ROYAL GENEALOGY AND THE GOTHIC THESIS IN MEDIEVAL IBERIAN HISTORIOGRAPHY

***by Andrew Devereux*[1]**

ABSTRACT

This paper examines claims of dynastic continuity linking the monarchs of medieval Castile to the earlier Visigothic kings of Hispania, arguing that the unlikely choice of the Visigoths as progenitors allowed medieval chroniclers to develop a biblical and providential model against which to frame Castilian history. This historiographical theme was deployed as a means to explain the Muslim conquest of large parts of Iberia as well as to prophecy the eventual success of the Castilian "reconquest".

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In the mid-fifteenth century Diego Enriquez del Castillo, royal chronicler of King Henry IV of Castile (1454-1474), recorded an anecdote in which the Castilian monarch's uncle, King Alfonso V "The Magnanimous" of Aragon (1416-1458), deferentially referred to Henry as '*the source of the royal lineage of the Goths of Spain.*'[2] For the purpose of this essay, the significance of this passage lies in the reference to the royal lineage of the Goths of Spain. The Visigothic kingdom of Hispania had collapsed following the Islamic invasion of the Iberian peninsula in 711 CE. Nonetheless, over seven centuries later the monarchs of Castile (and, on occasion, Aragon and other Mediterranean kingdoms) would claim an uninterrupted descent from the Goths who had ruled from Toledo[3], sometimes even styling themselves, as Enriquez del Castillo does for Henry IV, "Gothic" kings.

Modern historians have applied the term "Gothic thesis" to the historiographic approach to royal genealogy in medieval and early modern Spain that employed this invented continuity to depict ruling monarchs as the direct descendants and heirs of the Visigoths who had reigned prior to the Islamic conquest (Maravall, 1954)[4]. This

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1 *Author details:* Andrew Devereux is currently a PhD candidate in the department of history at The Johns Hopkins University, in Baltimore, Maryland, where he focuses on Medieval and Early Modern Spain.

Email: awdevereux@yahoo.com

2 Alfonso's imagery is that of the family tree, as he purportedly describes his nephew Enrique as "*el tronco* [the trunk] *de quien él* [Alfonso] *y el linaje Real de los Godos de España descendían*", Diego Enríquez del Castillo, *Crónica del Rey Don Enrique el Cuarto* (Rosell, 1878, p.104). The chronicler's aim, rather than illustrating Alfonso's famous magnanimity, was probably to provide a testimony of Aragonese acknowledgment of Castilian primacy in the Iberian peninsula. As the throne of Aragon was held from 1412 by a junior branch of the Trastamaran dynasty that had seized power in Castile in 1369, this deduction is clear enough. All translations, unless otherwise noted, are mine.

3 See, for example, the 1492/93 genealogical treatise written for King Ferrante I of Naples (1458-1494), *Suma de los Reyes de Castilla*, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Ms. esp. 110. This is one of the latest examples, of those that can truly be considered medieval chronicles, to elucidate the putative uninterrupted lineage.

4 The first edition (1954) of Maravall's *El Concepto de España en la Edad Media* represents, to my knowledge, the first use of the term "Gothic thesis," or, in his words, "*la tesis neo-gótica*". In this essay, I will at times refer to the "Visigothic Kingdom of Hispania." This is to distinguish the Gothic kingdom based first at Toulouse and later at Toledo from the

theme, appearing in chronicles, family trees, and political treatises, enjoyed a longevity that spanned centuries. Indeed, the claim of direct descent from the kings of Visigothic Hispania appeared as early as the ninth century in the tiny northern Iberian kingdom of Asturias. As the Kingdom of León absorbed Asturias in the tenth century and Castile in turn absorbed León in the thirteenth, Castilian chroniclers inherited this approach to royal genealogy[5]. In this way the Gothic thesis continued, in various guises but with remarkable durability, into the seventeenth century.

Who were the Goths and why were they chosen to play the part of progenitors in Castilian royal genealogies for so many centuries? Classical authors described the Goths as but one of the Germanic peoples who swept into Europe as part of the "barbarian" migrations of Late Antiquity[6]. Alaric famously led a band of Goths in sacking Rome in 410 CE. The Goths arrived in the Roman province of Hispania only as recently as the fifth century and modern scholarship estimates the actual number of Germanic immigrants to Iberia to have been only a few thousand (Collins, 2004). Given that their dominion in the Iberian peninsula was cut short after less than three centuries by the Muslim invasions, the Goths would appear to have been historical interlopers in Spain. It is important, at this point, to consider Howard Bloch's determination that, by the later Middle Ages, Europeans viewed the legitimacy (or illegitimacy) of power as deriving from origins[7]. Origins, whether of a family or a people, were meaningful because they exerted a determining force on the future of that line. An origin, in other words, played a prophetic role[8]. Claims about a dynasty's origins were in fact claims about the present and the future. In light of this reasoning, a Gothic ancestry would seem an inauspicious origin for a royal dynasty to claim.

So why, from the ninth century on, did the Goths come to occupy the same position in Asturian-Leonese-Castilian histories that the Trojans had in Frankish historiography since the seventh century[9]? If origins held such meaningful implications for the present, it would seem that Castilian chroniclers would have done their royal patrons

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Ostrogothic Kingdom in Italy. The distinction between Ostro- and Visigothic, however, is anachronistic, a distinction not made until the later Middle Ages.

5 For simplicity's sake, I will at times use the term "Castilian" to include the historiography produced in the early medieval kingdoms of Asturias and León as ultimately the Kingdom of Castile came to incorporate not only the lands of Asturias and León but also their historiographical traditions. "Castilian" historiography will thus apply to texts produced in these regions, although not necessarily in the Castilian language (a number of the works under examination were composed in Latin). The term "Castilian" will thus serve to distinguish the traditions of the central part of the Iberian peninsula from those of Portugal to the west and those of the Crown of Aragon (including Catalonia) to the east.

6 It should be pointed out that even the "gothicness" of the Goths has recently been called into question. On Roman constructions of Germanic "ethnicities", see Collins (2004), especially chapter 1: *From Empire to Kingdom, 409-507*.

7 This is what Bloch labelled "*a deep, though historically determined, mental structure that assumes power to be legitimated through recourse to origins.*" (Bloch, 1986).

8 In this respect an origin, in medieval historiography, functioned in a manner similar to Auerbach's *figura*, which serve as prefigurations, pointing towards an event or action not yet completed (Auerbach, 1973)

9 This tradition in Frankish historiography seems to have begun with the seventh-century *Chronique de Frédégaire*. Gabrielle Spiegel has pointed out that the tradition of Trojan origins was maintained in French royal historiography throughout the Middle Ages (Spiegel, 1997, pp.106-7). The *Grandes Chroniques* present French kingship as unbroken, from Priam through Pharamond, Clovis, Charlemagne, and Philip Augustus. See also Genicot (1975) who cites the seventh-century *Genealogia comitum Bulonensium*, that records that Pharamond was son of Priam.

better service by developing a different dynastic history. There were other historical traditions that historians might have appealed to in the formulation of royal genealogies. Medieval chroniclers often argued for the Trojan origins of both "nations" (meaning peoples) and dynasties, a claim that had the effect of rendering someone a "cousin" of the Romans of Antiquity. As alluded to above, a Trojan ancestry of the Frankish kings was asserted as early as the seventh century in the *Chronique de Frédégaire*, and Geoffrey of Monmouth, in his *Historia de Reges Britannia*, asserted that the "nation" of the Britons derived from the Trojan Brutus. In the medieval Kingdom of Castile, however, Trojan origins were never claimed for either the ruling dynasty or the populace at large. It is possible that a desire to present a dynasty as opposed, rather than related, to Rome might explain an aversion to claiming Trojan origins. In this case, however, Iberia itself presented an alternative origin with a strong anti-Roman bent: chroniclers in medieval Castile might have claimed for their monarchs a descent from the Celtiberians who, according to classical historians, had heroically defended the Iberian city of Numantia for twenty years against overwhelming numbers of Roman soldiers led by Scipio Aemilianus in the second century BCE. Such a strategy would have endowed a medieval ruler with an ancestry at once rooted in antiquity, heroic, and anti-Roman. Yet, while the siege of Numantia was recorded in numerous medieval Iberian chronicles, there was never any attempt to associate a ruling dynasty with a heroic and autochthonous Celtiberian past[10]. Rather, the claim of direct descent from the Visigothic kings of Hispania served, with few exceptions, as the defining mode of Castilian royal genealogies throughout the Middle Ages.

It has yet to be satisfactorily answered why this particular historiographical line came to dominate medieval Castilian royal genealogy. It is not that the presence of this theme has gone unnoticed; on the contrary, the Spanish historian José Antonio Maravall has conducted an exhaustive study of the transmission of the Gothic thesis through the historiographical traditions of the medieval Iberian peninsula (Maravall, 1997, pp.299-346). Historians Jocelyn Hillgarth (1985) and Robert Tate (1954) have both emphasized the dominant role of the claim of Gothic ancestry in medieval Castilian historiography. There has been, however, no systematic analysis of the claims that were made through recourse to a Gothic royal genealogy. In this essay I propose to study the claims of Gothic ancestry and origins, and the commensurate territorial claims that were made by medieval Spanish monarchs. Clearly the origins claims and territorial claims that were put forth were not static. I intend to trace the development of the claim of Gothic ancestry and to analyze the ways in which it was deployed through the Middle Ages as it was adapted to meet the political exigencies of the day. In doing this, I hope to illuminate changes in the portrayal and projection of royal authority over time, as well as to propose one answer to the fundamental question of why Goths were chosen to fulfil the role of mythical progenitors in Castile. I believe that a claim of Gothic ancestry, despite the inherent weaknesses alluded to above, allowed for the narration of Castilian history according to a biblical and providential model, an aspect of the Gothic thesis that has not been explored. This reading of their own history was but one way in which medieval Castilians attempted to understand and explain the Islamic conquest of Spain.

