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**A Comparative Approach to Ethnic Identity and
Urban Settlement: Visigothic Spain, Lombard
Italy and Merovingian *Francia*, c. 565-774 AD**

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Thesis presented for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
University of Edinburgh
2012

Declaration

A Comparative Approach to Ethnic Identity and Urban Settlement: Visigothic Spain, Lombard Italy and Merovingian *Francia*, c. 565-774 AD

I declare that this thesis is my own composition and that the pages contained within constitute my own work. It has not been submitted for any other degree or qualification.

All external material has been appropriately cited using quotations marks and footnotes with reference to the original source.

Craig Ferguson
May 15, 2012

Abstract

The traditional social and political divisions between the Late Roman and 'Barbarian' inhabitants of the post-Roman successor states has in the last few decades been challenged from several new angles. In this thesis, a comparative approach to the question of post-migration period urban settlement is constructed, taking into account recent scholarly research and developments. Following a short introduction broad issues such as terminology, ethnicity, historiography, cultural exchanges, and archaeological evidence are examined in the first two chapters of this work. After this the case studies of Visigothic Spain, Lombard Italy, and Merovingian *Francia* are presented in three respective chapters. Having looked at some of the specific details for these regions and how they illustrate some of the underlying concepts, trends, or variations in urban administration, the sixth chapter of this thesis presents the comparative approach itself.

The main goal of the approach is to alter the ways in which historians perceive the processes of ethnic interactions and identity formation taking place from the mid-sixth to eighth centuries AD, and consists of six main points based upon both the earlier broader chapters, but also incorporates the specific details from the case studies as well. Ultimately it states that while each of the newly established aristocracies inherited a largely fragmentary and localized region following the collapse of the Western Roman Empire in the fifth century, the administrative structures and means of interaction with the Roman populace varied widely in each of the three case studies. The greatest variations were detected in how each group administered non-capital cities within their respective region, particularly the degrees to which they altered the Late Roman urban framework. This work advocates the importance of focusing on 'the new elite and interactions with different types of cities', rather than the traditional approach of studying their impact upon cities as a general and broad term.

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Acknowledgements

The undertaking of this doctoral thesis and my ability to finally complete the project after four years are both the result of strong support from a wide range of individuals in both the academic and personal spheres. During my undergraduate studies at McGill University from 1999 to 2003 I was fortunate to have taken numerous courses under the guidance of Professor Elizabeth Digeser. Her lectures greatly cultivated my desire to study late antiquity and the early medieval era at a higher level, particularly the course entitled ‘Rome and the Barbarian Kingdoms’, and for that I am very grateful. Granted the overall approach of this project, looking back on it now the name chosen for that course largely goes against my stance regarding early medieval identities and settlement, but as they say life is full of ironies, and I cannot help but smile when contemplating this contradiction.

In the area of academic support this project would never have even left the runway (quite literally in some cases) if it wasn’t for the constant supervision and feedback I have received from my supervisor Dr. Tom Brown here at the University of Edinburgh. He has been my guide throughout both the MSc and PhD programmes over the course of many years, and has always been steadfast and reliable in his support through all of my ups and downs, both academic and personal alike. Other members of staff at Edinburgh who have helped me along the way include Dr. Judith Green and Dr. James Fraser, who in the earlier phase of my research introduced me to the broader concepts of ethnicity, cultural exchanges, and issues of gradual settlement. Prior to this I

had been largely concerned with the more immediate issues such as fortifications, coinage, or artefacts, but I had not considered the wider questions and how urban life can be studied in relation to them. I also have to thank Dr. Anthony Barrett from the University of British Columbia for training me in the basic jobs required on archaeological sites at the Lunt Fort in Baggington during August of 2002 while I was an undergraduate at McGill. Other notable people I would like to thank include the staff at the British Library, UCL and King's College libraries, and the Warburg Institute for their continued help over the years with my research down in London.

On a personal note, first and foremost I must thank my parents, Dr. Alan Ferguson and Mrs. Elizabeth Ferguson, for their constant emotional, financial, and moral support. They have by far required the greatest deal of patience while I have been undergoing the stress that any former or current doctoral student will be familiar with. Without them this study would most certainly not have come to fruition, and for that I will always be thankful. I also have to thank my brother Colin Ferguson for his friendship and support over the years, as he has often helped me through a difficult spell. Finally, I have to say thank you to all my friends from around the world who I have met on my travels, particularly Jeremy Orenbuch (earning first mention since he is a fellow history enthusiast and fellow McGill student), and Ryan Alldridge, who I grew up with in West Vancouver and have been a close friend with for over two decades.

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Introduction

The study of early medieval urban settlement is a fluid and dynamic one, as preceding patterns or systems of urbanism fused together with contemporary developments of the time. Whether one studies the Merovingian kingdoms and their cities or the less well documented city life of Visigothic Spain there exists a degree of interaction between the former Late Roman urban structures. The following dissertation will summarize some of the problems a historian must resolve when tackling the issue of early medieval settlement and identity, and it will also present various methods that can be employed in order to examine the topic at hand. Three regions in particular will be used as case studies, those of Visigothic Spain, Lombard Italy and Merovingian *Francia*, using a chronological timeline from approximately 507 through to the mid-eighth century AD.¹ An examination of their respective forms of urbanism and of the particular developments when researching each region will be presented. Prior to this study, a discussion on the methodology for this type of research will be put forth, and will demonstrate the significance of this particular period regarding its impact upon urban structures, as well as upon the exchanges of cultural values and local identities taking place.

When the casual historian or enthusiast is asked what kind of images are conjured up in his or her mind on the subjects of ancient or medieval urban life, two traditional

¹ These regions have been selected for three main reasons: First, the migration period of the fourth to fifth centuries has already been thoroughly examined, and these represent the next phase of settlement. Second, these settled kingdoms represent several strategies of cultural interaction and emerged under differing circumstances. Finally, there exists a reasonable amount of literary and archaeological evidence for the three regions, albeit such material can sometimes prove problematic.

views are likely to be constructed. First, the ancient Roman *civitas* full of public monuments and classical colonnade-style architecture, bustling with merchants from varying locations throughout the Roman Empire. Second, the less economically prosperous medieval, fortified city; the medieval city is one of squalor, disease, declining quality of architecture, and existence under a dominant Christian presence, at least in the minds of most contemporary individuals living in the twenty-first century. This thesis will dispute these traditional views by clearly demonstrating not only the relative economic prosperity of various early medieval centres, but also by illustrating the gradual forms of settlement which took place across Western Europe during the early medieval period, and the different forms of local administration or communal identities associated with these areas.

A comparative study of early medieval urban administrative structures from the early sixth to mid-eighth centuries, looking at the Visigothic, Lombard and Merovingian realms in particular will be presented. After having examined the relevant primary accounts and secondary sources, the questions of early medieval urban life and cultural exchange will be examined using case studies from each region. The ultimate goal of the project is to identify the impact of the new ruling classes upon forms of settlement and local administration, and upon the ethnic or cultural identities which were emerging during the early sixth to early eighth centuries. Archaeological information will also be used wherever possible to correlate the written documents; these are typically ecclesiastical accounts or historical sources that give little information on cultural identities or local administration, and the recent archaeological work on cemeteries or graves will help shed some light on the question. Here some of the general questions

regarding the study of the non-Roman elite will be put forward, alongside methods of examining their relationship with the urban administration within their respective kingdoms that will be employed.

