Leipzig: Teubner, 1962–1963)
Prud. Peri.	Prudentius, *Peristephanon*, ed. by Maurice P. Cunningham, *Aurelii Prudentii Clementis Carmina*. CCSL 126 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1966)
Sid. Apol. Carm.	Sidonius Apollinaris, *Carmina*, ed. by André Loyen, *Sidoine Apollinaire. Poèmes*. Collection des universités de France. Série latine, 161 (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1960)
Sid. Apol. Ep.	Sidonius Apollinaris, *Epistulae*, ed. by André Loyen, *Sidoine Apollinaire. Correspondence*, 2 vols. Collection des universités de France. Série latine, 198 and 199 (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1970)
VA	Braulio of Zaragoza, *Vita Aemiliani*, ed. by Ignazio Cazzaniga, 'La Vita di S. Emiliano scritta da Braulione vescovo di Saragozza: edizione critica', in *Bolletino del Comitato per la preparazione della Edizione Nazionale dei Classici Greci e Latini* 3 (1954), pp. 7–44

Val. Ord. quer.   Valerius of Bierzo, *Ordo querimonie prefati discriminis*, ed. by Manuel C. Díaz y Díaz, *Valerio del Bierzo. Su persona, su obra* (León: Centro de Estudios e Investigación 'San Isidoro', 2006)

VF   *Vita Fructuosi*, ed. by Manuel C. Díaz y Díaz, *La vida de San Fructuoso de Braga. Estudio y edición crítica* (Braga: Empresa do Diário do Minho, 1974)

VSPE   *Vitas sanctorum patrum Emeretensium*, ed. by Antonio Maya Sánchez, CCSL 116 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1992)

10   Romanness in Visigothic Hagiography

Santiago Castellanos[1]

Abstract

This chapter evaluates the use (or not) of Roman identities and institutions in Visigothic hagiography. Visigothic hagiographical materials display a telling absence of 'Romanness', understood as a collective or individual consciousness of belonging to a Roman cultural tradition. This absence is tied to the erosion of ethnic binaries during the political construction of the Gothic kingdom, a process in which both the Roman aristocracy and the Catholic episcopate participated. I argue that in the seventh century, invocations of Roman heritage did not represent a continuation of ethnic conflict; rather, the hagiographers in their treatment of Rome's legacy were less interested in articulating the Roman identities of contemporary individuals than in placing their subjects within a world with recognizably Roman features.

Keywords: Romanness; Visigothic kingdom; hagiography; Christianism; Late Roman aristocracy; ethnicity

In the first third of the seventh century, a cleric from the ecclesiastical and monastic complex of St Eulalia, in *Emerita* (Mérida), in southwestern Hispania, felt it appropriate to note the Roman origin of one of the figures in the text that he was writing, the *Lives of the Fathers of Mérida*, a series of accounts of the lives of ecclesiastics from sixth-century Mérida.[2] This

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2   Elsewhere in the volume, Graham Barrett offers an alternative interpretation for the dating and composition of the first version of the work. See Maya Sánchez 1992 for the edition of the *Vitas sanctorum patrum Emeretensium* (VSPE), which should be consulted for details of authorship and dating, alongside Velázquez 2008a). On the social, ideological, and political context of the VSPE, see Collins 1980; Chaparro 1992; Velázquez 1994; Arce 1999; Castellanos 2003; Díaz 2010.

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anonymous hagiographer made explicit reference to the Roman origins of the *dux* Claudius, a military leader and governor in the service of the Gothic king Reccared (r. 586–601) in the province of Lusitania, stating that he was of noble lineage and had been born to Roman parents: 'Idem vero Claudius nobili genere hortus Romanis fuit parentibus progenitus.'[3]

The Méridan hagiographer's invocation of the Lusitanian *dux*'s 'Roman' parentage is strikingly unique within the text, and his evident desire to underscore a figure's Roman heritage is more suggestive than it may seem. Given that the Iberian peninsula was (depending on the region) subject to Roman rule for more than half a millennium, we might expect to find a strong sense of Romanness among its inhabitants well into the post-Roman period. I will refer to 'Romanness' as a collective or individual consciousness of belonging to a Roman cultural tradition. Such tradition(s) could have been received through numerous ways, such as the persistence of Roman law, the memory of aristocratic families of Roman origins, and the cult of late Roman saints, among others. Yet by the time the hagiographer composed his work, more than a century separated the end of Roman rule in Hispania and the composition of the VSPE, and we might assume that the sense of belonging to a Roman world had faded as well. Attachment to Roman identity likely varied across the peninsula, as Roman rule had ceased to function in the western, central, and even southern provinces long before it did so in Tarraconensis. Given the potential for Roman identity to have variously endured and declined depending on location, the hagiographer's highly selective invocation of 'being Roman' deserves further consideration.