The sources upon which this analysis will be based comprise a representative sample of medieval historical texts, including chronicles, political treatises, and letters, that were produced from the ninth century to the fifteenth. As this study focuses on the

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[10] Codice A-189 at the Real Academia de la Historia in Madrid contains a fifteenth-century text titled *De preconiis ciuitatis Numantine* (ff. 99-136). This work celebrates the Numantians, but does not address the issue of dynastic origins.

claims that were made through recourse to an assertion of Gothic ancestry, the scope will necessarily be limited to texts that ascribe a genealogical continuity from the pre-711 Visigothic kings based at Toledo to the later Christian monarchs of the successive Iberian kingdoms of Asturias, León, and Castile. Particular works have been chosen due to their import, a judgment based on the influence they had on later chroniclers. I believe that this analysis will answer the questions posed above while at the same time showing how much more work remains to be done on the subject of medieval royal genealogies in the Iberian peninsula, a topic that has received substantially less attention than its counterparts in France, England, the Holy Roman Empire, and other parts of Europe.

Isidore of Seville and his History of the Goths

The claim of dynastic continuity between the Visigothic kingdom of Hispania and the Christian kingdoms that developed in the wake of the eighth-century Muslim invasion first appeared in the late ninth-century in the northern Iberian kingdom of Asturias. The Asturian chroniclers who advanced this assertion styled their monarchs the descendants and heirs of the Visigothic kings while simultaneously asserting that the ninth-century chronicles themselves were merely continuations of Isidore of Seville's seventh-century *Historia Gothorum*. As this text remained a model and authority for Spanish chroniclers throughout the Middle Ages, a study of the Gothic thesis must begin with Isidore's work, produced nearly a century before the Islamic invasion of Iberia.

Isidore of Seville was caught between two intellectual worlds. He possessed a background in classical learning but, at the same time, his position as archbishop of Seville brought him into the royal orbit of the Visigothic kings of Hispania. Consequently, when Isidore wrote his *Historia Gothorum*, he appealed to Classical authorities while simultaneously portraying the Goths in a flattering light that represented a departure from the traditional histories of the Goths as compiled by writers such as Ambrose and Jordanes. Isidore's most influential innovations in this area were his depiction of the Goths as catholic and as "Spanish," themes that would be further developed by his Iberian successors.

The Goths, however, had only very recently been either catholic or Spanish, and Isidore was at pains to develop a suitable historical background for his heroes. Thus, when it came to elucidating the origins of the Goths, he followed two sharply divergent postulations that he found in his reading of classical authors. Isidore drew an etymological connection between the words "*Getae*" (Goth) and "*Scythae*," showing that with the change of just a few letters, the two nouns are clearly related[11]. On this basis, Isidore argued that the Goths had originated in the land of *Scythae* (Scythia), the region lying north of the Black Sea and encompassing the lower river valleys of the Don and the Dnieper, roughly geographically equivalent to modern Ukraine. In addition to this theory, however, he offered another: Isidore elaborated an etymology that suggested a biblical origin for the Goths by postulating Magog/Gog as the etymological root of the word "Goth." '*Some suspect that they originated from Magog, son of Japheth, on the basis of the similarity of the last syllable, or they conclude the same from the prophet Ezechiel. But in the past, learned men were in the habit of calling them*

[11] Isidore of Seville, *Historia Gothorum*, Ch. 66 (Wolf, 1990, p.108). In this assertion, Isidore was probably following Jerome, who argued that the Goths descended from "*Getae*", "*a people from the north identified by Herodotus and Pliny*." (Wolf, *Introduction*, p.17).

'Getae' rather than "Gog" or "Magog".'[12] Hedging his bets, perhaps, Isidore concluded his history by stating that the Goths originated from Magog **and** shared a common origin with the Scythians[13]. The book of Ezekiel to which Isidore referred prophesies that Gog will come from the land of Magog (in the uttermost north) and will march on Israel, whereupon the Lord will strike Gog down in order to show his holiness[14]. Little wonder, then, that Isidore should emphasize the opinion held by learned men in the past concerning the "*Getae*" etymology. Given Isidore's attempt to paint the Goths as catholic (especially in light of the fact that they had until quite recently been Arian), it is puzzling that he would even include this origins story in his text. Kenneth Baxter Wolf has suggested that perhaps Isidore felt that the antiquity as well as the genealogical connection to the line of Japheth implicit in the Magog etymology outweighed the negative implications of the biblical prophecy[15].

If Isidore did not feel fully comfortable with either origin suggested by his etymologies, he was clearly anxious to show that the Goths belonged in Hispania. In his description of the Iberian peninsula he depicted the land as a woman who had been held by the Romans but who was now enjoyed by the Goths[16]. After wandering on a westerly course from Scythia, if not further, the Goths had finally found a home in this land that Isidore depicted as one of abundance. Isidore's portrayal rendered the Goths modern day Hebrews, and Spain their promised land. These parallels allowed Isidore to frame his history biblically, which aided his objective of portraying the Goths as catholic. In short, Isidore's *Historia Gothorum* depicted the Goths, as Jocelyn Hillgarth put it, as '*selected by God as the people chosen to succeed Rome*.'[17]

Isidore made the Goths "Spanish" but the geographical boundaries of Spain were nearly as obscure as the origins of the Goths. The question of what constituted Spain, however, came to have a consuming importance in the course of the Middle Ages and in this matter, too, Isidore was later cited as an authority. The Visigoths established their rule over roughly the bounds of the Roman province of Hispania, which held six dioceces: Tarraconensis, Cartaginensis, Baetica, Lusitania, and Gallaecia all lay within the Iberian peninsula. The sixth see was Tingitana, which lay across the Straits of Gibraltar, centered on the city of Tangiers. Isidore's *Historia Gothorum* attested to a sixth-century Gothic presence in Tingitana through the story of a conflict between Goths and imperial (Byzantine) soldiers for control of the North African city of Ceuta, in the province of Tingitana. The Goths, however, refused to take up arms on a Sunday, displaying a piety that cost them the military victory[18]. Isidore did not lament this loss. He seems to have related the story of the Gothic loss at Ceuta, not as a means of claiming North Africa for the Goths, but as an illustration of their devotion

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[12] *Historia Gothorum*, Ch.1 (Wolf, 1990, p.83). Susan Reynolds (1983, p.383) concludes that this constitutes "*the first known myth of biblical descent for west European peoples.*"

[13] *Historia Gothorum*, Ch.66 (Wolf, 1990).

[14] *Ezekiel*, 38-39; the New Testament records a variation of the same prophecy in *Revelation*, 20:8.

[15] Wolf (1990) *Introduction*, p.17.

[16] "*Rightly did golden Rome, the head of the nations, desire you long ago. And although the same Romulean power, initially victorious, betrothed you to itself, now it is the most flourishing people of the Goths, who in their turn, after many victories all over the world, have eagerly seized you and loved you: they enjoy you up to the present time amidst royal emblems and great wealth, secure in the good fortune of empire.*" *Historia Gothorum*, Prologue: In Praise of Spain (Wolf, 1990, pp.82-83).

[17] Hillgarth, J N (1970) Historiography in Visigothic Spain. *La Storiografia Altomedievale*, I:pp.295-299, Spoleto (quoted in Hillgarth, 1985, p.27).

[18] *Historia Gothorum*, Ch.42 (Wolf, 1990, p.100).

to catholicism, a clear contrast with the imperial forces. On the other hand, one of the chief heroes of Isidore's work is the Visigothic ruler Suinthila, the first king "*to obtain the monarchy of the entire kingdom of Spain north of the straits.*"[19] The wording clearly suggests that "Spain" included lands south of the straits as well. Isidore, however, seems to have cared little about the recovery of Tingitana, all the while remaining most interested in Spain north of the straits. While Isidore used this anecdote as an illustration of the piety of the Goths, the passage would be seized upon by chroniclers in later centuries to be used as an authority to prove that the Goths had, at one time, held dominion over North Africa.

Medieval chroniclers in the kingdoms of Asturias-León-Castile used Isidore of Seville's history as a model and they frequently further elaborated on many of the themes first developed in the *Historia Gothorum*. These consisted principally of the portrayal of the Goths as Catholic and of the relationship between the Goths and Spain. What, exactly, was encompassed by "Spain" was frequently the subject of debate. A consistent theme would be the emphasis of the geographical unity underlying that of a polity. Most importantly, perhaps, Isidore's employment of a providential model for Gothic history was taken up by the chroniclers who would later attempt to make sense of the Muslim dominion over the vast majority of the Iberian peninsula.

The Asturian chronicles

In the wake of the Islamic invasion of Visigothic Hispania in 711, the oldest evidence that exists of a claim of continuity with the defunct Christian kingdom dates from the late ninth century. A trio of chronicles (*The Chronicle of Alfonso III*, *The Chronicle of Albelda*, and *The Prophetic Chronicle*), all produced in the northern Kingdom of Asturias during the years 881-883, probably under the patronage of the Asturian King Alfonso III (r.866-910), portray the Asturian monarchs as descendants and heirs of the vanquished Visigoths. These claims of continuity have sparked many scholarly debates over the plausibility of a diminished Visigothic kingdom surviving in the northern mountains. Documentary and archaeological evidence suggests that the mountainous region of Asturias, like the Basque lands to the east, had fiercely resisted incorporation into the Roman province as well as the Visigothic kingdom of Hispania. In the early eighth century, then, Asturias was not a heavily "Gothicized" area. Whether or not, as the chronicles claim, members of the Visigothic royal family fled north to this region from Toledo following the Muslim invasion is less clear. Any actual continuity, institutional or otherwise, between the two kingdoms is likely to have been quite tenuous at best[20]. Dynastic continuity, however, is precisely what this trio of chronicles sought to portray.

Of the three Asturian texts, the lengthiest and most historical in its approach is the *Chronicle of Alfonso III*. This chronicle styled itself a continuation of Isidore of Seville's *Historia Gothorum* and claimed to bring his genealogy of the Gothic kings up to the reigning king of Asturias[21]. An examination of variations in this ninth-century

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19 *Historia Gothorum*, Ch.62 (Wolf, 1990, p.107).

20 On Asturias' lack of integration into the spheres of Roman and Visigothic control, see Barbero & Vigil (1974) and, for a similar argument in English, Manzano Moreno (1994). For an interpretation that emphasizes certain continuities from the Visigothic to the Asturian kingdom, see the introduction in Bonnaz (1987). For more on the historiography produced in the ninth-century Asturian kingdom, see Wolf (1990) pp.46-60.