An application of various methodologies

The secular elite serve as a the main focus for this kind of study for various reasons: First, such members of society had primary responsibility when it came to military and administrative affairs, whether in recruiting their own followers into the service of the king, or also being charged with the protection and upkeep of a city and regulating its day to day activities. Indeed, the localized protection of cities as early as the third century is well attested for by Andrew Gillett when he writes that “cities could organize their own defence; more characteristically, cities sought through embassies to avoid becoming theatres of war between competing forces, whether imperial or barbarian.”² The life and forms of settlement which the elite followed reflect the view of urban life within the new regime, and can incorporate the continuity/catastrophe debate within this study. Second, with the question of *sedes regiae* differing so drastically from region to region, the settlement strategies of the aristocracy illustrate the specific regional influences upon urban life in a way which a study of the royal courts themselves would be unable to provide. For example, why does the aristocracy generally abandon urban settlement in northern Gaul, in favour of countryside villas, whereas in Lombard Italy they largely maintain the urban settlements? The question of aristocratic reluctance or enthusiasm to live within the city walls is even more obscure and difficult to resolve in Visigothic

² A. Gillett, *Envoys and Political Communication in the Late Antique West, 411-533* (Cambridge, 2003) p. 274.

Spain. A case in point is an argument advanced by K.E. Carr, when she states the lack of a regular standing army in Visigothic Spain led some administrators to demolish outlying roads and fortifications, in an attempt to cut off any royal attempts at besieging the respective city.³ An image of ‘scorched earth’ policy including roads and fortifications as well as fields appears to be the general concept advocated. What do such policies say about the local aristocratic views on city life in Visigothic Spain? Deliberate destruction of trade routes, fortifications and urban infrastructure demonstrates a breaking away from late antique concepts of urban government. However, the city remained the local centre of economic activity, albeit on a reduced scale, and could be considered a continuation from the Late Roman era, at least in terms of economic function. Finally, the styles and administrative modes of the local aristocracies greatly demonstrate the differences between the kingdoms themselves, thereby reflecting the differences in non-Roman influences between the three regions. Simply put, the processes of aristocratic settlement in Lombard Italy differ from those found in Merovingian Gaul, and can be studied in order to reflect different impacts upon the cities by the elite.

The next crucial question is that of the cities themselves, and which urban centres have been used in this study. The cities selected for each region demonstrate the impact of the new governing classes upon the urban landscape; one of the crucial questions for the dissertation will be the differences between Frankish and Lombard cities, dealing with the perhaps ironic point that a partly Romanized people displayed a less urbanized tendency than their Lombard counterparts. When one adds the situation in Visigothic Spain to the equation, in which archaeology is only recently starting to build up

³ K.E. Carr, *Vandals to Visigoths: Rural Settlement Patterns in Early Medieval Spain* (Ann Arbor, 2002) p. 181.

momentum,⁴ and which also lacks secular literary sources on urban life, the impact of the newly established elite upon early medieval urban structures and local forms of interaction becomes abstract and difficult to trace. By focusing on the *comes* and local aristocrats, the levels of their influence upon the system can be examined, and in the cases of the Merovingians and Visigoths, this will also serve as a demonstration of certain royal powers, through royal representatives across the realm. In the case of the Lombards the actions of the *duces* are often more isolated from the royal presence than in Gaul or Spain; perhaps it is due to this very reason that the Lombards maintain such a localized and urban society in order to establish local power bases centred around the previous Roman *civitates* or *castra*.

Essentially the secular elite for each region, at least those who demonstrate any connection with urban life, have been examined in the context of their influences upon urban administration, and as indicators of both local and central identity formation. A central question to the project is that of the ‘urban barbarian’, that is to say the Lombard city dwellers who showed a high degree of urban life when generally contrasted with Visigothic Spain or the supposedly more Romanized Merovingians. Was this due simply to a pre-existing Roman system which was maintained by the Lombards due to the substantial strategic and socio-political benefits it granted, or was this due to increasing reliance upon local recruitment and security following the fifth century? The matter of fifth-century settlements will be incorporated into this discussion when necessary, as the

⁴ There has been quite a strong impetus towards Visigothic archaeology in recent years, particularly in the Catalonian region surrounding Barcelona. Authors such as Javier Arce, Gisela Ripoll and Roger Collins have examined some of the new urban and rural excavations in detail, and the chapter concerning Visigothic archaeology will discuss the various sources and materials currently available.

Ostrogothic presence in northern Italy prior to the Lombard invasion provides a clear example of the inherent difficulties one faces when there is a period of settlement between two lengthier preceding and subsequent systems. However, focus will be geared towards the *regnum Langobardorum* in keeping with the overall chronological period of this thesis. After having examined some of the literary and archaeological issues, as well as the state of modern research and current debate, the dissertation will then go on to compare and contrast network of cities from each region, in an attempt not only to demonstrate the differences between the three, but also to try and further explain a range of issues, such as why the Merovingians retreated to their rural villas whereas the Lombards and Visigoths seem to continue some degree of political residence within the city walls.

Central considerations of the thesis

Two specific criteria for examining the impact on urban life in early medieval Western Europe by the newly landed elite have been used in this thesis: First, the settlement should have some pre-existing Roman roots in order to contrast such structures with the later non-Roman ones, although the unique case of Reccopolis is an exception to this general rule as we will see. Second, the town under scrutiny should be able to demonstrate a relatively high degree of fortification or military importance, possibly as an indication of relative self sufficiency and localized identity, and also sources which refer to those individuals responsible for its upkeep. Prior to examining the individual case studies themselves the broader issues pertaining to this study, and the general methodological problems one faces when undertaking such a project, must be examined

in the first two chapters respectively. The first chapter will aim to review the current debates and state of research in early medieval spheres of urban studies, using parallels from other regions or periods to put the urbanism of early medieval Western Europe into context and perspective.⁵ One issue that must be addressed when trying to determine the level of urban economic success and sophistication of architecture in early medieval Europe is the question of the function of a city itself, and this issue will also be addressed throughout the subsequent chapters.

First, the identity of the ‘city’ must be defined in terms which are relevant to the post-Roman era, and the new forms of urban life and settlement must be viewed in terms of relative economic success. Second, the level of urbanism throughout the three kingdoms must be compared and contrasted while bearing in mind the new concept of urban life which begins to emerge as early as the fourth century. Issues such as fortification, burial finds, reciprocal culture exchange,⁶ nomenclature and the importance of names or titles,⁷ and the creation of self-identity within a given group will be

⁵ A useful starting point for this comparison and contrast of cities across a wide range of time, or from varying regions is that of A. Southall, *The City in Time and Space* (Cambridge, 2000). This volume gives a brief presentation of urban developments in all regions since the earliest records of settlement in Ancient Sumeria, and despite the brevity of each analysis, it nevertheless serves as a useful tool for constructing parallels between different groups.

⁶ For a useful article concerning patterns of cultural exchanges, see P.S. Wells, ‘Culture Contact, Identity and Change in the European Provinces of the Roman Empire,’ in J.G. Cusick ed., *Studies in Culture Contact: Interaction, Culture Change, and Archaeology* (Carbondale, 1998) pp. 316-35.