While recent analyses have focused on Romanness in other areas in Europe from the end of the western Roman empire onwards,[4] this chapter evaluates the uses and non-uses of Roman identities and institutions in Visigothic hagiography. I will argue that in the seventh century, invocations of Roman heritage did not represent a continuation of ethnic conflict between Romans and Goths. In the extant sources, we find a few references to *Romani* (the VSPE being one of the principal instances) with different meanings.[5] Yet ethnicity was not an absolute and unchanging concept in the Visigothic kingdom.[6] Allusions to *Gothi* and *Romani* in Visigothic-era texts gradually changed over the course of the sixth century, to the point that there was a certain tendency by the end of the seventh century to

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3   VSPE 5.10.32–36.
4   Pohl 2014.
5   Arce 2018.
6   Buchberger 2017. The conceptual and general arguments by Walter Pohl are essential (Pohl 1998).

identify all the subjects of the *regnum Gothorum* as *Gothi*.[7] Nevertheless, it was a requirement to be a *Gothus* in order to become *rex Gothorum*, which suggests that the binary ethnic distinction between Goth and Roman was crucial in some very specific instances, but not in others.[8]

Roman and Gothic identity do not seem to have featured in Visigothic hagiography as prominently as in other sources. Apart from the allusion to Claudius's Roman identity in the VSPE, there are no other references of a similar nature in the Visigothic-era hagiographies analysed in this chapter: the Life of Saint Aemilian or *Vita Sancti Aemiliani* (henceforth, VA), the Life of Fructuosus or *Vita Fructuosi* (henceforth, VF), the 'auto-hagiographic' writings of Valerius of Bierzo, and the rest of the VSPE (the *Vita Desiderii* by Sisebut will not be considered here as its setting is primarily Merovingian). In general, barring the exceptions examined below, the hagiographers were not at all interested in marking historic or contemporary identities as 'Roman'.[9]

Instead, I suggest that the hagiographers had other aims, such as creating a fixed written memory based on oral traditions. In particular, hagiographers invoked Roman identities and sketched a Roman social background to pursue their own agendas and to create a world their readers would recognize. Within this agenda, neither the explicit identification with the Roman past nor the expressions of Roman identity were of particular importance. Rather than speaking to ethnic categorization, the hagiographers' treatment of Rome's legacy was only one part of an overall attempt to fix the memory of a relatively recent, yet no longer extant world. They were less interested in articulating the Roman identities of contemporary individuals than in placing their subjects within a world with recognizably Roman features. The Roman past lived on in descriptions of historical landscapes and topographies and discussions of institutions, socio-economic classes, and religious structures.

Historical Contexts of Holy Men and Hagiographers

To examine how these hagiographies selectively activated Roman legacies, we must understand the historical contexts of both the hagiographers and the holy men they depicted. Although all the texts under consideration

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7   Buchberger 2017.

8   V Toledo 3; VI Toledo 17.

9   This matter was naturally different in the case of the *Passiones*, which referred to the Roman background of the martyrs and were mostly set in Roman contexts. With regard to the *Passiones*, see the chapter by David Addison in this volume.

were written in the seventh century, two (the VSPE and the VA) were set
in the context of the sixth-century consolidation of the Visigothic kingdom
of Hispania. The origins of the shift in the focus of Visigothic activity to
Hispania can be traced to the conquests in eastern Tarraconensis at the
end of the fifth century. The process of consolidating Visigothic rule in the
peninsula intensified after the battle of Vouillé (507) and the victory of
Clovis's Franks over the Goths of Alaric II. This military event undoubtedly
marked the end of any Visigothic ambitions to establish their hegemony
in Gaul, and from then on Hispania took on a growing importance for
the Visigothic monarchy. Even then, however, the end of the Visigothic
kingdom in Gaul and the beginnings of the Visigothic kingdom in Hispania
did not constitute a single episode, but rather a process. As late as the year
531, upon King Amalaric's death, Goths were still migrating from Gaul to
Hispania,[10] and Gothic interest in the southern areas of the peninsula seems
to have expanded only under Theudis (r. 531–548). In the middle of the sixth
century, the growth of Gothic influence in Hispania occurred even in the
context of civil war and the establishment of competing courts of Agila and
Athanagild (in Córdoba, Seville, and Mérida). When Leovigild acceded to
the throne with his brother Liuva in 568/9, the Visigothic monarchy and
its aristocracy were present in a good portion of Hispania, but they were
far from controlling the entire peninsula.[11]

The reigns of Leovigild (*c.* 568/9–586) and Reccared (586–601) provide the
political background for the events of the VSPE and, to some degree, of the
VA. Leovigild consolidated the administrative, tax, and military structures
of the *regnum Gothorum*, and extended the territorial boundaries of the
kingdom through a series of conquests. The Visigothic monarchy was still
Arian, and Nicene sources, which dominate the surviving record, present
Leovigild as a king who was hostile to Christian orthodoxy, and even as a
persecutor. Meanwhile, the same sources present Reccared, his son and
successor, as a champion of orthodoxy. After converting from Arianism to
Catholicism in 587, Reccared convened the Third Council of Toledo in 589,
bringing about the conversion of the entire *gens* and the *regnum* of the
Gothi, in addition to the kingdom of the Sueves, which had been conquered
by his father in 585. Iberian sources, essentially those of John of Biclarum
and Isidore of Seville, and those written outside of the peninsula, namely
those of Gregory of Tours and Gregory the Great, produced the particular
images of Leovigild and Reccared mentioned above for ideological reasons.

10   Proc. Bell. 5.13.13. See Arce 2018.
11   A quick overview in Castellanos 2020.

It is not absolutely certain, however, that Leovigild's religious policy was consistently hostile towards Nicenes, and sources from Iberia are silent about the conversion of Hermenegild, son of Leovigild and brother of Reccared, to Nicene Christianity in the course of his rebellion against his father between around 579 and 585. Yet external sources do mention this important detail.[12]

Although both the VSPE and the VA are set in the sixth century, they were written at different points in the seventh century: the former is dated approximately toward the end of the first third of the seventh century and the latter to the first half of the seventh century. The seventh-century worlds of Braulio, the author of the VA, and the Méridan hagiographer were quite different from that of Leovigild and Reccared. For one thing, the Visigothic monarchy had expanded its territorial control across the peninsula. After 589, the Catholic kingdom headed by Reccared, the nobility, and the bishops was able to defend the frontiers that had been expanded by Leovigild's conquests. Reccared and his successors also held on to Septimania, in southern Gaul. Offensives against imperial troops in the south-east concluded with their expulsion by King Swinthila around 625.