21 '*Incipit chronica visegothorum a tempore Wambani regis usque nunc … Et quia Gothorum Chronica usque ad tempora gloriosi Wambani Regis Isidorus, Hispalensis sedis episcopus, plenissime edocuit, et*

text will allow us to trace the development of the claim of dynastic continuity. In the shorter of the two surviving versions of the chronicle, Pelayo (r.718-737), the first Asturian king, was described as a former member of the royal guard of the last two Visigothic kings, Witiza and Roderic[22]. Following Pelayo's consolidation of his rule in Asturias, he married his daughter, Ermesinda, to a certain Alfonso, of the royal lineage of the Goths, and with this *reditus regni*, dynastic continuity became a *fait accompli*[23]. In the lengthier of the two versions of the chronicle, Pelayo himself was of royal blood, thus achieving a greater degree of genealogical continuity than in the shorter text[24].

This King Pelayo faced a daunting task. As the *Chronicle of Alfonso III* related events, the sins of the Visigothic kings Witiza (698-710) and Roderic (710-711) had prompted God to castigate the Goths through the Muslim invasion of the kingdom of Hispania[25]. Pelayo, however, took it upon himself to save Christianity[26]. He sought refuge in a cave in the mountains of Asturias, where he prepared to do battle with the Muslim forces. The chronicler related that the Muslims sent Oppa, a corrupt bishop from Seville who was apparently resigned to live under Muslim rule, to negotiate a peace. In Pelayo's reproach to Oppa's attempt at conciliation, we learn that, in addition to saving Christianity, Pelayo intended to restore the army and the kingdom of the Goths[27]. In this, the righteousness of their cause garnered the Asturians divine assistance. In the ensuing Battle of Covadonga, God played an active part on the side of the Christian forces, hurling the slings and arrows shot by the Muslims back onto them and then causing a mountain to topple down on top of them when they attempted to flee.

This scene dramatically illustrates themes that run throughout the *Chronicle of Alfonso III*. Chief among these is the emphasis on restoration. King Pelayo and his successors worked, not only for the spiritual restoration of Christianity, but for the political restoration of the Visigothic kingdom of Hispania. This is the crux of the

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nos quidem ex eo tempore, sicut ab antiques et a praedecessoribus nostris audiuimus, et uera esse cognouimus, tibi breuiter intimabimus.' *Chronicle of Alfonso III*, Introductory Address, "erudite" version, (Bonnaz, 1987, p.31). Isidore of Seville (d.636), in fact, did not live to see Wamba's reign (672-680), however, this inaccuracy does not alter the intent of the author of the *Chronicle of Alfonso III*.

22 '*Pelagius quidam, spatarius Vitizani et Ruderici regum*' *Chronicle of Alfonso III*, ch.6.1 (Bonnaz, p.38).

23 '*Infra uero pauci temporis spatium, Adefonsus, filius Petri Cantabrorum ducis, ex regia prosapia, Asturias aduenit; filiam Pelagii nominee Ermisindam in coniugio accepit …*' *Chronicle of Alfonso III*, ch.6.4 (Bonnaz, p.44).

24 '*sibique Pelagium, filium quondam Fafilani ducis ex semine regio, principem elegerunt.*' *Chronicle of Alfonso III*, "erudite" version, ch.6.1 (Bonnaz, p.38).

25 *Chronicle of Alfonso III* (both versions), chs.4-5, (Bonnaz, pp.35-38).

26 '*… quod iam cogitauerat de saluatione Ecclesiae cum omni animositate agere festinauit.*' *Chronicle of Alfonso III*, ch.6.1, (Bonnaz, p.39).

27 '*sed tu non nosti quia Ecclesia Domini lunae comparatur, quae et defectum patitur et rursus per tempus ad pristinam plenitudinem reuertitur? Confidimus enim in Domini misericordia quod ab isto modico monticulo quem conspicis, sit Hispaniae salus et Gothorum gentis exercitus reparatus, ut in nobis compleatur ille propheticus sermo qui dicit: 'Visitabo in uirga iniquitates eorum, et in flagellis peccata eorum, misericordiam autem meam non auferam ab eis.' Igitur, etsi sententiam seueritatis per meritum excepimus, eius misericordiam in recuperatione Ecclesiae seu gentis et regni uenturam expectamus.*' *Chronicle of Alfonso III*, "erudite" version, ch.6.1, (Bonnaz, pp.41-42).

Gothic thesis as an historiographic theme: the kings of Asturias were not engaged in the creation of a new polity; rather, they were merely restoring their inheritance. Conquering monarchs were thus not annexing foreign territories, but laying claim to lands that were rightfully theirs. Whether the historiographical application of the assertion of dynastic continuity with the defeated Visigothic kingdom arose solely as a means of justifying war against the Muslims is not clear. The story of Pelayo's victory at Covadonga, however, has a dual function: there is both a legitimation and a sanctification of the military actions of the Christians.

The other ninth-century Asturian chronicles develop the same themes of divine punishment and redemption, dynastic continuity with the Visigothic kingdom, the salvation of Christianity, and a restoration of Visigothic Hispania. The *Chronicle of Albelda*, an abbreviated universal history, styles the kings both before and after the Muslim invasion "kings of the Goths."[28] Nowhere does the author explicitly state that the Asturian kings were the direct descendants of the Visigothic kings but, just as in the "erudite" version of the *Chronicle of Alfonso III*, Pelayo appears as the son of Duke Fáfila, and the text makes numerous references to events more fully described in the *Chronicle of Alfonso III*, creating the impression that the two works were intended to complement one another. In a rather extraordinary example of an attempt to depict continuity rather than rupture, the *Chronicle of Albelda* elaborates a chronology of the history of the world that includes the reign of King Wamba (r.672-680, putatively the first Visigothic king to be consecrated), but not the Islamic invasion of the peninsula[29].

Among the trio of ninth-century Asturian chronicles, the *Prophetic Chronicle* presents the most interesting view of the Goths. This text develops a biblical origins legend for the Gothic peoples and then uses this to relate a prophecy foretelling a Christian victory over Islam. At first glance, the *Prophetic Chronicle* appears to follow Isidore of Seville's *Historia Gothorum* in tracing the origin of the Goths to the biblical Gog, of the land of Magog: "*Gog quidem gens Gothorum est.*"[30] Like Isidore, the *Prophetic Chronicle* cites the book of Ezekiel as its source[31]. The difficulty presented by a genealogy that derived from a damned line is neatly gotten around, however, by falsifying the prophecy of Ezekiel, substituting Ishmael for Israel, and reversing the roles of the protagonists so that, in the ninth-century text, Gog (the Gothic people) is prophesied to destroy Ishmael (the Muslims) and regain the lost kingdom[32]. In this way, the author of the *Prophetic Chronicle* endowed the Goths with the antiquity of a biblical origin as well as a positive prophetic destiny.

Like the *Chronicle of Alfonso III* and the *Chronicle of Albelda*, the *Prophetic Chronicle* espouses the biblical theme of punishment and redemption, stating that the "Ishmaelites" had entered Spain due to the sins of the Goths[33]. We read, though, that

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28 *Chronicle of Albelda*, (Bonnaz, p.23).

29 *Chronicle of Albelda*, (Bonnaz, p.12).

30 *Prophetic Chronicle*, chapter 2.1, (Bonnaz, p.2).

31 '*Et magis de Ezechielo propheta id collegitis.*' *Prophetic Chronicle*, chapter 2.1, (Bonnaz, p.2). See also: Isidore of Seville, *Historia Gothorum*, ch.1 (Wolf, 1990, p.83).

32 *Prophetic Chronicle*, chapter 2.1, (Bonnaz, pp.2-3).

33 '*Terra quidem Gog Spania designatur sub regimine Gothorum in qua Ismaelitae, propter delicta gentis gothicae, ingressi sunt …*' *Prophetic Chronicle*, chapter 2.1, (Bonnaz, p.3). And in greater detail: '*Quia non fuit in illis pro suis delictis digna paenitentia, et quia dereliquerunt praecepta Domini et sacrorum canonum instituta, dereliquit illos Dominus ne possiderent desiderabilem terram.*' *Prophetic Chronicle*, ch.5, (Bonnaz, p.7).

numerous prophecies foretell that King Alfonso III will soon reign over all of Spain[34]. It is not exactly clear what is meant by "*omni Spania*". Can the ninth-century Asturians possibly have understood this phrase to encompass the entirety of the Iberian peninsula? Neither version of the *Chronicle of Alfonso III* addresses the issue of territorial claims. The *Chronicle of Albelda*, however, claims that the kings of Hispania had ruled Tingitana as well as the Gallic province of Narbonne[35]. One manuscript of the *Prophetic Chronicle* describes Hispania as including "*our provinces beyond the sea*"[36].

There is a certain optimism regarding the imminent demise of Islam and recovery of Hispania expressed in these early medieval texts that seems misplaced given the modern historian's knowledge of the subsequent history of the Iberian peninsula. During the reign of Alfonso III of Asturias (866-910), however, there may have been cause for optimism in the small northern realm. King Alfonso led military raids as far south into Muslim territory as the vicinity of Mérida, a point not brought under Christian rule until the early thirteenth century[37]. Perhaps ventures such as this one led to the sense of optimism that permeates the Asturian chronicles. Of the isolated Christian communities that spanned the northern rim of the Iberian peninsula in the ninth century, from Galicia in the west to the Catalan counties at the foot of the Pyrenees in the east, the kingdom of Asturias probably exhibited the greatest degree of political coherence and military might. No contemporary Iberian polity proved capable of executing campaigns such as that led by Alfonso III. Perhaps the depiction of Asturian kings as heirs of the Visigoths should be read as an attempt by these monarchs to position themselves at the head of the emerging Christian polities of the peninsula, a proclamation of Asturian primacy over its Christian neighbors. But this is merely one possibility. In his study of these chronicles, Yves Bonnaz advanced the theory that the Asturian emphasis on Gothic heritage developed less as a result of the Islamic invasion than as a response to the threat posed by the late eighth-century Frankish incursions into Catalonia along the Marca Hispanica[38]. The claim of direct descent from the Visigothic kings clearly displayed a potential utility in making claims, not only against Muslims, but also against Christian contenders for power in Iberia. Although Isidore of Seville wrote in the wake of Gothic victories over imperial forces in Hispania, his model lent itself easily to the Asturian chronicler(s) who wrestled with how to interpret the Gothic defeat at the hands of Muslim invaders and, accordingly, how to portray the Asturian monarchy that had emerged by the ninth century. The *Chronicle of Alfonso III*, the *Chronicle of Albelda*, and the *Prophetic Chronicle* developed more fully the providential interpretation of Gothic history that was already present in Isidore. In this sense, the Islamic dominion over most of Hispania was interpreted as divine castigation, although it was emphasized that God had not abandoned the "Goths" (Asturians). The Asturian kings, as descendants and heirs of the Visigothic kings, were therefore engaged, not simply in warfare, but in a redemptory process to recoup the inheritance that had been lost due to the sins of

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[34] '*Etiam et multorum christianorum reuelationibus atque ostensionibus, hic princeps noster, gloriosus domnus Adefonsus, proximiori tempore in omni Spania praedicetur regnaturus.*' *Prophetic Chronicle*, ch.2.2, (Bonnaz, p.3).