⁷ An interesting study which aims to connect ethnic ‘Germanic’ names with positions of power, and a good example of how difficult studies of early medieval nomenclature can be, is that of A. Gillett, ‘Was Ethnicity Politicized in the Early Medieval Kingdoms?’ *On Barbarian Identity: critical approaches to ethnicity in the Early Middle Ages* (Turnhout, 2002) pp. 85-123.

discussed in the first chapter.⁸ Problems such as the supposed ethnic composition of Late Roman and post-Roman armies will have to be addressed in connection with such notions of ethnogenesis and the organic creation of identities taking place over generations, or at times over a relatively short period due to clear incentives behind the adoption of such labels.⁹ Although this study will loosely follow the general concept of ‘traditionskern ethnogenesis theory’, which essentially promotes the creation and promotion of a cultural bond from an elite core to the masses, other traditions and schools of thought will contribute to this new approach.¹⁰ The extent to which the oral traditions of the ‘Germanic’ peoples influenced their self-perception or sense of identity during the Early Middle Ages will also require some attention.¹¹ The level of militarization of society, and its level of interaction with the Roman forces will also come into question, as such connections had serious implications for ethnicity; the peoples with closer connections to Rome would have been labeled as a certain ethnic group by Latin sources,¹² and this would have in turn have influenced the way in which the non-Roman peoples viewed themselves.

⁸ The background and history of ‘traditionskern ethnogenesis theory’ will be examined in the first chapter, looking at the developments from Wenskus to Pohl, but some recent works which deserve mention at this early stage of the introduction are those found in *Borders, Barriers and Ethnogenesis: Frontiers in Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages* (Turnhout, 2005), namely those of S. Brather, pp. 139-73, M. Kulikowski, pp. 247-55, and W. Pohl, pp. 255-65.

⁹ For information on *foederati* and their ethnic compositions, or at least an illustration of the difficulties behind such studies, see A.D. Lee, *War in Late Antiquity: A Social History* (Oxford, 2007) p. 84.

¹⁰ For a good summary of the various schools of thought surrounding ethnogenesis, see A. Gillett, ‘Introduction: Ethnicity, History and Methodology,’ *On Barbarian Identity: critical approaches to ethnicity in the Early Middle Ages*, pp. 1-21.

¹¹ W. Goffart, ‘Does the distant past impinge on the Invasion Age Germans?’ in *On Barbarian Identity: critical approaches to ethnicity in the Early Middle Ages*, pp. 21-39.

¹² M. Kulikowski, ‘Nation versus Army: A Necessary Contrast?’ in *On Barbarian Identity: critical approaches to ethnicity in the Early Middle Ages*, pp. 69-84.

Ultimately the problems of urbanism and ethnicity will be examined in the first chapter, and a feasible definition of a city and of an ethnic group will be suggested as a frame within which this study can be put forth. At some point terms such as ethnicity, city and barbarian must be used to convey the proper historical imagery, context or perspective, all that can be done is to clearly set out definitions for these terms before the main chapters are discussed, in order to encompass as many variables and interpretations as possible. The local concept of urbanism in northern Italy vis-à-vis its Visigothic counterpart in Spain was inherently different due to the regional variations which existed prior to the collapse of Late Roman government. The local forms of city infrastructure and 'level of urbanism' should be put into their proper context for each post-Roman kingdom, and then such catastrophist or continuist theories can be applied, after having taken into account the regional level of urbanism within its own context.

To compare the level of urban development in sixth-century Pavia with that of Merovingian Soissons would be pointless and counterproductive, unless it has already been established that Italy and Gaul are either catastrophist or continuist within their own backgrounds and social contexts. The archaeological challenges extend beyond this debate, into the question of material evidence from individual sites. Unfortunately the level of social interest in early medieval sites is not evenly distributed across the regions in question, so the quality and quantity of excavation varies from well researched centres such as Metz, which received extensive attention from Guy Halsall in the preceding decade, to up and coming sites such as El Bovalar in Spain. Often the early medieval context and stratigraphic layer is destroyed in order to gain access to more ancient features; this is particularly the case in the Italian peninsula, as classical archaeology

continues to hold prominence over the early medieval period even in the post-Mussolini era.

Focal points for the study of Visigothic Spain

Fortunately there has been somewhat of a ‘boom’ of interest in Visigothic Spain in the last decade, with many local authors such as Javier Arce, L.A. García Moreno and Gisela Ripoll López producing volumes on the subject; foreign authors such as Roger Collins and K.B. Wolf have also been publishing works on Visigothic Spain. The notion of Roman *civitates* evolving into *sedes regiae*, or royal seats, has been of particular interest to contemporary authors.¹³ The relative lack of primary documentation is often considered slightly unusual, given that the Visigothic kingdom was relatively unified following the re-conquests of Suintila in 624, despite occasional internal feuds that we will examine in the third chapter. The lack of monetary finds in Visigothic Spain further compounds the problem of understanding its urban society, yet recent works on coinage are aiming to reassess the lack of Visigothic fiscal finds in light of recent bronze and copper coins which have been discovered in sites such as El Bovalar or El Carpio de Tajo.¹⁴ It was previously believed that the Visigoths did not use a lower form of cash economy, apart from a gold coin minted by the kings; however recent discoveries have challenged this assumption. If the existence of a cash economy can be established for everyday life in the Visigothic kingdom, then the impact this will have on how we view urban life and the economic role of a *civitas* will be a profound one.

¹³ J.M. Gurt, and G. Ripoll, ed., *Sedes Regiae (ann. 400-800)*, (Barcelona, 2000).

¹⁴ For information on the excavations, particularly El Carpio de Tajo, see R. Collins, *Visigothic Spain 409-711* (Oxford, 2006) pp. 175-182.

The Visigothic pattern of settlement and its influences on city life more closely resembles that of the Lombards, rather than showing similar patterns to the Merovingians. There exists no significant evidence for Visigothic villa settlements, yet we do not know to what extent this is due to the earlier Vandal migrations or to conditions prior to the arrival of the Visigoths. If Visigothic aristocrats tended to reside in the cities while tending to their affairs, then for what particular reason did the Merovingians feel compelled to gradually take up more rural accommodation? Was this simply due to a general level of prosperity or a sense of security, which allowed for officials to feel comfortable administering their power from a farther distance? Or perhaps it was out of more pragmatic reasons, such as a poor quality of life within the cities, which understandably no wealthy Merovingian Count or noble would be expected to endure, and luckily Gregory of Tours and other primary sources provide several instances where cities would certainly not be comfortable for the aristocratic elite to take up residence. The political situation in Spain during the early medieval era seems to be one of upheaval followed by a general level of stability, as the Visigothic court at Toledo came to terms with its Frankish, Suevic and Byzantine neighbours, and indeed to successfully expand against them, taking land from the latter two powers. The lack of archaeological evidence, despite recent achievements in La Vega Baja at Toledo, and literary sources makes the study of urban life in Visigothic Spain somewhat less precise than its counterparts, yet cities such as Barcelona, which served as a Visigothic royal seat, and Merida, which gives us the *Vitae Sanctorum Patrum Emeretensium*, still provide relatively strong cases. The act of establishing the city of Reccopolis by

Leovigild in itself demonstrates if not a high level of wealth and stability afforded by the king, then at least an interest and appreciation for urban society.

Key considerations for Lombard Italy

The next post-Roman kingdom to be examined will be the Lombards in northern Italy, and this will constitute the fourth chapter of this dissertation. Governing their various duchies from 568 to 774 independently from the Frankish territories to the north and the Byzantine exarchate at Ravenna to the south, the Lombard aristocracy was more powerful in relation to the monarchy than its Visigothic or Frankish counterparts, and fortified urban centres such as Pavia, Brescia or Benevento provided the foundations for local support and recruitment within the Lombard territories. The Lombards benefited from a strong Roman level of urbanization in the region, although the extent to which the preceding Gothic Wars had damaged or destroyed the future Lombard settlements is uncertain at best, as Procopius tends to focus on the campaigns and political events rather than the impact on urban life in northern Italy. Despite this lack of literature outside of Procopius on Gothic urban life, modern authors such as G.P. Brogiolo, Neil Christie, Cristina La Rocca and Bryan Ward-Perkins have all produced valuable works on the subject, comprised of both historical analysis and archaeological evidence.