The bishops, including Isidore of Seville, also developed a new religious and political ideology that fused Visigothic monarchy and Catholic religion and reached its zenith at the Fourth Council of Toledo, held in 633.[13] This cooperative approach put the administrative organization of the church at the disposal of the state, and it allowed kings to make use of the church's powerful ability to produce influential discourses. Religious discourses served to justify the *Gothi*'s presence in Hispania and the hegemony of the *regnum*. Clerical preaching throughout the realm sought to discourage any tendency towards localism or rebellion.

This was the general political and ideological context within which both Braulio's VA and the VSPE were written. Of course, each text had its own ideological agendas that shaped their presentation of the late sixth century. Braulio wished to promote Aemilian's oratory and the cult of his relics, particularly since he had family interests in it. Braulio's 630s narrative of the political events and conquests of the 570s and 580s related these episodes to Aemilian's holy power. Leovigild appeared as an avenging sword against incredulous local rulers as a result of Aemilian's prophecies. Leovigild's conquest of Cantabria in 574 is presented in the context of a different, divine plan: the victory of a Catholic holy man over challenges to his thaumaturgical and prophetic capacity.[14]

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12   Greg. Tur. Decem libri 5.38; Greg. Mag. Dial. 3.31.
13   Stocking 2000; Velázquez 2003.
14   VA 33.

The VSPE also reflects the connection between the local and the central. Leovigild and Reccared appeared with treacherous and benevolent tints respectively and served as vehicles to advance the author's efforts to narrate internal conflicts within the city. As in the case of Braulio's VA, the local loyalties of the VSPE's author in the seventh century profoundly shaped the presentation of the characters and the interpretation of events from the sixth century. The author was aligned with one of the parties to the sixth-century disputes, the monastic complex of St Eulalia, and sought to justify the Nicene bishops' control over the city's premier cult site. Moreover, the VSPE does not refer once to Hermenegild, omitting the detail that the city was a war theatre during his rebellion against his father (as alluded to in Gregory of Tours). It is clear, therefore, that there is a complex relationship between the VSPE, a hagiographical account by a clergyman from Mérida, and the political events of the preceding decades, which resulted in particular emphases, silences, and manipulations in the hagiographical text.[15]

The VF and the autobiographical works of Valerius of Bierzo were written in the second half of the seventh century.[16] Fructuosus of Braga (d. 665/667) was active in the mid-seventh century and Valerius of Bierzo probably wrote his texts in the 690s. All too often, the period from the mid-seventh century onward has been viewed retrospectively, as bound inevitably for a particular end, namely the collapse of the Visigothic kingdom and the defeat of King Roderic by the conquering Arab-Berber armies in 711. In recent years, scholars have rejected the idea of a weakened kingdom in the late Visigothic period.[17]

In contrast to the VA and the VSPE, the author of the VF and Valerius made very few references to the broader political context in which their main characters operated.[18] For example, the VF intentionally omits Fructuosus's important role as a bishop in favour of his earlier life as a monk, a decision

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15   Fouracre 1990. On the Merovingian material, see also Kreiner 2014. A recent essay about the narratives in that period, in Ghosh 2016. With regard to Leovigild, see García Moreno 2008. On Reccared and the use of his kingdom in the sources, Castellanos 2007. The passage from Gregory of Tours featuring Leovigild as a persecutor, leading a *magna persecutio*, is Greg. Tur. Decem libri 5.38; and Leovigild is shown as a persecutor in Isid. Hist. Goth. 50.

16   For the origins of the VF, see Díaz y Díaz 1953; Maya Sánchez 1978; Codoñer 1987; for an overview, see Andrés Sanz 2010. The edition of the texts by Valerius used is Díaz y Díaz 2006. On Valerius and his writings, there are, among other publications, Collins 1986; Martín Iglesias 2009 and 2010; Díaz 2013.

17   A summary in Díaz and Poveda 2016.

18   Overviews of these periods are given in Díaz 2007; González Salinero 2017; Castellanos 2018. In respect of the historical context of the end of the kingdom and the immediately preceding period, see Díaz and Poveda 2016, which also gives extensive bibliographic references.

that Codoñer has pointed out was likely due to the monastic origin of the text.[19] The choice is striking because Fructuosus was bishop of Braga, one of the most important sees of the realm, and corresponded with other powerful bishops, such as Braulio of Zaragoza. The VF, however, only offers glimpses of Fructuosus as a member of the socio-political elite through a brief mention of his father's high status and a reference to royal intervention to limit Fructuosus's efforts to travel to the Holy Land. Valerius also sought to downplay his own elite connections. He presents himself as an outsider, a non-conformist character, a presentation that was more related to his radical religious agenda than to his own actions. Valerius's activities took place in a world of landowners, with whom he was not uncomfortable, and he shows awareness of episcopal power, regardless of his apparent disagreements with his bishop's decisions.

Despite the hagiographers' own social practices, the VF and Valerius's writings present overall a tense relationship between the holy men and the socio-political elite. Kingdom-level political events and characters are not as visible as the local worlds of these holy men. Yet the indirect testimony of these texts reveals a great deal about local elite society—the great landowners and bishops—that formed the political base of the Visigothic *regnum*.