[35] *Chronicle of Albelda*, (Bonnaz, p.11).

[36] '*Dehinc prettermitento et nunquam adiciendo nomina Ysmaelitarum diuina clementia indiferenter a nostris prouintiis trans maria expellat et regnum eorum fidelibus Christi possidendum perpetuum concedat. amen.*' *Prophetic Chronicle*, Ms.A, ch.3, (Bonnaz, p.4).

[37] The *Chronicle of Albelda*, ch.47.4, provides a detailed description of the raid, a campaign corroborated by Arabic sources; see Bonnaz, p.97, n.2.

[38] Bonnaz, p.90, n.13.

their ancestors. The providential interpretation of "Gothic" history developed in this trio of Asturian chronicles would continue to serve as the model for chroniclers in Asturias-León-Castile for centuries.

The Rise of the Kingdom of León

As the Asturian kingdom expanded southward, it absorbed lands that had formerly been under nominal Islamic rule and populated these with Christian settlers. With this shift, the kingdom's political center of gravity also moved south and in the early tenth century the city of León replaced Oviedo as the seat of royal government. The new kingdom of León was, in every sense of the word, an outgrowth of the Asturian kingdom. The subjects and ruling dynasty were the same, and so it is logical that León would inherit the cultural traditions of Asturias. Nowhere is this more true than in the context of historiography.

The extant corpus of Leonese histories is nearly as limited as that of the Asturian predecessor kingdom. The vast majority of surviving Leonese chronicles date from the twelfth century, leaving the historiographic traditions of the tenth and eleventh centuries relatively open to conjecture. The twelfth-century texts, however, suggest that Leonese chroniclers did not concern themselves with innovation, but instead employed the Asturian *Chronicle of Alfonso III* as the basis for their histories, with regnal additions merely bringing the chronicle up to date.

The anonymous *Historia Silense*, composed circa 1109-1118, built on the ninth-century Asturian chronicle and depicted the eleventh-century Leonese monarchs as deriving from the lineage of the Gothic kings[39]. As in the earlier Asturian histories, the Goths were said to have lost dominion over their extensive patrimony due to the sins of their kings:

> *The Spanish Kings governed in a Catholic manner from the Rhône, the greatest river of the Gauls, as far as the sea which divides Europe from Africa; six provinces, that is to say, of Narbonne, Tarragona, Betica, Lusitania, Carthago and Galicia. Furthermore they subjugated the province of Tingitana, in the furthest bounds of Africa, to their lordship. Then at length divine providence, descrying that Wittiza king of the Goths had for long been skulking among the Christians like a wolf among the sheep, lest all the flock should again be defiled by this age-old swinish wallowing allowed barbarian peoples to take possession of Spain - just as in the time of Noah the flood [covered] the earth - few of the Christians being spared.*[40]

Like his ninth-century predecessors, the author of the *Silense* drew an explicit parallel with the Israelites in portraying the Goths as a chosen people undergoing punishment for their sins[41]. This text continued the practice of casting Gothic (or, in this case, Leonese) history in providential terms, utilizing the appeal to a specifically *Gothic* ancestry as the key to such a portrayal.

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[39] Referring to King Alfonso VI (of León, 1065-72; of Castile, León, and Galicia, 1072-1109), the author of the *Silense* writes, "*Alfonso, then, sprung from the famous stock of the Goths.*" *Historia Silense*, Ch.8 (Barton & Fletcher, 2000, p.29).

[40] *Historia Silense*, Ch.6 (Barton & Fletcher, p.28).

[41] "*by God's leave the Moors were again allowed dominion over the Spains - just as pagan peoples had lorded it over the Israelites for their manifold sins.*" *Historia Silense*, Ch.69, (Barton & Fletcher, p.36).

Besides the *Historia Silense*, two other texts from this period enjoyed a wide circulation and served as sources for future chroniclers. Bishop Pelayo of Oviedo's *Chronicon Regum Legionensium* (written c.1121-1129)[42] and the anonymous *Crónica Najerense* (composed c.1180)[43] both drew extensively on the *Historia Silense*; neither text, however, made any significant developments in the royal claims of Gothic ancestry, in the portrayal of the Goths, or in the territorial claims made on behalf of the Leonese monarchs through recourse to the Gothic thesis.

These twelfth-century chronicles relied heavily on the Asturian *Chronicle of Alfonso III* but did not incorporate Isidore's *History of the Goths*. Consequently, Leonese historiography displayed a lack of concern with Gothic origins; the focus of the texts was consistently more localized within the realm of León. In this context, Leonese historiography continued to depict the monarchs as descendants and heirs of the Goths, rulers of a people chastised for their sins yet destined to regain their promised land. The importance of these texts was in their role as a conduit. Although they were not innovative, these chronicles served to disseminate the Asturian histories nearly undiluted, replete with the prophetic strain concerning the eventual recovery of Visigothic Hispania and the expulsion of Islam from Spain. The *Historia Silense*, the *Chronicon Regum Legionensium*, and the *Crónica Najerense* were copied and recopied at monasteries across León and Castile. By the thirteenth century, these were the sources on which historians of the ascendant Kingdom of Castile would draw as they found a new utility for the Gothic thesis.

Castilian Hegemony

In the eleventh century the County of Castile (which lay on the eastern border of the Kingdom of León) became a kingdom in its own right. During the turbulent years of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries the two kingdoms were briefly joined, split apart, and then united definitively in 1230 in the person of King Ferdinand III (1217-1252 in León; 1230-1252 in Castile). The Leonese dynasty brought with it to the throne of Castile-León its traditions of royal genealogy. In the course of the thirteenth century, though, Castilian royal chroniclers proved remarkably innovative in their portrayal of Gothic history and in the claims that they made based on the Gothic thesis. These changes may be taken to reflect the development of a new and broader historical consciousness, characterized by an increased concern with the presentation of dynastic continuity.

The chronicler Lucas de Túy is representative of the transmission of the traditions of Asturian-Leonese historiography to the Castilian orbit. Lucas' *Chronicon Mundi* (begun circa 1197-1204, while he was a monk at the monastery of San Isidoro in León, and completed ca. 1252, in all likelihood by someone other than Lucas) was a departure from the rather static Leonese school of historiography. Although the chronicle's primary concern was the history of the Christian Kingdoms of Asturias, León , and Castile, this was couched within a universal history and thus displayed a broader historical interest than had its twelfth-century Leonese predecessors.

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[42] There is an English translation of this text in Barton & Fletcher (2000).

[43] *Crónica Najerense*, Ubieto Arteta (1985, editor). It is not known where the *Najerense* was written; some have postulated a Leonese origin, but Ubieto Arteta posits a French author who was a monk at the monastery of Nájera, in the Rioja, which was subject to Castile at this time (p.30). Clearly this complicates interpretation, but the primary interest of the text lies with the Leonese dynasty, which is why it has been included in this discussion.

Lucas de Túy's *Chronicon Mundi* made no attempt to re-write early medieval Spanish history: the text merely incorporated the seventh-century histories of Isidore of Seville and Julian of Toledo, as well as the ninth-century *Chronicle of Alfonso III*. Simply through his incorporation of the seventh-century works, though, Lucas gave his chronicle a broader temporal scope than the twelfth-century Leonese texts that he no doubt had access to in the library at San Isidoro. Lucas included Isidore's ambivalent conjecture that the Goths descended from Magog and were also related to the Scythians[44]. Lucas, however, developed a novel royal genealogy by recording King Pelayo's lineage as more explicitly royal: here this first Asturian king was now the grandson of the Visigothic King Çidasuindo[45]. This genealogy thereby provided a greater degree of dynastic continuity than had the Asturian histories' vague claims about Pelayo being "*ex semine regio.*" Lucas further emphasized the theme of continuity with the Visigothic kingdom when he described the eighth-century Asturians as the "*pueblo de los godos*"[46].

The *Chronicon Mundi* continued the tradition, dating back to the ninth century, of portraying the Christian reconquest according to a biblical model of history. Political events of the first half of the thirteenth century must have contributed significantly to Lucas' framing of his narrative in this light. In 1230 Ferdinand III, King of León since 1217, inherited the Crown of Castile. This political union, which would prove permanent, gave King Ferdinand control over an enormous area of the central Iberian peninsula. Ferdinand waged relentless wars against his Muslim neighbours, and under his direction Christian forces conquered a huge swath of southern Spain, including the important Islamic political and commercial centres of Córdoba (1236) and Seville (1248). The result was a fifty percent increase, within the span of one generation, in the geographic area of the united kingdom. The *Chronicon Mundi*, in relating these events, described King Ferdinand as another Joshua and the Leonese and Castilians as sons of Israel being led into the promised land, where milk and honey were replaced by wine, citrus, and dates[47]. By Ferdinand's death in 1252, the Kindom of Castile-León was far larger than the neighbouring Christian kingdoms of Portugal and Aragon. In geographical terms, it most closely resembled Visigothic Hispania.