The Lombard kingdom is a more suitable case to study in Italy than the Ostrogothic settlement, due to three reasons: First, it is a settlement which occupies a longer period of time, and is more permanent than that of the Gothic predecessors. Second, the establishment of the Lombard kingdom in northern Italy coincides with roughly the same period as Visigothic settlement in Spain and the Frankish expansion

across Gaul in the early to mid-sixth century. Finally, the cities of northern Italy were better able to maintain a level of ‘Romanitas’ during the Ostrogothic occupation than in Gaul or Spain,¹⁵ and this notion will be examined in further detail in the relevant chapters. The most important of these three points is the first one; although the questions of chronology and ‘Romanitas’ may leave some room for debate or interpretation, the fact that the Lombards occupied the Po Valley for a much lengthier period of time is of primary importance when examining the impact of newly settled peoples upon Roman urban structures and city life. There are several significant centres which will be examined for evidence of Lombard influence in northern Italy. Cities such as Pavia, Cividale, Brescia and various other highly urbanized centres provide strong points of reference for this study. The archaeology and local Italian literature will prove useful to the Lombard inclusion in this research.

The situation in Merovingian *Francia*

Let us now turn to the case of the towns in Merovingian *Francia* that will constitute the fifth chapter and final case study of this thesis, which is both the best documented of the three regions in the ancient sources, as well as perhaps the most researched by recent scholars. Various saints’ lives and chroniclers present ecclesiastical sources on the bishoprics and towns in early medieval *Francia*, and they occasionally offer insight into the level of fortifications or urban structure. For example, Gregory of Tours writes that around the year 582 AD “King Chilperic appointed new counts to the cities which he had

¹⁵ B. Ward-Perkins, ‘Urban Continuity?’ in *Towns in Transition: Urban Evolution in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages*, p. 12.

taken from his brother and ordered all the taxes from these cities to be paid to him.”¹⁶ It is a great loss to the reader that Gregory did not provide the names and backgrounds of the counts appointed by Chilperic, but nevertheless this reveals a significant amount of information concerning the Frankish governing of cities. Frankish counts must have maintained a high level of allegiance to the king, generally speaking, as Chilperic felt it necessary to replace the previous administrators of his brother. The importance of this passage in the work also indicates a high level of urban importance in the minds of contemporary Franks, and this point is enhanced by Gregory’s insistence upon the accuracy of his information. Cities were obviously still of great value to the sixth-century Merovingian kingdoms. That being said, the question at hand is just how much of an impact the Merovingian court and its Frankish subjects had upon these centres.

The challenge lies in drawing connections which demonstrate the specific Frankish influences and impact upon the Roman cities of what had been Gaul. Royal centres such as Soissons, Paris, or Metz provide strong examples of urbanism in Merovingian *Francia*, yet the extent to which a royal capital was an actual city rather than simply a location at which the royal court was held is often difficult to pinpoint in the sixth century. For example, Maastricht evolved into one of three cities in Austrasia with a royal mint by the mid-seventh century, alongside Metz and Rheims, yet its status as a city, whether royal capital or simply an important local centre, remains open to debate.¹⁷ Scholars must deal with a generally decreasing level of aristocratic urban living

¹⁶ Gregory of Tours, *The History of the Franks*, L. Thorpe, trans., (London, 1974) p. 350.

¹⁷ The use of the name TRIECTO on the Maastricht tremisses originally led historians to believe that Utrecht was the site of the mint, but since the 19th century it has been generally accepted that this title refers to Maastricht moneyers such as Thrasemundus. For more information about Maastricht and its mint, see A. Bruins and D. Faltin, ‘A Rare

in Merovingian *Francia*, while ironically the cities in this region are generally better documented than those in either Lombard Italy or Visigothic Spain.

The Merovingian cities best suited to this project are those that show a degree of continuity from the Roman era, while at the same time displaying Frankish or non-Roman influences along with a changing level of urban development which reflects its new found importance under Merovingian rule. Cities such as Paris or Soissons fit the criteria mentioned earlier, and the archaeological work done on cities such as Metz also reinforces the use of the royal *civitates* in this kind of project,¹⁸ as an historian of urban society must work with whatever materials are available for the region. A study of these cases will illustrate some of the key points of cultural interaction and exchange taking place within the *Teilreiche*, in both its constituent kingdoms and as a more broadly encompassing Frankish realm.

The construction of a comparative approach

These are just some of the problems to be faced when dealing with the post-Roman successor states and their ability to maintain and influence urban culture in the early medieval era. The purpose of this introduction has thus far been to demonstrate some of the specific issues concerning each of the three regions in question, ranging from the relations between the local population and the new ruling elite, to the ability of the

Coin of Thrasemundus of Maastricht,' *The Celator*, 18, 5, (Lancaster, PA, May, 2004) pp. 34-36.

¹⁸ For detailed information and archaeological evidence concerning Austrasia and its urban centres see G. Halsall, 'Towns, Societies and Ideas: The Not-so-strange Case of Late Roman and Early Merovingian Metz,' in N. Christie, and S.T. Loseby, ed., *Towns in Transition: Urban Evolution in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages* (Aldershot, 1996) pp. 235-61.

royalty to exercise its authority over its respective territory. Now the methodology employed in order to tackle the main focal points and considerations of this thesis will be discussed. First, a comparative study of the three regions will serve to emphasize both the similarities and differences found in the cities of each post-Roman kingdom. Second, a comparative study of particular cities, representing the region as respective case studies, for each of the three areas will be undertaken. Third, each region will be examined as a particular case study, in order to demonstrate its level of urban culture in relation to the Western European kingdoms in general. It is important to note the catastrophist-continuist debate will be discussed within each region individually; this is in order to avoid the generalizations of European, Roman urbanism which the debate often implies, and then to select the best representation of urban culture and compare this case with the other regional equivalents.

To sum up all of these ideas concerning this dissertation, the project will have two main goals: First, it will aim to understand non-Roman influences upon Late Roman cities through a study of the aristocratic members of society through the literary evidence. Second, the thesis will also try to explain why the Merovingian aristocracy retired to the countryside more often than their Lombard or Visigothic aristocratic equivalents, while bearing in mind the connections each noble class had with the cities and military command within its respective kingdom. Through studying the role of the aristocracy in the military system and urban society in these three regions, perhaps some light can be shed on why the Merovingians had a tendency to move from urban residences to suburban or rural villas. Was it due to a different mindset possessed by the Merovingian nobility which had not developed in the South, or was the difference due to political and

economic necessity, as was suggested earlier in the imagery of the potentially hazardous city, full of famine or disease, which the nobility would avoid whenever possible? The combination of literary evidence for individual leading figures with the archaeological evidence for urban settlement will hopefully give some indication as to the real reasons the Merovingians felt less inclined towards city life, or whether this was even the case at all. The data will demonstrate that certain patterns across Europe were more common than we had previously believed, and the application of ‘traditionskern ethnogenesis theory’ will explain such regional differences as a product of the local elite and their self-presentation of unique identity. It is the hope of the author that a coherent approach to the question of early medieval urban administration and cultural exchange emerges, one which contributes to our greater understanding of such matters, even if the evidence which it is based upon requires an inevitable degree of conjecture and extrapolation due to the general lack of material evidence for the period.