The Direct Use of Romanness

Given the different historical contexts of the VSPE's composition (the mid-seventh century) and the events it narrated (late sixth century), the direct evocations of the 'Roman' identities, political alliances, and enmities of some of its central figures are striking. The VSPE is a hagiographic text that is composed of five books or *opuscula*.[20] The first book is about Augustus, a young servant of the St Eulalia complex. The second is about a gluttonous and drunken monk from the monastery of Cauliana, a few miles from the city. The third is about Nanctus, an abbot who arrived in *Emerita* from Africa and to whom the Arian King Leovigild gave a fiscal property (*locus fisci*) for him to lead an ascetic life. The fourth book focuses on the bishops Paul and Fidel, whose episcopates probably coincide with the beginning of the second half of the sixth century although the exact dates are uncertain. The fifth and main piece is dedicated to Masona, who was bishop of Mérida

19   Codoñer 1987, 190.
20   On the VSPE, see the chapter by Graham Barrett in this book. Besides, see the introduction to the edition by Maya Sánchez 1992, and the introduction to the translation by Velázquez 2008a.

from at least 572/573 (the date cited by John of Biclarum) and who died *c.* 605/606. Masona's successors, Innocentius and Renovatus, are also very briefly mentioned in this book.

In the story of Masona, the Méridan hagiographer's choice to identify *dux* Claudius's Roman origins (as outlined in this chapter's opening paragraphs) may reveal something about the possible valences of Roman identity in sixth- and seventh-century Mérida. Studies of hagiography have shown that these texts are valuable sources for exploring the local worlds they describe despite the many distorting *topoi* typical of the genre. Hagiographies frequently offer vivid day-to-day details and place individuals in specific local contexts, regardless of their ideological underpinnings or specific narrative structures.[21]

The author of the VSPE occasionally invokes the 'Roman' backgrounds of the figures with whom Méridan bishops interacted. The hagiographer's desire to note that Claudius was of Roman origin was presumably not baseless: in the 630s, local tradition likely remembered this important historical figure, and there was no reason not to record Claudius's ancestry. Claudius had been an important figure as Reccared's political and military right-hand man in Mérida. Claudius faced the task of thwarting plots at a time when multiple conspiracies arose in Mérida, Toledo, and Narbonne, several decades before the first version of the VSPE was written.[22] Nor is Claudius the only figure in the VSPE who had 'Roman' origins. In the story of Bishop Paul, the bishop aids a married couple of senatorial background when the wife has a health crisis. They subsequently donate their estate to him.[23] The same invocation of the heritage (*genus*) of both the senatorial couple and *dux* Claudius links them, explicitly or implicitly, with a Roman past.

In addition to 'Roman' heritage, the VSPE invokes connections with the popes of Rome. The hagiographers in Mérida appeal to a different idea of Rome when they describe Gregory the Great (r. 590–604) in the work's preface as the holiest and most conspicuous bishop of the City of Rome, making a word play on his name Gregory and the adjective *egregious*. By invoking the name of Gregory and stating that the work was written in the manner of his *Dialogues*, the preface associates the VSPE with one of the most prestigious contemporary Latin hagiographies. The connections with

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21   On the hagiography of the Iberian Visigothic kingdom as a whole, see Castellanos 2004; Velázquez 2007. John of Biclarum's mention of Masona is in his chronicle, Ioh. Bicl. 30.

22   On the revolts, see Castellanos 2007.

23   VSPE 4.2.3–5: 'Contigit cuiusdam primarii ciuitatis ex genere senatorum nobilissimi viri ergotrasse matrona, que et ipsa inlustri stigmate progenita nobilem traebat prosapiem.'

papal Rome go beyond textual emulation. Through his friend Leander of
Seville, Gregory had been kept well-informed about events in Hispania,
including the conversion of Reccared, and he had corresponded with the
aforementioned Claudius himself.[24]

The purposes of these 'Roman' identifications are varied. Clarifying the
fact that Claudius was of Roman origin sheds light on the allegiances and
activities of local elites, as prominent sectors of the Hispano-Roman aristocracy
decided to collaborate with the Gothic kingdom. The identification presumably
offered a contrast to aristocrats of Gothic origin, which by the 580s were well
established in Mérida and other major cities.[25] Given Paul's collaborative
relationship with the married senatorial couple, the couple's 'Roman' origins
might have served to highlight the prestigious stature of the bishop's lay allies.
Or perhaps these clerics had familial or social links to members of the local
aristocracy who had a Roman background and wished to promote it. The VSPE
presents Roman ancestry in a positive light, as in the case of Masona, without
a doubt the principal 'holy man' in the work, who is identified as a Goth.[26]

Despite these strategic invocations of Roman and Gothic identity,
constructing ethnic identities was not a priority for the hagiographers
of the VSPE.[27] Ethnicity, in the sense of a Gothic-Roman binary in both
political and religious terms, was likely not the sense in which the Méridan
hagiographers used the term 'Roman' in referring to Claudius's origins, nor
'Goth' in alluding to those of Masona. Rather, these hagiographers aimed to
fix an oral memory in written form that would enhance emotional responses
to the monastic and ecclesiastic complex of St Eulalia. The references to
the respective Roman and Gothic origins of Claudius and Masona did not
intend to illustrate the identities of two ethnic groups in conflict. According
to the hagiographer's narrative, both Romans and Goths worked together
to achieve a greater good: the triumph of orthodoxy and, importantly for
the ecclesiastical parties in Mérida, the central role of the complex of St
Eulalia in the process.[28]

24   VSPE, praef. 2–4: 'qua sanctissimus egregiusque uates, Romane presul urbis'. About the
connections, Díaz 2008; Wood 2016.