Following Lucas de Túy's *Chronicon Mundi*, the universal history became a common format for Castilian chronicles from the thirteenth through the fifteenth centuries. Rodrigo Ximénez de Rada (c.1170-1247; from 1208 archbishop of Toledo and advisor to Ferdinand III) wrote *Historia de rebus Hispanie sive Historia Gothica*, a universal history that he dedicated to his king. This work presented a synthesized view of Castilian kingship and rendered the thirteenth-century reconquest monarchs the direct heirs of the Visigothic kings who had ruled prior to the Islamic conquest. Yet, where Lucas de Túy had adhered rather strictly to historical models established in

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44 *Chronicon Mundi*, *texto romanceado*: libro II, cap.5, (Puyol, 1926), pp.162-163.

45 *Chronicon Mundi*, libro IV, cap.1, (Puyol, 1926), p.272.

46 *Chronicon Mundi*, libro IV, cap.8, (Puyol, 1926), p.279.

47 "*Este fue otro Josue que, vençidos los reyes que tenian ocupada la tierra de promission, echó della al cananeo, y al jebuseo, y gergeseo, y ferezeo, y heveo, gentes que eran muy más fuertes que él, y metio a los hijos de Isrrael en ella por que se criasen con leche y miel y alabasen en ella el nonbre del Señor en coro y organo y en campanas de alegria. Por auentura, podremos dezir el rey Fernando éste ser Josue que, vençidos los reyes de Cordoua y de Murcia y de Jahen y de Seuilla y de Niebla y de Granada con los condes de Castilla, metio los pueblos, y Leon y Castilla, que son los hijos de Isrrael, en la tierra de los moros para que viesen cada dia al Señor de faz y faz por que se criasen con pan y vino, y frutas millgranas, limones, toronjas, naranjas, fructos de palmas ...*", *Chronicon Mundi*, libro IV, cap.101, (Puyol, 1926), pp. 445-446.

older chronicles, Ximénez de Rada developed a completely novel depiction of Gothic history. The subject of the origins of the Goths had clearly presented problems for medieval royal chroniclers. Isidore of Seville's ambivalent postulations on the matter had produced nothing more than two unsatisfactory genealogical possibilities. Subsequent chroniclers had resolved the question in various ways: some copied Isidore, some ignored the issue altogether, while the author of the *Prophetic Chronicle* fabricated a biblical passage in order to give Isidore's Magog/Gog etymology a more auspicious veneer. It was not until the thirteenth century in Spain that a different origins legend for the Goths was put forth. Ximénez de Rada argued that Isidore's ambivalent etymology had confused rather than clarified matters[48]. Instead, Ximénez de Rada cited a more ancient authority, Ptolomy, to ascribe Scandinavian origins to the Goths[49]. The late thirteenth-century *Primera Crónica General*, composed in the historiographical workshops of Alfonso X "The Wise" (1252-1284) and his son Sancho IV (1284-1295), also postulated a Scandinavian origins legend for the Goths[50].

In diverging from established origins legends, Ximénez de Rada developed an early Gothic history that situated his subjects among the prominent peoples of Antiquity. He depicted the early Goths as invincible warriors and related stories of Gothic victories over the Persians and their conquest of Athens[51]. Ximénez de Rada wrote that even Caesar could not defeat the Goths in battle[52]. The *Primera Crónica General* followed Ximénez de Rada's text in placing the Goths among the heroes of Antiquity. In addition to their military prowess, however, the Alfonsine chronicle extolled the wisdom of the Goths and attempted to imbue their past with cultural achievements on

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[48] Roderici Ximenii de Rada, *Historia de Rebus Hispanie sive Historia Gothica*, (Fernández Valverde, 1987) Liber Primus, cap.IX, p.22.

[49] "*Ex hac igitur Schancia insula, quasi gencium oficina et nationum uagina, Gothi cum rege suo nominee Verig quondam memorantur egressi, et quam cito terram exeuntes e nauibus atigerunt, dederunt ilico nomen loco Gothiscanciam nominantes, et locus ille adhuc hodie Gothiscancia appellatur.*" *Historia de Rebus Hispanie sive Historia Gothica*, Liber Primus, cap.VIII, pp.20-21 (Fernández Valverde, 1987). Ximénez de Rada says that the island of Schancia lies so far north that it experiences forty days of darkness in winter and forty of continual light in summer. While this thirteenth-century historian appears to draw on the geographical knowledge of the classical world, there is an interesting possible conflation with the description in *Ezekiel* that the land of Magog lies in "*uttermost north*" (*Ezekiel*, 38-39). Susan Reynolds (1983, p.379) refers to this family of origins stories as the "*Scandinavian or north-German topos*". She argues that the use of this *topos* constitutes a myth, just as do Trojan or biblical origins stories. Burgundians also claimed Scandinavian origins (Wood, 1995).

[50] *Primera Crónica General de España* (Que Mandó Componer Alfonso el Sabio y se Continuaba Bajo Sancho IV en 1289) (Menéndez Pidal, 1955), pp.215-216. The Alfonsine text identifies the Gothic homeland as the northern island of "Scancia," which is said to lie north of where the Vistula River empties into the Baltic Sea. There is a geographical correlation between this description and the Swedish island of Gotland.

[51] "*Quem dolum cum post longum tempus cognouisset Sitalcus egregius doctor et ductor Gothorum, CL milia pugnancium congregauit et Atheniensibus bellum intulit, in eis Perdica tunc regnante, quem Alexander apud Babiloniam ministri insidiis potans interitum porrecto anulo in Atheniensium principatu reliquerat successorem ...*", *Historia de Rebus Hispanie sive Historia Gothica*, (Fernández Valverde, 1987) Liber Primus, cap.XIV, p.32.

[52] "*Gothorum regnum Cesar, qui pene totum mundum suo subiecit imperio, crebro pertemptans non potuit subiugare neque Gayus Tyberius imperator tercius Romanorum, licet sepius atemptarit.*", *Historia de Rebus Hispanie sive Historia Gothica*, (Fernández Valverde, 1987) Liber Primus, cap.XV, p.32.

a par with those of ancient Greece and Rome[53]. These depictions of early Gothic history show a refusal to move away from the claim of Gothic royal lineage, and yet are clearly indicative of a need to portray that ancestry in a different light. These historiographical changes may have been determined by increasing contact between Castile and other regions of Europe. It is tempting, for instance, to read the *Primera Crónica General's* description of ancient Gothic philosophers as related to Castile's attempts to depict itself as one of the great monarchies of Europe, or to Alfonso X's ultimately failed bid to become Holy Roman Emperor[54].

Castilian monarchs did not claim descent from the Gothic kings solely as a means of emphasizing the prestige or antiquity of their lineage. During the thirteenth century, court historians employed the Gothic thesis to make territorial claims on behalf of their monarchs. What distinguished the thirteenth-century territorial claims was the emphasis placed on claiming lands beyond the Iberian peninsula and the coeval political and military efforts to establish Castilian dominion in North Africa. Although the assertion that the North African province of Tingitana had formed part of the Visigothic kingdom could be traced back to the Asturian cycle (and, more tenuously, to Isidore of Seville), it was only in the thirteenth century that a Christian push across the Straits of Gibraltar became a possibility. North Africa was viewed as forming an integral part of Christendom that had been subjugated to the rule of Muslim invaders from the East. It was therefore natural that Ferdinand III of Castile-León, after conquering most of Andalucía, planned to continue the reconquest across the Straits of Gibraltar before he died in 1252 in Seville. His court historian, Ximénez de Rada, simultaneously articulated in his chronicle the centuries-old claim to the North African province of Tingitana[55]. Ferdinand's son and successor, Alfonso X, followed his father's policy and held a session of the *cortes* (parliamentary councils) at Toledo in 1254 in which he raised the issue of an invasion of North Africa (O'Callaghan, 1989, p.23). In September 1260, a fleet of Castilian ships attacked Salé, a port on North Africa's Atlantic coast, near modern Rabat, Morocco (O'Callaghan, 1989, p.103). Four months later, at the Cortes of Seville, King Alfonso X again discussed what was entered in the records as "*the affair of Africa*" (O'Callaghan, 1989, p.70). Throughout the first decade of his reign, then, Alfonso X made Castilian expansion into Africa one of the central elements of his foreign policy. It is therefore only to be expected that his *Primera Crónica General* should follow Ximénez de Rada in claiming Tingitana and its ten cities as part of the Castilian monarch's inheritance (Milhou, 1983). The same justifications for military aggression towards the Maghreb were called on in the fourteenth century when Alfonso X's great-grandson, Alfonso XI (1312-1350), was encouraged by one of his chief councillors to undertake a conquest of Africa. Álvaro Pelayo wrote to the king (ca. 1340), "*Africa, where the name of Christ was revered, but where Muhammad is exalted today, belongs to you by right. The kings of the Goths, from whom you descend, subjected Africa to the faith … Take it, as the other western lands, for it is yours*

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[53] The text discusses early Gothic philosophers and describes the Goths as wiser than all other foreigners ("*mas sabios que todas las otras yentes estrannos*"). (Menéndez Pidal, 1955, pp. 217-218).

[54] The "Wise" king was elected Holy Roman Emperor in 1257 but was never able to secure his claim.

[55] ' *... et in Africa etiam una prouincia decem ciuitatum, que Tingitania dicebatur, ad Gothorum dominium pertinebant*.' *Historia de Rebus Hispanie sive Historia Gothica*, (Fernández Valverde, 1987) Liber Tribus, cap.XXI, p.105.

by hereditary right. Because it is yours, subject it to the faith and take it in the name of Christ."[56]

With the unification of the crowns of León and Castile and the contemporaneous conquest of what would become southern Spain, royal historiography adapted the traditional Leonese dynastic genealogy of descent from the Gothic kings of Hispania. This basic genealogy was maintained while, perhaps indicative of the development of a more European approach to history, it was increasingly recorded in the format of universal history, one in which the Goths had figured among the greats of the Ancient World. Inseparable from the putative Gothic ancestry and the correlative territorial claims, however, was the notion of religious war for the salvation of Christianity. In this, the thirteenth- and fourteenth-century Castilian histories had not diverged in any significant way from the themes established in the *Chronicle of Alfonso III*.