Chapter 1. Modern Research on Cultural Exchange

The localization of political authority and civil administration had its beginnings during the third century AD in the Roman Empire, a period which has been referred to as the third century crisis. This led to the establishment of regional forms of governance at the expense of centralized control from Rome, and later Ravenna, under which new systems of allegiances and identities began to transform the social landscape of Western Europe. Although such political developments played a central role in the processes of cultural exchange, the question of ethnicity and its role within the early medieval context is more complex and dynamic than strictly a result of changes in the political structures. The transition from imperial rule to that of the post-Roman successor states by the fifth and sixth centuries played a significant role in identity formation not only in the high political sense, but also in creating new incentives behind adopting certain signs of identity in order to attain some form of social mobility.

After the three cases have been presented, the final chapter will compare and contrast these three early medieval kingdoms to illustrate that not only were they able to incorporate both forms of Late Roman and also their own traditional customs when either were of social or political necessity, but also that each of the respective peoples demonstrated their own concepts of identities and should not be viewed simply in the dichotomy between ‘Germanic’ or ‘Roman’ cultures.¹ An example of the shifting views of historians and archaeologists regarding this matter can be seen in the use of the term

¹ W. Goffart, *Barbarian Tides: Migration Age and the Later Roman Empire* (Philadelphia, 2006) p. 7.

‘arqueologia hispanovisigoda’ to describe early medieval cultural artifacts from Visigothic Spain, as it is broadly encompassing and covers a wider range of interpretations.² It will be of the utmost importance in this chapter to look at the current discourse and studies surrounding the issues not only of ethnicity and cultural identification in the Early Middle Ages, but also of how these new kingdoms viewed their relationships within the urban sphere of socio-political interaction. The latter question regarding the role of the *civitates* within the successor states is inherently tied to matters of cultural exchanges due to their traditional importance in the Roman world, and, to greater or lesser extents, their continued role in the Visigothic, Lombard and Merovingian realms.

Although the first part of this chapter will deal in some detail with the matter of early medieval ethnicities and cultural exchanges, it must be acknowledged that this subject and the debates surrounding it could indeed very likely constitute a thesis in their own right, and due to limitations of both time and space they will probably not receive the full attention or depth of analysis that they deserve. One of the most broadly encompassing definitions of an ethnic group, and one that will be generally adhered to in this thesis, is presented in the work of Siân Jones, concerning the archaeological approach to ethnicity. “Ethnic groups are culturally ascribed identity groups, which are based on the expression of a real or assumed shared culture and common descent (usually through the objectification of cultural, linguistic, religious, historical and/or physical

² P. de Palol, ‘Estat actual de la investigació arqueològica de temps visigots a Hispania,’ in P. Périn ed., *Gallo-Romains, Wisigoths et Francs en Aquitaine, Septimanie et Espagne: actes des VIIe Journées internationales d'archéologie mérovingienne* (Toulouse, 1985) p. 29.

characteristics).”³ Although there will be variations to this statement in the subsequent section, it is important for the time being to emphasize the above definition, in that one’s ethnic affiliation is largely down to self-perception and not necessarily ‘real’ or set in stone. It is often a malleable and fluid concept, which can be altered by the same individual in different circumstances to obtain varying social or political objectives.

The problems of traditionally ascribed ethnic markers

First it should be acknowledged that there is no explicit evidence in either the literature or archaeological record for Romans, Lombards or Visigoths using the *francisca* as their particular weapon of choice, but the reason for the above statement is to illustrate that the reciprocal is no more evident; the usage of such throwing axes was not necessarily a clear indicator of Frankish ethnic or cultural identity either. Guy Halsall examines the misuse of such archaeological materials being used as ethnic badges, and he emphasizes that different styles of clothing or apparel do not necessarily reflect a biological background, but could reflect a voluntary identity assumed by the individual in order to better fit in with his fellow inhabitants whether civil or military.⁴ This is not to say that such signs or markers are not important, because in a fluid and dynamic system of heterogeneous groups such as a Frankish army of the early medieval era, these artificial markers were employed to assume the identity desired at the time.⁵ Although it cannot be doubted that these individuals did inherit some biological traits from their ancestors, of greater

³ S. Jones, *The Archaeology of Ethnicity: Constructing Identities in the Past and Present* (London, 1997) p. 84.

⁴ G. Halsall, *Barbarian Migrations and the Roman West 376-568* (Cambridge, 2007) pp. 466-467.

⁵ *Ibid*, p. 468.

consequence was to which ethnic or social identity these members of society wished to be perceived, in order to advance their careers or personal lives.⁶ For those individuals to which political marriages and bonds of allegiance were important, by the fifth century such ties greatly outweighed ones biological or ‘ethnic’ heritage. “This genealogical network makes a nonsense of cultural difference, at least at the imperial or royal level.”⁷ If this is indeed the case, and signs of ethnicity or personal identity in the early medieval West were generally attempts at identifying with the local aristocracy or ruling elite, what does this tell us about how the peoples of the Visigothic, Lombard and Frankish lands interacted at local and higher levels of society, both between themselves and also with the previous Roman inhabitants?

The issue of ‘barbarian’ identity has been hotly contested for decades now, and can essentially be divided into two main schools of thought: First, the *traditionskern* model which has been promoted largely by Reinhard Wenskus, Herwig Wolfram, Patrick Geary, and Walter Pohl,⁸ advocates that a kernel of non-Roman customs and traditions were maintained by the dominant ethnic group of the Germanic confederation in

⁶ For an interesting summary of the work of Edmund Leach in the 1950’s concerning the local identities in Burma, and how this study pertained to ethnic and cultural traits being a matter of perception, see P. Heather, *Empire and Barbarians: Migration, Development and the Birth of Europe* (London, 2009) p. 14. For the original work of Leach, see E.R. Leach, *Political Systems of Highland Burma: a study of Kachin social structure* (London, 1970).

⁷ C. Wickham, *The Inheritance of Rome: A History of Europe from 400 to 1000* (London, 2009) p. 96.

⁸ For a synopsis of the *traditionskern* ethnogenesis theory, see A. Gillett, ‘Introduction: Ethnicity, History and Methodology,’ *On Barbarian Identity: critical approaches to ethnicity in the early middle ages* (Turnhout, 2002) pp. 3-4. Also for more detail see P. Geary, *Ethnic Identity as a Situational Construct in the Early Middle Ages* (Vienna, 1983), W. Pohl, ‘Ethnicity, Theory, and Tradition: A Response,’ in *On Barbarian Identity*, pp. 221-239, R. Wenskus, *Stammesbildung und Verfassung* (Köln, 1961), and H. Wolfram, *The Roman Empire and Its Germanic Peoples*, T. Dunlap, trans., (Berkeley, 1997).

question, to which the lower groups would aspire in order to identify with the ruling elite. Second, it has been suggested that the Germanic ethnic markers of the early medieval period were simply a renaming of the previous military identity of Late Roman soldiers.⁹ If it was true that differentiation between non-Roman peoples was not important to the Late Roman mindset (indeed Sebastian Brather has gone as far as to say they were all considered to be ‘marauders’)¹⁰ this would have aided either of the two above models in their creation of new identities following the fall of the Western Empire in the fifth century.

In a recent 2008 article Walter Goffart argued against the notion that the ‘Germanic’ peoples were viewed by contemporaries as trespassers into the Late Roman Empire.¹¹ Rather, they constituted an integral part of the overall Late Roman equation and system. He later goes on to discuss how several tribes such as the Huns, Heruls or Taifals became extinct without much mention, yet such events deserved to have received the same attention as the fall of Rome in 476.¹² While the approach of this thesis largely build upon the views established by Wolfram, applying many of them to a later context in the period of settlement rather than migration, it is the opinion of this writer that he has potentially overlooked two important points on this matter. First, the literary and archaeological evidence available make determining ‘extinction’ of an early medieval people very difficult to ascertain, and it is probable that they were amalgamated into later

⁹ For a recent look into the debate surrounding ethnic markers, see C. Wickham, *The Inheritance of Rome*, p. 97.