25   The best-known case comes from Mérida itself, especially those listed in VSPE 5 on Gothic *nobiles*
and Masona. The conversion of the Arian bishops at the Third Council of Toledo is another example
of the wider Gothic presence in the cities of Hispania in the late 580s (Castellanos 2007, 243–67).

26   VSPE 5.2.1–3.

27   Ethnicity was likewise of no interest to Braulio of Zaragoza when writing his *Vita Aemiliani*,
or to the anonymous compilers of the *Vita Fructuosi*. Castellanos 2004.

28   In VSPE 5.5.8–9, Leovigild appoints Sunna as an Arian bishop. The text does not present
this as a conflict between Goths and Romans, but as a conflict between Arians and orthodox
Christians, especially over the control of the complex of St Eulalia (VSPE 5.5.32–35). Within the

Other Romanness: Roman Topographies

Apart from the examples in the VSPE noted above, there are no direct
references to 'ethnic' Romanness in other Visigothic-era hagiographies.
However, this does not translate into the complete absence of Roman ideas
and institutions from the saints' lives. Indeed, the geo-historical contexts
for the events recounted in the *vitae* and the texts' composition were deeply
shaped by the empire's legacy. Although there was no simple continuity
between late Roman socio-political configurations and those of the *regnum
Gothorum*,[29] the political, administrative, economic, and cultural structures
of the Visigothic kingdom had their roots in the Roman period. In a basic
sense, the Visigothic landscape of the sixth and seventh centuries was the
result of urban, provincial, and rural precedents stretching back deep into
the imperial past.[30]

The Roman imprint is evident in multiple *vitae*. Mérida, for example,
was one of the greatest cities in Hispania, founded in the time of Augustus
and more than likely the administrative capital of Hispania from the end
of the third through the fifth century.[31] The city's continued importance is
reflected in Fructuosus's travels to southwest Iberia, including his stop to
worship St Eulalia at Mérida and to the zone around *Gades* (Cádiz), a journey
doubtlessly taken along the Roman road that had linked Astorga (in León)
to Mérida for centuries.[32] As we shall presently see, hagiographers depicted
the activities of their 'holy men' within a geo-historical environment with
undeniably Roman features.

In many *vitae*, large rural properties provide a background for the ac-
tions of the holy men. Holy men performed sacred powers and engaged in
religious conflicts within large rural properties that operated according
to long-established Roman socio-economic practices. As we have already
seen, in Mérida, the protagonists are clearly connected with local notables
and the local church. In the VA, the local Roman background is made clear

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ideological framework of the text, the reaction against this event was massive, comprising the
populus (VSPE 5.5.36–41). During the revolt of Gothic nobles against Masona, and ultimately
against Reccared, the text stresses that Claudius, who was 'Roman' as indicated earlier, intervened
in favour of Masona, who had been identified as a Goth (VSPE 5.10.1–8).

29   On administrative structures, see Martin 2003; with regard to the way the kingdom was
rooted in Roman social and economic structures, see Castellanos 2020.

30   Kulikowski 2004.

31   On late Roman Mérida, Sastre de Diego 2015, with the archaeological and historical keys,
and the main bibliography.

32   VF 11–15.

through the association of holy men with pre-eminent individuals who possess enslaved individuals (described as *servi* or *ancillae* in the text). For example, Honorius, a prominent figure in the enclave of *Parpalines*, is shown to possess an extensive estate with its own private church. Somewhat similar is Ebronanto, an estate on which Valerius of Bierzo lived and which also had its private church.[33]

Even though the rural and rather mountainous upper reaches of the Ebro in northern Hispania were a world apart from Mérida, they also still contained recognizably Roman features. The rustic Bierzo of Fructuosus was a territory that had been organized under Roman rule into *castella* and large estates. Fructuosus's life also revolved around many older cities and provinces originally founded in the early Roman empire. It has already been remarked that Fructuosus was initially active not only in the Bierzo district (the *Bergidum* of both Roman and Visigothic sources), but also in Mérida and the zone around Cádiz. And although the role of Fructuosus as a bishop is given a passing mention in the VF, the city of Braga, the capital of Gallaecia since late Roman times, was a major setting for his later life.

Late antique topography also shaped the experiences and writings of Valerius of Bierzo. A few decades after Fructuosus, the Bierzo of Valerius (a self-styled 'holy man') continued to reflect the hierarchical territorial organization of the Roman period. The chief city of the district, Astorga, lay outside the Bierzo proper, although it appears in Valerius's texts as the diocesan see held by Isidore, a bishop with whom Valerius came into conflict.[34] At the time of Valerius's activities, there were several recently established monastic enclaves, such as the monasteries founded by Fructuosus, while others had roots going much further back, as was the case for *Castrum Petrense* (perhaps Castro Pedroso in Oencia or Pedrero de Somoza in Maragarería).[35]

A deeply Roman landscape also provides the setting for the VA, written by Braulio of Zaragoza (bishop 631–651) for Frunimianus, who was likely his brother and the abbot of the community of monks living in caves in the mountains around the former *oratorium* of the saint.[36] Before his death

33   VA 18; 20; 21; 24; 29; Val. Ord. quer. 13–16.

34   Val. Ord. quer. 21.

35   On the historical backdrop of the works of Valerius, see Díaz 2012; Martin 2017–2018. The different proposals about Castro Petrense, in Díaz 2012, 386.