The Fifteenth-Century Apogee of the Gothic Thesis

During the fifteenth century, the claim of direct descent from the early medieval Gothic kings not only continued to dominate Castilian royal historiography, but in fact attained its widest application. More than ever before, royal chroniclers emphasized the Gothic ancestry of the Castilian monarch[57]. And yet, although descent from the Gothic Kings of Hispania was an inescapable theme of fifteenth-century chronicles, the origins of the Goths were less explored than they had been in past centuries. Many chronicles simply did not address the matter[58]; those that did usually adhered to the by-then-standard topos of Scandinavian origins. For example, the royal chronicler Pablo de Santa Maria, in his *Siete edades del mundo* (a universal history in verse composed before 1418), wrote that the Goths came from the islands of Aquilon, a poetic rendition of the "Scancia" origins legend[59].

In fact, only one significantly innovative portrayal of early Gothic history was produced during the fifteenth century. The author of a Castilian abbreviated universal history written for the King of Naples in 1492/93 developed a biblical origins legend, tracing the Goths to lands on the banks of the River Jordan. There, he wrote, citing the *Book of Paralipomenon* (*1 Chronicles* and *2 Chronicles*), the children of Gad, son of the patriarch Jacob, took the name "godos" (Goths) for their tribe[60]. This etymology imbued the Goths with an origin of greater antiquity than that of the Scandinavian legend and, incidentally, older than the Trojan beginnings that were claimed in France. Although tracing the Goths to Gad did not give the House of Castile

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[56] Álvaro Pelayo, *Espelho dos reis*, in O'Callaghan, (2003).

[57] This theme was espoused by the royal councilor Alonso de Cartagena during the 1430s in his discourse delivered at the Council of Basel, *Discurso sobre la Precedencia del Rey Católico sobre el de Inglaterra en el Concilio de Basilea*, in which he asserted that King John II of Castile (1406-1454)'s nobility was due to his descent from the Gothic kings: "... *mi señor el Rey de Castilla, considerada la sangre de sus antecesores, es muy noble: ca, no solamente desciende de los reyes de los godos e de las casas de Castilla e de León* ...", (Penna, 1959, p.208). Diego de Valera, a royal counselor, in a letter to King Ferdinand of Aragon, extolled the king's Gothic ancestry: "*descendido de la ínclita gótica sangre donde venís* ..." *Epístola*, 2 July 1482, (Penna, 1959, p.24).

[58] For example, Diego de Valera's *Crónica de España* (Sevilla: Alonso del Puerto, 1482) is an exhaustive universal history that ascribes tremendous importance to the role of the Goths in Iberian history, yet does not address their origins. See Part III, cap. 1, in which the Goths suddenly appear as rulers in fourth-century Hispania.

[59] Pablo de Santa Maria, *Siete Edades del Mundo*, (Sconza, 1991, p.113).

[60] Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Ms. esp. 110, f. 4r.

quite the antiquity of a lineage going back to Magog/Gog, the new genealogy circumvented the obvious problems inherent in the latter. In fact, rather than a negative prophetic destiny, a Gaddite ancestry actually imparted an auspicious prophetic future: not only does Gad mean good fortune in Hebrew, but the Gaddites were said to be superb warriors[61]. The Prophecy of Jacob recorded that, with their military prowess, they would fend off a great enemy: "*Raiders shall raid Gad, but he shall raid at their heels.*"[62] It is not explicitly clear that a Gaddite origin for the Goths was developed due specifically to this prophecy. The political context in which this chronicle was written, however, could support such a claim[63]. The advantages of such a genealogy were clearly manifold, and antiquity and prophecy are but two of the themes that it allowed the House of Castile to claim.

Other than these two examples, fifteenth-century Castilian texts that depicted the reigning monarchs as descendants and heirs of the Goths did not address the question of Gothic origins. However, if there was less emphasis placed on the origins of the Goths than there had been in previous centuries, fifteenth-century historians increasingly stressed the antiquity and continuity of the Castilian dynastic line. The royal chronicler Fernán Pérez de Guzmán, in the Prologue to his history, *Generaciones y Semblenzas*, wrote that King Henry III of Castile (1390-1406) was descended from the "noble, ancient, and glorious lineage of the kings of the Goths" and that the blood of the Kings of Castile had been uninterrupted for more than eight centuries[64]. The royal councillor Alonso de Cartagena employed dynastic continuity as justification in crafting his argument at the Council of Basel (1434-1439) that the King of Castile should have precedence over the King of England, asserting that the royal lineage had been uninterrupted from the seventh to the fifteenth century[65]. In fact, Alonso argued, this line could be traced back to Theodoric, putatively the first Goth to rule in Spain, a degree of dynastic continuity rarely found in Europe[66]. In a similar appeal to antiquity, the anonymous Castilian chronicle written for King Ferrante of Naples (1492/3) claimed for its subject 1150 years of uninterrupted royal succession, tracing

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61 *1 Chronicles*, 12:8.

62 *Genesis* 49:19.

63 The Prophecy of Jacob could be applied specifically to King Ferrante of Naples' circumstances, as he faced the imminent French invasion of his kingdom at precisely the time this chronicle was written. It could also be applied more generally to the House of Castile (as embodied in King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella), concerning the war against Islam, especially in light of the substantial advances made by the Ottoman Empire in the Mediterranean during the fifteenth century. Yet another reason for tracing King Ferrante's ancestry to the banks of the Jordan might be related to the fact that the Neapolitan king was also titular King of Jerusalem.

64 "*...desçendió de la noble e muy antigua e clara generación de los reyes godos e señaladamente del glorioso e católico prínçipe Recaredo, rey de los godos en España. E segunt por las estorias de Castilla paresçe, la sangre de los reyes de Castilla e su suçesión de un rey en otro se ha continuado fasta oy, que son más de ochoçientos años sin aver en ella mudamiento de otra liña nin generación. Lo qual creo que se fallará en pocas generaçiones de los reyes christianos que tan luengo tienpo durase ...*" Fernán Pérez de Guzmán, *Generaciones y Semblenzas*, (Tate, 1965, pp.4-5).

65 Referring to the pre-711 Visigothic kings, Alonso wrote, "*et post illum continuati sunt reges per rectam lineam descendentes usque ad dominum nostrum regem*", Alonso de Cartagena, *Discurso Sobre la Precedencia del Rey Católico* ..., (Penna, 1959, p.100).

66 "*et etiam a Theodorico, qui primus ex Gothis in Hispania regnauit, semper est continuatum regnum in eadem domo et genere regio, sine aliqua interpolatione, quod ita singularissimum est, ut in tota Europa forte non ualeret simile reperirii.*" Alonso de Cartagena, *Discurso Sobre la Precedencia del Rey Católico* ..., (Penna, 1959, p.102).

Ferrante's royal line back to the putative beginning of Athanaric's reign in 343 CE[67]. The claim of Gothic ancestry, then, was increasingly utilized by chroniclers to emphasize the antiquity and continuity of the Castilian line. During the course of the fifteenth century, claims of continuity were gradually altered until the beginning of Gothic rule in Spain had been pushed back to the mid-fourth century. This was part of a process, based on the premise of dynastic continuity, that consciously sought to increase the prestige of the ruling House of Castile vis à vis other European monarchies.

The fifteenth century witnessed Castile's first concerted attempts at overseas expansion since the era of Alfonso X in the mid-thirteenth century. Chroniclers continued to appeal to the tradition of a Visigothic kingdom that had spanned the Straits of Gibraltar as a means to encourage Castilian expansion into North Africa, to carry the reconquest into lands that were viewed as belonging naturally to Christendom. Alonso de Cartagena claimed for the Castilian king the six ancient provinces of Roman Hispania, including Africa[68]. Alonso's student, Rodrigo Sánchez de Arévalo, wrote to Henry IV of Castile (1454-1474), urging the monarch to carry the crusade against Islam across the Straits of Gibraltar. Sánchez de Arévalo sounded remarkably like the fourteenth-century royal advisor Álvaro Pelayo when he held up the precedent of pre-Islamic Gothic rule in Africa, arguing that the overseas provinces were Henry's because his ancestors (including the Gothic king Theodoric) had held them peacefully under the monarchy of Spain[69]. Alonso de Cartagena offered a juridical reasoning for the Castilian kings' right to the putative patrimony, asserting that the legal right to the realm remained, even if the material possession had been lost[70].

Beyond the Maghreb, chroniclers appealed to the Gothic thesis in Castile's conflict with Portugal over claims to the recently discovered Canary Islands. Although the

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[67] In the prologue, the chronicler noted the longevity and purity of the Castilian line: "*çerca de mill años syn reçebir en tanto tyenpo esta real suçesion ninguna mmudança ni entrevenir en ella rey de pelegrina ni estraña generaçion lo que en muy pocos de los reyes xristianos se halla*", Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Ms. esp. 110, f. 1r. In the conclusion, the chronicler adds another half-century to the antiquity of the dynatic line: "*... que ha MCL años que començaron a reynar los godos en españa*", f. 31r.

[68] " *... en España hay seis provincias, conviene a saber: la de Tarragona, la de Cartajena, Lusitania, Gallisia, Bética [e] la pasada del mar, en el regno de África.*" Alonso de Cartagena, *Discurso sobre la Precedencia del rey Católico ...*, (Penna, 1959, p.218).

[69] "*Nin en esto cansará vuestra virtud fasta que en las fieras partes de África vuestro nombre e poder se dilate e vuestra moneda se cunda; donde recobre aquellas latas provincias, a vuestra real persona devidas, segunt que el rey famoso Theodorico e los vuestros progenitors so la gran monarchía de España poseyeron pacíficas.*" Rodrigo Sánchez de Arévalo, *Vergel de los Príncipes*, (Penna, 1959, p.312).