¹⁰ S. Brather, ‘Acculturation and Ethnogenesis along the Frontier: Rome and the Ancient Germans in an Archaeological Perspective,’ *Borders, Barriers and Ethnogenesis: Frontiers in Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages* (Turnhout, 2005) p. 150.

¹¹ W. Goffart, ‘Rome’s Final Conquest: The Barbarians,’ in *History Compass*, 6:3 (2008) pp. 858-859.

¹² *Ibid*, p. 868.

groups when their overarching political structures lost control. Second, the collapse of the peoples he lists, with the exception arguably of the Huns, do not deserve the same level of attention as the fall of Rome due to their lesser contribution to the social and political environment of the time. To clarify, even if the fall of Rome in 476 was merely symbolic and the outcome of decades of decline, to say that the Taifal or Heruls possessed the same eminence and prestige to contemporaries as Rome in the fifth century would be incorrect.

Despite the above points, Goffart is correct with his overall view that such groups do deserve a higher level of attention than they have traditionally received, but putting some of them on equal footing with the Late Roman Empire regarding cultural impact is a bit of a stretch. There is also the matter of viewing the fall of Rome as irrelevant, due to the fact that its values were never repudiated and its cultural points were maintained within the successor states in the early medieval period.¹³ The biggest problem with this point is that it treats the developments of the fifth to eighth centuries as overly static and predetermined from the fifth century, rather than taking into account the wide range of alterations or innovations that occurred during the period under the new ruling elites. These developments ranged from the founding of entirely new urban centres, which changed the overall socio-economic network of the region, to stylistic developments in terms of numismatics, construction and clothing or weaponry, as well as the establishment of new local identities brought on by the settlement of new peoples into the former western provinces. It could be argued that the values of Rome lived on in some

¹³ Ibid, p. 872.

form or another into the eighth century, but to say that they were never repudiated implies that nothing of any major import happened to change them following the fifth century.

In the case of *traditionskern* ethnogenesis theory, the labeling together of the various peoples migrating into the Empire as ‘Goths’, for example, did not go unnoticed by the elite core of this group, and they built upon this Late Roman constructed identity to further their own extent of political authority and control over the loose confederation which they nominally ruled. Indeed by the sixth century, the Visigothic inhabitants of Spain were supposedly proud to be Gothic,¹⁴ whether they were originally of Gothic descent or not, and this represents the gradual outcome of such earlier fifth century policies adopted by the aristocratic core, to which the Hispano-Roman population was also keen to identify in order to maintain a degree of social mobility. That being said, certain scholars studying the ethnic aspects of ‘Visigotologica’ have emphasized that ones social status was of far greater import than his or her ethnicity with respect to social division and mobility.¹⁵ With respect to the second school of thought, the fact that Late Roman armies consisted largely of non-Roman *foederati* and soldiers is well known by scholars of both the Late Roman and early medieval periods,¹⁶ and if we are to assume that these individuals adopted a common sense of identity within the regiment, whether by Roman influence and labeling or not, then following the end of imperial government it would have been a natural continuation of this process for the units to serve under the

¹⁴ M. Kulikowski, ‘Ethnicity, Rulership and Early Medieval Frontiers,’ in *Borders, Barriers and Ethnogenesis*, p. 250.

¹⁵ I. Velázquez, ‘Auge y nuevas perspectivas de los estudios visigóticos,’ *Estudios Clásicos*, No. 94 (Madrid, 1988) p. 86.

¹⁶ For some of the problems identifying these *foederati* on ethnic or cultural lines, particularly after having become settled in a given territory, see A.D. Lee, *War in Late Antiquity: A Social History* (Oxford, 2007) p. 84.

post-Roman kingdoms in much the same capacity as warbands.¹⁷ During this time such groups adopted new cultural and ethnic values along the way due to the fluid nature of ethnogenesis, and to the shifting socio-political environment of the fifth to eighth centuries.

This 'instrumentalist' approach to ethnic and cultural exchange has been promoted as a potential reason for the Ostrogoths, Gauls and Britons largely disappearing from the literary and archaeological records, as these groups adopted the identities of the new landowning elite rather than having been physically displaced as was earlier thought.¹⁸ This is particularly apt in describing the latter two peoples, but there are a few examples of individuals claiming Ostrogothic descent persisting into the seventh century. In the cases of the peoples with whom this thesis is concerned, it would have been an inverse situation to those discussed by Halsall, with the previous Roman inhabitants adopting new identities in order to adapt to the new political landscapes in which they lived. Gundulf, the maternal great-uncle of Gregory of Tours, provides us with a clear example of this process, as he came from a rich senatorial background and adopted a Frankish name in order to serve the Merovingian rulers in a military capacity.¹⁹ This is not to say that the Roman inhabitants abandoned their sense of culture overnight, it was a gradual process that took place over generations.²⁰ The Roman inhabitants of sixth

¹⁷ C.R. Bowlus emphasizes that these groups were not necessarily bound by blood or descent, at least at the gentes level, see C.R. Bowlus, 'Ethnogenesis: The Tyranny of a Concept,' in *On Barbarian Identity*, p. 245.

¹⁸ G. Halsall, *Barbarian Migrations*, p. 36.

¹⁹ *Ibid*, p. 469.

²⁰ Bryan Ward-Perkins had emphasized the gradual nature of identity formation, and that individuals cannot simply choose a new identity, they must also be accepted by the group in question. While this is certainly true, that is not to say that individuals who tried to emulate the new elite would not have been viewed more favourably than those who

century *Francia*, particularly those south of the Loire, continued to speak Latin, were conscious of their Roman senatorial heritage and maintained some degree of interest in Roman culture.²¹ It was a sense of regional, localized identity that emerged from the fifth to eighth centuries in the kingdoms of Western Europe, which was cultivated by the new landed aristocracies and, where it was of benefit to those subjects belonging to the previously dominant ethnic or cultural group, adopted in accordance with social, political and economic opportunism.

The focus at the moment is not to examine the processes of cultural exchange illustrated in the primary source material, given that the second chapter of this work will be dedicated entirely to such matters, but to present some of the recent historical or archaeological studies concerning ethnogenesis during the early medieval period and the problems they have faced. One of the most significant challenges scholars in this field had to overcome was that of the ‘culture history’ approach to archaeology and the construction of ethnic identities. Established by Gustaf Kossinna in the nineteenth century, this model advocated that areas of homogenous archaeological finds represented their respective peoples, and this coincided with the attempt to establish a Germanic cultural continuity.²² As Siân Jones has pointed out, this view was working under the assumption that bounded uniform cultural entities correlated with particular peoples or

directly opposed and resisted it. They may have gained substantial benefits even without being fully accepted as a member of the group. For his point on choosing identity, see B. Ward-Perkins, *The Fall of Rome and the End of Civilization* (Oxford, 2005) p. 77.

²¹ P. Heather, *Empire and Barbarians*, pp. 310-311.