36   There has been scholarly discussion on whether Frunimianus was truly the brother of Braulio, but Vitalino Valcárcel and José Carlos Martín Iglesias have persuasively argued that the two men were indeed brothers. On various aspects of the VA, Castellanos 1998. About Frunimianus as Braulio's brother, Valcárcel 1990–1991; Martín Iglesias 2010. Contra, Kelly 2016.

in 574/575, Aemilian had spent most of his time in the mountainous land surrounding his *oratorium*, which lay in the upper reaches of the Ebro valley within the Roman province of Tarraconensis, in what is the modern region of La Rioja. The bishop of Tarazona, another Roman city and situated farther down the Ebro valley, temporarily placed him in charge of the parish of *Vergegio* (Berceo, La Rioja). Although this geography has often been interpreted as hinting at a hierarchy of lands in a zone with large late Roman estates,[37] the question of the geo-historical context in which Aemilian operated within Cantabria is more complicated. While some have suggested that the Cantabria mentioned by Braulio indicates a city, it is most likely that in Late Antiquity, and more specifically the Visigothic period, this referred to a territory comprising today's region of Cantabria, the northern parts of the current provinces of Burgos and Palencia, and the upper reaches of the Ebro.[38] Therefore, Braulio evokes a typically Roman city-territory landscape but one that is rapidly changing in the course of Late Antiquity.

Aemilian's oratory lay in the Distercian or Dercetian mountains, today's Sierra de la Demanda. Other landmarks in the region included *Castellum Bilibium*, near modern Haro in the Rioja region, and *Amaia*, perhaps the strongest point in the territorial structure of Cantabria in Late Antiquity. The latter was a hill-fort of considerable size in the area of what is now Peña Amaya in the modern province of Burgos,[39] a region with roots in the transformational period of the fifth century. In the north of the province of Tarraconensis, where Aemilian lived, new village communities sprung up along with numerous *castella*, a phenomenon that archaeology has uncovered across the peninsula. Braulio's biography of Aemilian, therefore, takes place in a small world that resulted from territorial changes after the fifth century.[40]

In contrast to the rural focus of the VA, the VSPE offers a detailed depiction of an urban context of Mérida. From the reforms of Diocletian (r. 284–305) onwards, epigraphic evidence indicates that Mérida became the *de facto* capital of late Roman Hispania, as the see of the *vicarius Hispaniarum*. The evolution of the city's layout in Late Antiquity is well known, and in

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37   VA 10.25–26 and 12.9 (*Vergegio*). Castellanos 1998.

38   Regarding this problem of Cantabria, see Castellanos 1998; Martin 2003, 76–77. A different interpretation seeing Cantabria as a city is in García Moreno 2008, 64–70.

39   VA 9.14–15 (*castellum Bilibium*); 11.4 (*Dircetii montis secreta*); 16 (*Amaia*).

40   Quirós Castillo 2013a, with particular attention to the case of Peña Amaya. On the state of knowledge of *castella* in northern Hispania, see the range of contributions in Quirós Castillo and Tejado Sebastián 2012. See also Tejerizo and Canosa 2018.

the time of the Visigothic kingdom, Mérida retained the greater part of its Roman urban structure in spite of some significant changes. Striking new developments included the privatization of larger public spaces and the narrowing of streets as residential buildings spilled out into them. The construction of churches and oratories, also found in the city's *suburbia*, gave the town the Christian topography that forms the backdrop for the VSPE's narrative.[41]

It is important to note that the majority of these topographical and urbanistic changes occurred in the late Roman period rather than the Visigothic era. For example, the city walls were Roman but underwent considerable restructuring in the fifth century. This is hinted at by the controversial inscription mentioning cooperation between the Gothic *dux* Salla and Bishop Zeno, dating from the times of King Euric (r. 466–484) and confirmed by archaeological findings.[42] Furthermore, several of the most important locations mentioned in the VSPE, such as the mausoleum and the first church of St Eulalia in the *suburbium*, date from this time, as does the first cathedral, in all probability. In addition to the Roman roots of the urban landscape, the VSPE bore witness to ongoing repairs and updates, such as renovation work undertaken by Bishop Fidel and the construction of a new *xenodochium* by Masona in the Visigothic period.[43]

Overall, the backdrop for the seventh-century hagiographies situated within the Visigothic kingdom of Toledo is essentially Roman. Readers of these hagiographies would recognize places that still bore a Roman imprint, including cities such as Mérida, Astorga, Tarazona, Toledo, and Cádiz, as well as other settlements that largely stemmed from the Roman territorial organization. This does not in itself imply that the hagiographers had any ideological intent to highlight and foreground the 'Roman' identity of locations or individuals. Rather, references to such places were inevitable because the historical landscape in which the 'holy men' had lived and where the authors set their narratives were 'Roman'. Yet the hagiographies did not need to make the 'Roman connection' explicit: their audiences would have

41   On the archaeological panorama of Mérida in Late Antiquity and Visigothic times, see Mateos 2000; Alba Calzado and Mateos Cruz 2008; Mateos and Alba 2011; Mateos and Caballero 2011; Alba Calzado 2011; Sastre de Diego 2011 and 2015.

42   On this inscription, see Arce 2008; Koch 2008; Velázquez 2008b. See also the recent comments by Damián Fernández (Fernández 2017, 165–68). On the city walls and archaeological confirmation of fifth-century rebuilding, the author would like to express his gratitude for the information provided on the site of excavations by Isaac Sastre, Javier Martínez, and Santiago Feijoo. See Feijoo Martínez and Alba Calzado 2014, 94.