[70] Alonso employed this line of reasoning in his argument in favor of Castile's claim to the recently discovered Canary Islands: "*Concluditur ergo quod ius totius monarchiae Hispaniae remansit in Pelagio rege, tamquam in successore uniuersali qui idem princeps et eadem persona reputari debuit cum praedecessoribus suis, ut in Auctentico, de iureiurando a morientibus praestito, I, collatione V; et sic ad eum pertinebant Tingitania, id est Benamarinum, et insulae eius quae sunt Canariae, sicut Toletum uel Corduba quae tunc de facto ei non oboedierunt, quia quantum as successionem uniuersalem attinet, nihil refert, an aprehendat bona corporalia pertinentia ad successionem, quia ita habet successor totum ius integre, licet de bonis corporalibus modicum uel nihil habeat, sicut si haberet omnia ...*", Alonso de Cartagena, *Allegationes super conquesta Insularum Canariae contra portugalenses*, (González Rolán *et al.*, 1994, pp.130-132).

indigenous inhabitants of these isles off the west coast of North Africa had apparently been isolated for thousands of years and practiced what was essentially a Stone Age culture (Abulafia, 2002), Castile argued its right to the islands based on their having been part of the ancient Gothic province of Tingitana. The fact that the inhabitants of the Canaries clearly had no knowledge of either Islamic or Christian culture required legal manoeuvring. Alonso de Cartagena formulated the legal argument that was presented on behalf of Castile at the Council of Basel, the premise of which was that the Goths had ruled Tingitana, which encompassed North Africa. Islands, Alonso pleaded, were known to belong to the lands to which they were most proximate; just as the island of Sicily was considered to be a part of Italy, so the Canary Islands should be considered part of Tingitana[71]. Since the ancestors of the Castilian King John II (1406-1454) had held Tingitana before the "infidels" occupied it, clearly the Canaries belonged by right to Castile[72].

Court historians may have argued that the Castilian monarchs' ancestral inheritance gave them the right to Hispania, but these kings were forced to wage intermittent warfare for centuries in order to impose their dominion over their "patrimony." Hearkening back to Pelayo's words in the *Chronicle of Alfonso III*, chroniclers portrayed this struggle, not only as a restoration of Visigothic Hispania, but as warfare undertaken in the service of all Christendom. The Castilian reconquest, then, became both a territorial recovery and a holy war. Medieval Castilian historiography ultimately sought to portray this protracted and sporadic conflict as equal in nobility and spiritual worth to the crusades to the Levant. The corollary of this depiction was that the kings of Castile were the "Catholic" monarchs, a claim most often asserted via the determination that they and their ancestors had been engaged for centuries in waging a divine war towards the expansion of Christendom. Ferdinand and Isabella were eventually granted the formal title "*Reyes Católicos*" by Pope Alexander VI in 1496, but long before that date Castilian chroniclers began to employ this terminology as a moniker for their kings. Before 1418, Pablo de Santa Maria described King Henry III of Castile (1390-1406) as "*tan catolico*" [73]. He projected the appellation backward in time by writing that Pelayo's successor, Alfonso I of Asturias (733-753) was the first of the dynasty to carry the title "*católico*" [74]. Pablo de Santa Maria's son, Alonso de Cartagena, argued at the Council of Basel in the 1430s that, unlike the English kings, who fought other Christian monarchs, Castilian kings waged *divine* war. Such an assertion implied that Castilian kings did more for the protection and expansion of Christendom than did their English counterparts[75]. The royal

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[71] "*Cum ergo istae insulae alludant Tingitaniae et sunt prope eam, recte possunt dici insulae et pars Tingitaniae, sicut Sicilia pars Italiae est et in Italie computatur, quia modico freto ab ea disiungitur ...*", Alonso de Cartagena, *Allegationes …*, (González Rolán *et al.*, 1994, p.94).

[72] "*cum autem ... omnes terre ... pertineant ad prefactum serenissimum regem Castelle et Legionis tamquam ad successorem illius principatus sub quo erant prius quam per infideles violenter occuparentur ...*", from a *relación* written by Alonso de Cartagena and cited in the introduction to *Allegationes super conquesta Insularum Canariae*, (González Rolán *et al.*, 1994, p.18).

[73] Pablo de Santa Maria, *Siete Edades del Mundo*, (Sconza, 1991, p.127).

[74] "*Por ser de Nuestro Señor alunbrado/ en todas sus obras aqueste santo onbre/ fue dicho catolico por sobrenonbre/ lo que ningunt rrey nunca fue llamado ...*" Pablo de Santa Maria, *Siete Edades del Mundo*, (Sconza, 1991, p.122).

[75] "*Pues manifiesta cosa es que mi señor el Rey de Castilla continuamente fase guerra contra los paganos e infieles, e por consiguiente es ocupado de fecho en guerra divinal por mandado del soberano enperador que es Dios. El señor Rey de Inglaterra, aunque fase guerra, pero non es aquella guerra divinal; ca comoquier que non digamos cosa alguna al presente de la justicia de aquella guerra - ca Dios sabe si es justa o injusta - pero sin dubda podemos desir que non se puede desir guerra divinal, ca nin es contra*

chronicler Diego Enriquez del Castillo, in fact, recorded that Pope Calixtus considered Henry IV of Castile (1454-1474) to be "*el mejor de todos los reyes que entonces reynaban en la christiandad*" (the best king in all of Christendom)[76]. The obvious target of these assertions was the French king. Drawing on the crusading heritage of French monarchs such as Louis IX, medieval historiography in that realm depicted France as supporting the church and the Catholic faith. This was closely linked to the notion that God had chosen France above all other kingdoms (Strayer, 1969). Castilian chroniclers' *rey católico* was thus a response to France's *roi trés chrétien*[77].

Justification for ascribing such piety to the Castilian monarchy was found in the success with which the war against Islam had met. Asturian, Leonese, and Castilian chroniclers had portrayed the Islamic defeat of Visigothic Hispania as divine punishment for the sins, depending on the chronicle, of kings, bishops, or the Gothic people. Implicit in this narrative was the idea that the wars of reconquest served as a redemptory process for the royal dynasty and for the realm. Thus, Castilian victories at Muslim expense were proof of God's favour, and demonstrated that the centuries of "divine" war had atoned for ancestral sin.

According to the vision of Castilian history established in medieval chronicles, the inexorable Christian advance southward through the Iberian peninsula had been pre-ordained. Every step towards the fulfilment of the prophecy first recorded in the *Chronicle of Alfonso III* and the *Prophetic Chronicle* was thus fitted into a providential format. When Ferdinand, heir apparent to the throne of Aragon, married Isabella, heir apparent to Castile, in 1469, their union represented the most decisive move in the direction of pan-Iberian political unity since the reign of Ferdinand III, when the crowns of León and Castile were united and Christians conquered a large portion of Andalucía. Court chroniclers, no doubt with royal encouragement, portrayed Ferdinand and Isabella's union as a sign that the restoration of Hispania was at hand.

In 1475, within a year of Ferdinand and Isabella's accession to the throne of Castile, and four years before Ferdinand inherited Aragon, the royal councillor and historian Diego de Valera penned *Doctrinal de Príncipes* (a manual on the qualities of a good king), which he dedicated to Ferdinand. In this text, Diego referred to a centuries-old prophecy that had foretold that a king would unite Aragon and Castile and all of the Spains, and that he would restore the imperial seat of the Goths[78]. The historian

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infieles nin por ensalçamiento de la Fee cathólica, nin por estensión de los términos de la Cristiandad, mas fásese por otras causas." Alonso de Cartagena, *Discurso de D. Alonso de Cartagena … sobre la precedencia del Rey Católico sobre el de Inglaterra* …, pp. 205-33, *Prosistas castellanos del siglo XV*, vol. 1, (Penna, 1959,p.221).

[76] Diego Enriquez del Castillo, *Crónica del Rey Don Enrique el Cuarto*, (Rosell, 1878, pp.108-109).

[77] One tangible benefit of such status was measured in the place occupied by a crown's representative at church councils. Diego de Valera, in a letter he wrote to Alfonso de Velasco in 1475, pined for the position held at church councils by the Gothic kings and speculated that if the ancient realm were restored, Castilians might replace the French at the head of councils: "*Así paresce, que, aunque después de la universal destruición de España los reyes de Francia han sido preferidos a los nuestros de Castilla, que podrían ser estos reinos engrandecidos e tornados en el estado que solían; e así acaesciendo, podrían ser nuestros reyes ante puestos a los reyes de Francia, como lo fueron en tienpo de los gloriosos reyes d'España Ervigio e Banba que señorearon todas las Españas e Lenguadoque, y el Delfinado, que entonces la Francia gótica se llamava, e allende la mar, Cebta e Tánjer e muy gran parte de Africa.*" Diego de Valera, *Epístolas*, (Penna, 1959, p.11).

[78] "*E si a todo príncipe el saber conviene, a vos más que a otro, muy humano Señor, es nescessario, de quien es profetizado de muchos siglos acá, que no solamente seréis señor destos reinados de Castilla e*

made it clear that by "*all of the Spains*," this meant realms not then subject to Castile or Aragon - in other words, Portugal, Navarre, Muslim Granada, and what the Gothic King Wamba (672-680) had ruled, including part of Africa[79]. Several years later, as Ferdinand's father, the ailing John II of Aragon (1458-1479), neared eighty years of age, Diego de Valera again depicted Ferdinand as the embodiment of centuries-old prophecy. In a letter that Diego wrote to the Aragonese heir, the royal councillor portrayed Ferdinand's accession to the throne of Castile, which had only come about through a series of unlikely deaths, as the work of God. Part of God's plan, Diego asserted, was that Ferdinand should gain dominion over all "*the Spains*."[80]

The events of the first years of Ferdinand and Isabella's reign were such that royal chroniclers were able to portray one development after another as a sign of the monarchs' imminent restoration of Visigothic Hispania and triumph over Iberian Islam. In 1479, Ferdinand inherited the Crown of Aragon, to go with the Castilian realms that he ruled jointly with his wife. With the vast majority of the peninsula now under their rule, in 1480 Ferdinand and Isabella launched a war against the Nasrid Kingdom of Granada, the last area of Islamic rule in the Iberian peninsula. After five years of warfare, during which Islamic dominion was drastically reduced, it appeared that Castile was on the verge of establishing Christian rule throughout Iberia. Again, Diego de Valera, in a letter to King Ferdinand, made reference to the prophecy concerning the conquest of "*the Spains*." In this letter, he suggested that the prophecy also foretold that Ferdinand would cross the sea, to the glory of Christendom, and ultimately destroy the Islamic sect[81].