²² A. Gillett, ‘Introduction: Ethnicity, History and Methodology,’ p. 4, and for the original volume by Kossinna which laid the foundations for the ‘culture history’ approach, see G. Kossinna, *Die Herkunft der Germanen: zur methode der Siedlungsarchäologie* (Würzburg, 1911)., also, for further insights into this historical view on archaeology, see B.G. Trigger, *A History of Archaeological Thought* (Cambridge, 2006) p. 530.

ethnic groups.²³ These ethno-histories were largely used as a means of justification for nationalist ideologies during the first half of the twentieth century, as an entitlement to territory by the means of historical possession and settlement corresponding to the then respective sovereign European nation-state.²⁴ With the subsequent events of the Second World War (1939-45) and the atrocities which have become associated with Nazi Germany, with those along ethnic and cultural lines being obvious and requiring no need for elaboration, scholars have had to rethink the entire question of what constitutes ethnicity, both at the personal and also at the higher political level.

Another complication which further exacerbates this already complex situation is that of the numbers of peoples who were engaging in cultural interaction at the local levels of society from the fifth to eighth centuries. While it is difficult to pinpoint any real number of migrants into the Late Roman Empire across the *limes* from the fifth century onwards, the view of ‘rampaging barbarians’ has for decades now been discredited, and the general consensus amongst scholars of the early medieval era is that the Visigothic, Lombard and Frankish settlers were greatly outnumbered by the previous inhabitants of the various regions we will be looking at.²⁵ “The transfer of a few regiments and their dependents from one part of the Empire to another could represent a

²³ S. Jones, ‘Discourses of Identity in the interpretation of the past,’ in C. Gamble and P. Graves-Brown, ed., *Cultural Identity and Archaeology: The construction of European Communities* (London and NY, 1996) p. 63.

²⁴ P. Graves-Brown and S. Jones, ‘Introduction: archaeology and cultural identity in Europe,’ in *Cultural Identity and Archaeology*, pp. 1-6.

²⁵ It should also be noted, as Rosamund McKitterick has shown, that our perceptions of the earlier phases of the kingdoms have largely relied on narrative sources written one or two centuries later, see R. McKitterick, ‘Introduction,’ in R. McKitterick, ed., *The Early Middle Ages: Europe 400-1000* (Oxford, 2001) p. 7.

movement of people as great, or nearly so, as any barbarian migration.”²⁶ Even if we are to work under the assumption that the migrations constituted a lesser impact upon the local demographics of fifth to sixth century Western Europe than was traditionally assumed, it was not the number of newcomers that was of the greatest importance, but rather, the political vacuum into which they settled and then emerged as the new landowning class and authority figures over a given area in what had previously been part of the Western Roman Empire.²⁷ It has been suggested that the lower strata of these groups of peoples did not have much access to, or interest in, Roman contacts,²⁸ and this would seem to keep with the notion of *traditionskern* theory, by which it was the core aristocracy that largely determined what was politically and socially convenient with respect to one's preferred identity; gradually over generations the subjects of the kingdom sought ways of projecting themselves in this preferred light as a way to gain royal patronage or favour.

Cultural interactions and the aristocracy

Unfortunately it is one of the major difficulties for any scholar of historical cultural exchange that very little can be deduced regarding such interactions at the lower levels of society, as the material deals almost exclusively with the aristocracy and ruling elite.

When the primary authors do briefly mention the odd reference to events amongst the commoners within their writings, it is not with the aim of describing to what degree the

²⁶ G. Halsall, *Barbarian Migrations*, p. 456.

²⁷ It has been argued that the successor states more or less fitted into the provincial and *civitates* structures of the former Late Roman provinces, albeit with the latter taken over by the Church to define its dioceses, see R. McKitterick, ‘Politics,’ in *The Early Middle Ages*, p. 27.

²⁸ S. Brather, ‘Acculturation and Ethnogenesis,’ p. 169.

Roman and non-Roman subjects exchanged cultural values or adopted the customs of the other group. This is not necessarily due to any particular lack of attention on the part of the author, but rather, such changes in a sector of society which had no real direct benefit from sudden changes, unlike Gundulf as we saw earlier, would have been very gradual and taken place over generations, shifts which went undetected by the contemporary writers at the time. It is for this reason that attention tends to be concentrated on the royal courts of the Visigothic, Lombard and Merovingian kingdoms, and the aristocratic elements of society which were directly connected with them.

One example of values and customs being held as important by the aristocracy and then transcending to the lower levels of society is the use of past oral lore and sagas, to which perhaps only a small contingent of the overall group felt any real connection, but which were then promoted as important to the overall community as they continued to live together and as it became politically useful. Walter Goffart describes the use of *Scandza* mythos by the Gothic Amal clan in this light, and as their confederation grew so did the importance of this identity in unifying fragmentary groups into a cohesive unit over which they could assert political control.²⁹ In the same volume, Michael Kulikowski also emphasized the impossibility of common biological descent of the various *ethne* or *gentes* which constituted the confederation of peoples moving into the Western Roman Empire during the fifth century,³⁰ a point that makes the way the political leaders viewed themselves of particular significance, since it was these individuals within the social framework of the migrating peoples, and later the settled

²⁹ W. Goffart, 'Does the distant past impinge on the Invasion Age Germans?' in *On Barbarian Identity*, pp. 33-34.

³⁰ M. Kulikowski, 'Nation versus Army: A Necessary Contrast?' in *On Barbarian Identity*, p. 70.

kingdoms following the fifth century, who were largely responsible for establishing some new form of regional identity to which all of their subjects could aspire to and accept.

If we are to generally accept, then, that early medieval identities were largely fluid, dynamic, opportunistic, and to a degree cultivated by the aristocratic core, due to the nature of the literature available it is on this sector of society that we must focus our attention. “In the process of ethnogenesis, ethnic identity can submerge, and reappear- with new definitions- under various circumstances.”³¹ It has been illustrated quite clearly that one of the most profound impacts of the rulers in the early medieval West was the shift away from a tax based economy to one of landed armies and revenues. Land essentially replaced tax income as the basis for the state, and as officials were now more localized and not salaried by a central administration, it reduced the level of authority of the kings over their respective territories, thus preventing them from recreating ‘miniature empires’ of their own.³² Such a drastic change in the socio-political makeup of these regions contributed to how the inhabitants viewed both themselves, and also the protocols under which they were expected to interact and serve the non-Roman elite ruling classes.

Let us take a look at one last broad example of non-Roman customs being applied within the early medieval political framework, that of the ‘public assembly’.³³ The importance of the *placitum* as it was called by the Frankish and Lombard rulers, is said to have represented a direct relationship between the king and all of his free subjects, although the extent to which these peoples actively participated in any real political

³¹ P. Amory, *People and Identity in Ostrogothic Italy, 489-554* (Cambridge, 1997) p. 16.

³² C. Wickham, *The Inheritance of Rome*, pp. 102-104.

³³ For a detailed survey which examines the various aspects of assemblies in the Early Middle Ages, see P.S. Barnwell, ‘Kings, Nobles and Assemblies in the Barbarian Kingdoms,’ in P.S. Barnwell and M. Mostert, ed., *Political Assemblies in the Earlier Middle Ages* (Turnhout, 2003).

discourse is questionable. In fact, the assembly itself and its attendants may have been a symbolic gesture during which the already decided policies were acclaimed by some representative body of the greater populace.³⁴ Whether this is the case or not, the importance of these assemblies in the mindset of early medieval aristocrats can be seen in the emphasis of the Carolingian dynasty on earlier seventh century *placita*, a clear demonstration of their dominance over ‘les rois fainéants’ of the decaying Merovingian dynasty.³⁵ The above points represent a few examples of how the newly established aristocracies altered the social and political forms of interacting, which in turn made individuals who were seeking higher positions in society, no matter what their original heritage, rethink their sense of identity and how they wanted to project themselves in a localized, royal *modus operandi* rather than a centralized, imperial one.