43   VSPE 4.6.32; 5.3.13.

immediately recognized a territorial hierarchy and a topography that still shaped the worlds of those who read these texts.

Becoming Non-Roman from a Roman Starting-Point: The Use of Social Structures

Just as the geographical and topographical backdrop of the lives of the 'holy men' was rooted in the Roman past, the same was true of the socio-economic structures that framed the narratives, miracles, and other components of these texts. The vocabulary of status, titles, and privileges of the hagiographers' actors derived from the late Roman world—from kingship to slavery, reaching every social stratum.

To be sure, some of these social structures were 'new', and the most striking non-Roman element in the *vitae* is the Gothic monarchy. In some *vitae*, Gothic kings seem to represent a negative force affecting the 'holy man'. This emerges in the VF, for example, where a king (perhaps Recceswinth, although the *vita* is unclear) prevented Fructuosus from making a journey to the east.[44] In the VSPE, Book 3 mentions Leovigild's donation to the Nicene holy man Nanctus. However, in Book 5, Leovigild is depicted as a formidable opponent of Bishop Masona, and the Méridan hagiographer stresses that the king is a persecuting Arian opposed to the Nicene bishop. After trying to bolster the position of Sunna, the Arian bishop of the city, against Masona, the king openly confronts the latter by successively exiling him and supporting an alternative Nicene bishop, Nepopis.

In contrast, in the VSPE Reccared is praised for his role in rendering the kingdom orthodox. Interestingly, the authors emphasize the bishop's autonomy in relation to Reccared. This is especially clear in the account of the 587 rebellion of Sunna and many nobles against Reccared, which is concluded in favour of the king through the armed intervention of *dux* Claudius. One of the nobles, Vagrila, seeks asylum in the basilica of St Eulalia. The king sentences him to perpetual service to the saint's complex, but Bishop Masona acts independently and frees Vagrila. Through this act of clemency, Masona's reputation is burnished in comparison to that of Reccared as the saint acted on his own initiative in interpreting and applying the sentence.[45]

The author also highlights the close relationship between the bishopric and the monastic complex of St Eulalia, rather than the profile of any

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44   VF 2; 17. Vallejo Girvés (2012, 414) suggests that this was probably Recceswinth.
45   VSPE 5.11.86–114.

individual bishop or ruler. It was this civic-religious identity, not 'Romanness' or 'Gothicness', let alone loyalty to the monarchy, that seems to have been the main concern of those associated with the complex of St Eulalia who produced the first version of the VSPE during the first third of the seventh century.[46] References to Gothic monarchs enabled the hagiographers to stress the virtues of the Catholic bishops; they were not mentioned in order to bolster the Gothic monarchy.[47]

Something rather similar occurred in Braulio's depiction of Leovigild in the VA. As noted above, Leovigild appears on the occasion of his conquest of Cantabria around the year 574. This was not just an incidental detail—Leovigild is presented as the avenging arm of God, even though he was an Arian. This characterization is the result of Braulio's desire to highlight the prophetic abilities of Aemilian, who reportedly foresaw the conquest of Cantabria. Some local notables ignored the 'holy man', seeing his prophecy as a symptom of senile dementia. Braulio stresses how Leovigild did indeed conquer Cantabria and killed the nobleman, Abundantius, who had been most opposed to Aemilian. The monarchy here appears as a complement, a narrative resource deployed for maximum effect on the audience to justify the holy man's role as prophet.[48] In brief, the authors used kings to play up one feature or another of the 'holy men' whose cults they aimed to enhance. Yet nowhere did the hagiographies refer to kingship as a non-Roman institution, another example of their indifference towards discussing or even emphasizing ethnic identities.

While Gothic kings and their agents might have replaced Roman emperors and governors as hagiographical protagonists, the hagiographies mention members of other social groups whose status and privileges stemmed from Roman traditions. By the time that the hagiographies were written, decades had passed since the Goths had settled in Hispania, a process that by necessity took account of social arrangements dating back to the Roman period.[49]

The presentation of the peasants and the nobles in the hagiographies deserves some attention. Peasants do not often appear as a clearly defined social group—the peasantry—in Visigothic sources, and hagiographies are no exception. In legal texts, the meaning of the term *servi* is unclear; it

46   Key aspects about the transformation of Roman civic identities in Late Antiquity in Hispania were exposed by San Bernardino 1996.

47   Several specific passages show the atrocious picture the hagiographers draw of Leovigild and his confrontation with Masona: VSPE 5.4.9–12; 5.5.1, 8–19; 5.6.37-48, 110-111. With regard to Vagrila: VSPE 5.11.86–114.