When Granada capitulated on 2 January 1492, the ancient prophecies first recorded in the Asturian cycle had been fulfilled. As with Christian military victories before, Granada's capture was interpreted as affirming God's favour. The first recorded Christian victory over Muslim forces, under Pelayo at the Battle of Covadonga, took on even greater significance, because its ultimate realization appeared to have

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Aragón, que por todo derechos vos pertenescen, mas avréis la monarchía de todas las Españas e reformaréis la silla inperial de la ínclita sangre de los Godos donde venís, que de tantos tienpos acá está esparsida e derramada." Diego de Valera, *Doctrinal de Príncipes*, (Penna, 1959, p.173).

79 Diego de Valera wrote of the extent of Wamba's domain: "*que fue tan gran príncipe, que señoreó las Españas e Lenguadoque y el Delfinado, que entonces se llamava la Francia gótica, e, de la otra parte de la mar, a Cebta e Tanjer, e muy gran parte de África.*" *Doctrinal de Príncipes*, (Penna, 1959, p.175).

80 "*para lo qual traer en efecto quiso qu'el serenísimo rey Don Alfonso de Aragón, tío vuestro, fallesciese sin dexar legítimo sucesor, porque sucediese en sus reynos el ilustrísimo rey Don Juan, padre vuestro; dispuso qu'el muy esclarescido príncipe Don Carlos, mayor hermano vuestro, muriese no quedando dél legítimo sucesor, porque vos, Señor, en su lugar sucediésedes; determinó que del preclarísimo rey Don Juan de Castilla, suegro e tío vuestro, quedasen dos varones legítimos sucesores e amos fallesciesen sin dellos quedar estirpe alguna, porque la sucesión destos reinos quedase a la muy alta e muy esclarescida princesa reina e señora Doña Isabel, su legítima sucesora, con quien fue su determinada voluntad fuésdes por casamiento ayuntado, porque en vos, Señor, se cunpliese lo que de muchos siglos acá está profetiçado, es a saber, que la señoría de las Españas debaxo de vuestro cetro real sería puesta.*" Diego de Valera to Ferdinand of Aragon, 4 August 1478, *Epístolas*, (Penna, 1959, p.14).

81 "*Claramente se muestra nuestro Señor querer poner en obra lo que de muchos siglos acá está profetiçado de vuestra muy ecelente y esclarescida persona, es a saber, que no solamente estas Españas pornés debaxo de vuestro cetro real, mas las partes ultra marinas sojuzgarés en gloria y ensalçamiento de nuestro Redentor e acrecentamiento de la cristiana religion, y en grande onor y ecelencia de vuestra Corona real;*" Diego de Valera to Ferdinand of Aragon, 2 June 1485, *Epístolas*, (Penna, 1959, p.31).

manifested itself in the fall of Granada, the last Muslim redoubt of Iberia. Chroniclers employed an exegetical reading of Covadonga, a battle that modern scholars agree was likely an insignificant skirmish, that pointed inevitably to the defeat of Granada over seven centuries later[82].

Restoration or Religious War?

The theme of Gothic dynastic continuity in medieval Castilian historiography was the prism through which chroniclers depicted the centuries-long struggle between Castilians and Muslims. Stressing simultaneously the salvation of Christianity *and* the political restoration of Visigothic Hispania, the Gothic thesis possessed a non-religious element that distinguished Castilian historiography from that produced in the neighbouring Iberian kingdoms of Portugal and Aragon-Catalonia. In non-Castilian lands, medieval historiography generally depicted the Christian reconquest in purely religious terms. For example, James I of Aragon (1213-1276), in his *Book of Deeds*, described his conquest of the Muslim kingdoms of Majorca (1229) and Valencia (1238), not as a restoration of an ancient order, but as a war between competing ideologies in which the Christians had God on their side (Smith & Buffery, 2003). In this respect, Arago-Catalan historiography bore a closer resemblance to European (*eg*, French) justification for crusade.

The question of why the historiographical approach examined here developed in Castile but not in other parts of the Iberian peninsula lies beyond the scope of this paper. What is clear, though, is that a genealogical or territorial justification was not necessary to undertake war against non-Christians. If the claim of dynastic continuity with the Gothic kingdom was not needed to justify Castilian militancy towards Muslims, this could suggest that the inherent territorial claims of the Gothic thesis were intended to be used by Castilian monarchs against their Portuguese and Aragonese neighbours. Alonso de Cartagena argued that the kings of Castile possessed the undiminished right to the entirety of Visigothic Hispania, and he asserted that the King of Castile was the true, legitimate King of Spain (Hispania). The kings of Aragon, Portugal, and Navarre were exactly what their titles implied, and not kings of Spain.[83] Such territorial claims could clearly be construed as claims of suzerainty over Portugal and the Crown of Aragon, yet only on rare occasions did Castilian monarchs actually act to assert a claim to the peninsula in its entirety, thereby claiming a primacy over the kings of Portugal, Navarre, and Aragon.[84] Perhaps, then, the territorial claims inherent in the Gothic thesis were about

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[82] The chronicler of the abbreviated Castilian history presented to Ferrante of Naples composed a panegyric to Ferdinand and Isabella, based on their capture of Granada (Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Ms. esp. 110, f. 29r). On medieval chroniclers' interpretation of history through exegesis, see *Political Utility in Medieval Historiography* in Spiegel (1997, pp.91-93). See also Nesbit (1969), where the author illustrates a similar phenomenon in a modern context, in this case how a random event (the Nat Turner Rebellion) could take on a prophetic significance over a century later as part of the "*slow, gradual, and continuous growth of the Negro nation within the United States*."

[83] "*nam ipsi bene sciunt omnia et alios reges qui sunt in Hispania nominant nominibus propriis, uocantes regem Aragonum, Portugaliae uel Nauarrae, solum autem regem Castellae uocant regem Hispaniae; non ergo prouenit hoc ex ignorantia rei, sed quia est inhibitum in cordibus hominum quod principatus Hispaniae continuatur in reges Castellae, ideo uolunt nominare eos ab antiquo nomine principatus in eos continuati.*" Alonso de Cartagena, *Allegationes* …, (González Rolán *et al.*, 1994, p.120).

[84] In 1135 Alfonso VII of León-Castile (1126-1157) proclaimed himself Emperor of "*the Spains*," meaning here the entirety of the Iberian peninsula and southern France as far as the Rhône.

sovereignty rather than dominion. One aspect of the utility of the Gothic thesis might have been that it could be directed towards the papacy or the Holy Roman Empire. In the eleventh century, Pope Gregory VII claimed suzerainty over newly-conquered lands in Spain and Emperor Henry IV demanded tribute payment from the Castilian king. The conflict that arose between King Ferdinand I of Castile (1035-1065) and the papacy was vividly recorded in the anonymous fifteenth-century chronicle presented to Ferrante of Naples, in which Ferdinand asserted that the Kings of Castile had conquered their lands with no outside help from anyone but God.[85] If Castilian kings could conquer lands and portray them as their patrimony, this would preclude external actors' ability to exercise control there in matters such as the appointment of bishops or demands of fealty. Thus, the claim of direct descent from the Gothic kings of Spain may have operated, not as justification for the reconquest, but as a declaration of sovereignty within newly conquered lands.

Conclusion

The claim of dynastic continuity with the Visigothic kingdom clearly served many different purposes at different times. Various origins myths allowed medieval monarchs to project certain images of their authority, some more flattering than others. With the passage of centuries, the claim became synonymous with dynastic antiquity, although this was clearly not a benefit derived by the ninth-century Asturian claimants of Gothic ancestry. The appeal had an intrinsic territorial component as well, an aspect of the Gothic thesis that was increasingly emphasized as Castilian monarchs exercised control over ever larger portions of the Iberian peninsula, as well as lands beyond Iberia proper. The Gothic thesis may even have served as a declaration of Castilian sovereignty within the realm's newly-conquered lands. The emphasis on the recovery of dynastic inheritance endowed Castilian military and political gains with legitimation as well as sanctification. It is the melding of these two themes that distinguishes medieval Castilian historiography from that of its Iberian neighbours, and which I believe accounts for the choice of the Goths, rather than other more likely candidates, as mythical progenitors. The Gothic thesis allowed chroniclers in the employ of the courts of Asturias-León-Castile to turn the Muslim rout of the Visigoths into a sign of God's engagement, to depict themselves, like the Israelites, as a chosen people. Therefore, although they had been punished, they had not been abandoned. Implicit in this narrative of divine punishment for sin was the correlative process of biblical redemption and recovery. When we chart the preponderance of this historiographical theme, we see that the Gothic thesis was employed, not in times of political crisis, as when a ruler's legitimacy was contested, but in times of political ascendancy and territorial aggrandizement - when Alfonso III of Asturias was conquering the lands that would become León; when Ferdinand III of León-Castile was conquering Andalucía; and when Ferdinand and Isabella were uniting Castile and Aragon and conquering Granada. In the wake of military gains, Christian monarchs used the claim of direct descent from the Gothic kings to show that their triumphs were evidence of God's favour, that, like the Israelites, they had suffered God's punishment but had not been abandoned. According to this schema, a king's victory in battle represented not only his bravery, but also divine favour. Royal chroniclers in medieval Asturias-León-Castile were clearly not unusual in framing

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[85] "*et el rey açebto su consejo e respondio al papa y al enperador que se devian dexar de tal demanda por que sus anteçesores y el avian ganado los reynos de españa de poder de los moros syn su ayuda ni socorro nin de ninguna otra presona salvo de dios.*" Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Ms. esp. 110, f. 15r.

history in providential terms. To be sure, there were many peoples who were depicted as New Israelites, their lands as New Jerusalems. This aspect of the use of the Gothic thesis in the royal genealogies of medieval Castile, however, has heretofore not been examined. It certainly explains the renewed dominance of this historiographic approach during Castile's late-fifteenth-century campaign against the Kingdom of Granada. Perhaps, too, the late medieval deployments of the Gothic thesis were calculated to convey a certain message to the rest of Christian Europe at a time when no power appeared capable of checking the gains of the ascendant Ottoman Empire in the eastern Mediterranean.

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