48   VA 33.

49   Buchberger 2017.

often includes agricultural workers who were dependent upon the *domini*. Elsewhere, the word may also denote slaves who worked in the fields, and in cities.[50] In general, however, peasants dependent upon a magnate were sometimes included in the generic term *servi*. It is even more difficult to identify references to free, independent peasants. Some archaeologists have recently made the suggestion that the new peasant communities which archaeology has been uncovering in the Iberian peninsula might correspond to such an independent peasantry, but there are serious doubts as to whether this is the case.[51]

The peasantry, like all other social groupings mentioned in the *vitae*, entered the saints' 'sphere of activity' in accordance with the hagiographers' narrative purpose. For example, in the VF, the author relates an anecdote of a *rusticus*, or peasant, who attacks Fructuosus because of the very poor appearance of the saint's clothing. In this passage, the author stresses the poorness of the saint's clothes in order to highlight his ascetic dedication over his episcopal status.[52] This episode is not recounted to make a point about social class, but rather to demonstrate the virtues of Fructuosus. The vocabulary the author of the VA uses to describe local powers and relationships of social dominance, such as *servus* and *ancilla*, were fully rooted within the late Roman tradition. The same is true of the slaves manumitted by Masona in Mérida, a tale that was less about recording the Méridan church's privileged place in the social hierarchy (which of course it had), but rather to stress the generosity of the 'holy man' who led it.[53]

In the treatment of the aristocracy there are more references to social classes and offices with Roman antecedents. It has already been seen that the most direct allusion to Roman titles is found in the VSPE's references to Gregory the Great and to the Roman origins of the *dux* Claudius. This particular office is also mentioned in the VF, where the author states that Fructuosus's father was a *dux*, a title that implied either a military command or a status as provincial governor within the Visigothic kingdom. Moreover,

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50   With regard to the peasantry, see García Moreno 2001; Díaz 2007, 463–99. On the possibility that these were mostly communities of independent peasants, as put forward recently by several archaeologists, the relevant bibliography can be found in Tejerizo 2017 and Quirós Castillo 2013b. As for doubts about this supposed independent status, at least with regard to peasant villages in general, see Castellanos 2020.

51   Vigil-Escalera 2015; Tejerizo 2017.

52   VF 11.

53   VA 18; 24; 29; 33. On the lexis of social dominance in the VA, Escalona Monge and Rodríguez Cerezo 1988; Castellanos 1998. The *comites* and Sunna in VSPE 5.10.1–8. The manumissions by Masona are described in VSPE 5.13.1–21.

senatorial status is invoked to describe the married couple helped by Paul in the VSPE. The term *senator* is not used to revive Roman positions but to demonstrate that the couple were among the longest-standing aristocratic lineages in Mérida. The hagiographer employs an anachronistic term that carried great prestige in Roman times to stress the couple's position at the summit of the local social hierarchy. The couple's status legitimates the fortune they give Paul, which he later uses in negotiations to ensure that his nephew Fidel will succeed him as bishop.

The invocation of *senator* also appears in the VA. Writing in the seventh century, Braulio utilizes this word to describe several personages with whom Aemilian has relationships. Once again, the aim is to underscore the very high rank held by these figures, such as Sicorius, Abundantius, and Honorius, in the mosaic of local powers on the upper reaches of the Ebro in the sixth century. The same interpretation must be put on the mention of a *senatus* of Cantabria. In this case, the term probably refers merely to some gathering of local potentates who managed to build up a regional powerbase that was sufficiently effective for Leovigild to undertake a military campaign against them.[54]

While the hagiographers clearly use Roman terminology at points, they also speak of new Gothic political institutions when it suits their purpose. In addition to the already-discussed case of kingship, there were also references to the monarchy's delegates at local level, the *comites*, such as those who joined Sunna in the revolt against Reccared.[55]

From this brief review of references to social statuses of Roman origin, certain features emerge. Terms such as *senatores*, *senatus*, *ancillae*, *servi*, and the like appear in the VSPE and the VA. These relationships of dependence had taken shape within the 'Roman' rural estates analysed in the previous section. But the hagiographers were not interested in painting an 'accurate' picture of social relations in the Visigothic kingdom. Rather, they related each figure (notables, peasants, slaves, dependents, and so forth) to the *miracula* and activities of the holy men about whom they were writing.[56] As in the case of landscape, social categories of Roman origin help situate the miraculous deeds of the holy men within a conceptual map familiar to their readers.

54   I have studied the references to local and regional powers in post-Roman Spain in Castellanos 2013.

55   VSPE 5.10.1–25; 5.11.38.

56   Concerning property in the context of the VSPE, see Díaz 1992–1993. In respect to the archaeological site suggested as Parpalines, see Espinosa 2003. Ebronanto is mentioned in Val. Ord. quer. 10.17. On estates and the social relationships of Valerius, Díaz 1986; Martin 2015.

Conclusion: Romanness Is Not the Question

Hagiographers writing during the seventh century in the Visigothic kingdom
of Toledo had no particular interest in stressing Romanness as a personal
identity, nor in highlighting the continuity of Roman topographical tradi-
tions. It was only very sporadically that they mentioned Romanness, such
as the Roman familial origin of Claudius, the Roman provincial structure,
or the 'senatorial' status of Iberian elites. Even in these cases, the echoes
of the empire were of no great interest in and of themselves. Instead, they
were deployed to highlight one feature or another of the exemplary holy
men. These features allowed the hagiographers to frame their narratives
and ensured that the messages that they articulated were recognized by
their audiences.

Romanness thus was of scant interest in a world where the *gens Gothorum*
had gradually come to become a dominant identity. Aside from its presence
in preserved ancient laws, Romanness as a personal identity had little
impact in the seventh-century *leges*, a situation that is also reflected in the
hagiographic genre.[57] The eastern Roman empire and the distant past were
considered Roman. Hagiographies constantly evoke a world of Roman-era
landscapes, Roman urban topography, and Roman social relations. Yet
they remain stubbornly silent about relating these features to any Roman
identity. Rome, whatever the term meant in the minds of the readers, was
not deemed necessary to celebrate the saints' powers. We must therefore
see hagiographies as another discursive practice that resignified the Roman
past (and present) in the imagination of the individuals and communities
in the Visigothic kingdom.

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57   Castellanos 2020, 18–19.

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