Hispano-Roman continuity under a Visigothic administration

It is evident that some degree of continued identification with a Roman heritage was expressed by the Hispano-Roman aristocracy, while the Visigothic identity, particularly in the military sphere, gradually gained ascendancy as the kingdom became more stable.³⁶ Following the conversion of Reccared to Catholicism in 587, there was a

³⁴ For the direct relationship between king and followers represented by the assembly, see C. Wickham, *The Inheritance of Rome*, pp. 100-101, and for the symbolic nature of the assembly as a means of public approval of the royal policy, see P.S. Barnwell, ‘Kings, Nobles, and Assemblies in the Barbarian Kingdoms,’ p. 28.

³⁵ P.S. Barnwell, ‘Kings, Nobles and Assemblies in the Barbarian Kingdoms,’ p. 12.

³⁶ For the specific example of the wealthy senatorial class being referred to in the primary sources, see the *Vitae Sanctorum Patrum Emeritensium*, M. Sanchez, ed., (Turnhout, 1999) IV.II.I, IV.II.15, and for Hispano-Roman and Visigothic elite coexisting in the southeastern region of Spain in the sixth and seventh centuries, see R. Collins, *Visigothic Spain, 409-711* (Oxford, 2006) p. 179. For the militaristic qualities behind political success in Visigothic Spain, see R.L. Stocking, *Bishops, Councils, and Consensus in the*

greater cultural fusion of the various peoples residing within the kingdom,³⁷ with Luis García Moreno even going so far as to claim an overall sense of ‘Hispania’ had emerged by the seventh century.³⁸ J.D. Dodds had estimated the approximate number of Visigoths at 200,000 amongst a Hispano-Roman population of 8 million, and attributed the success of the former to their strong political rule, which in turn enabled the continued Roman sense of identity to endure, albeit with a gradual form of ethnogenesis into a new ‘Hispanic’ polity taking place by the eighth century.³⁹ Even if these numbers are dubious, the concept of such a synthesis of cultures fits with the literary and archaeological material available.

The situation concerning the processes of ethnic or cultural exchanges within Visigothic Spain from the sixth to eighth centuries is not so simple as the above model suggests, it was much more multifaceted and complex and needs to incorporate a wide variety of source material,⁴⁰ as well as archaeological data. However, it will suffice for

Visigothic Kingdom, 589-633 (Ann Arbor, 2000) p. 52, and also, for the claim that all sixth century Visigothic aristocrats were successful in the military sphere, see K.E. Carr, *Vandals to Visigoths: Rural Settlement Patterns in Early Medieval Spain* (Ann Arbor, 2002) p. 179.

³⁷ While the conversion to Catholicism of Reccared certainly led to such developments, it was also for direct political benefits as it gave greater social control to the monarchy, see C. Godoy Fernandez and J. Vilella Masana, ‘La conversion de los visigodos al Catolicismo como afirmación política de la monarquía de Toledo,’ in P. Périn ed., *Gallo-Romains, Wisigoths et Francs en Aquitaine, Septimanie et Espagne: actes des VIIe Journées internationales d’archéologie mérovingienne* (Toulouse, 1985) p. 110.

³⁸ L.A. García Moreno, ‘Spanish Gothic Consciousness among the Mozarabs in Al-Andalus (VII-Xth centuries),’ *The Visigoths: Studies in Culture and Society* (Leiden and Boston, 1999) pp. 303-309.

³⁹ J.D. Dodds, *Architecture and Ideology in Early Medieval Spain* (University Park and London, 1990) pp. 8-10.

⁴⁰ A few examples, with respect to any information that can be gained concerning cultural exchange, being those of Julian of Toledo, *The Story of Wamba*, J.M. Pizarro, trans., (Washington D.C., 2005), the *Leges Visigothorum*, K. Zeumer, ed., (Hanover, 1902), and the *VSPE*.

the time being having emphasized the militaristic element of the Visigothic elite within the realm, and the centralized political rule which they were gradually able to assert over the peninsula by the beginning of the seventh century, which provided the Hispano-Roman inhabitants with a framework for both continued Late Roman identification and also the adoption of non-Roman values.

Localized aristocratic power and a fragmented Italian peninsula

It has in the last decade been proposed that approximately one hundred thousand Lombards entered into Italy with Alboin in 568, and that such a number of settlers could have been provided for in two urban centres at the time.⁴¹ Although this did not end up being the case, as the Lombard aristocracy established themselves with varying degrees of autonomy or ties to the royal dynasty, depending on both their location within the *regnum Langobardorum*, and also upon the period of Lombard rule in question,⁴² it has nevertheless been advocated that their settlement did not cause any major upheaval in the social fabric of Italy at the time.⁴³ Whether this was the case is difficult to determine, but what is relatively clear is that the Lombard ethnic identity would come to be dominant in the social, military, and political spheres, due largely in part to the volatile political

⁴¹ N. Christie, *From Constantine to Charlemagne: An Archaeology of Italy AD 300-800* (Aldershot, 2006), p. 59.

⁴² For the importance of land ownership, in the case of the more autonomous *duces*, or of offices to those closer to the kingship, although it should be noted that both would be of importance to varying degrees, see R. Balzaretto, 'Masculine authority and state identity in Liutprandic Italy,' in P. Erhart and W. Pohl edd., *Die Langobarden: Herrschaft und Identität* (Vienna, 2005) p. 362.

⁴³ This is largely attributed to the supposed allocation of one-third of land revenues to the new Lombard aristocracy, see N. Everett, *Literacy in Lombard Italy, c. 568-774* (Cambridge, 2003) p. 74, and for more detail concerning the division of resources, see Paul the Deacon, *HL*, II. 32.

environment in which the Lombard kingdom was established. The constant threat of military conflict with the Byzantines largely influenced Lombard royal policy and decision making, and it would hardly have been beneficial to individuals within the *regnum Langobardorum* to maintain an ethnic identity associated with directly opposing military forces.

The above situation is to an extent speculative, and there do exist examples of what could be considered Lombard nobles or even kings adopting Late Roman value systems and personal identities. For example, in describing the level of familiarity with Roman diplomatic customs possessed by *dux* Grasulf, modern historians have suggested this might imply a level of required ‘Romanization’ in the Lombard elite,⁴⁴ although this may be due primarily for reasons of necessity given the constant diplomacy that would have been engaged in with the Exarchate. It has also been proposed that the *gasindii* were perhaps descendents of Late Roman *comitatenses*, which would imply that the Lombard aristocracy was not entirely against recruiting individuals of Roman heritage into office, provided they adopted identities deemed suitable by the new elite.⁴⁵ It was the association with the military sphere of the Lombards that allowed one to establish himself as a ‘free’ subject, as this provided an individual with a degree of economic independence, and also the swearing of an oath to the king bound him to the Lombard elite as well.⁴⁶ There seems to be little doubt that within the Lombard territories, it was

⁴⁴ N. Everett, *Literacy in Lombard Italy*, p. 69.

⁴⁵ S. Fanning, ‘A Review of Lombard Prosopography,’ in *Medieval Prosopography*, 2: 1, (Kalamazoo, MI, 1981) p. 20.

⁴⁶ For a detailed account of the various Lombard offices, and the possibility that serving in the armies went hand in hand with free status, see P. Delogu, ‘Lombard and Carolingian Italy,’ in *The New Cambridge Medieval History, Vol. 2: c. 700-900* (Cambridge, 1995) pp. 290-293.

important from a relatively early stage to identify with the new ruling class. However, the relatively high level of urban continuity within the Lombard kingdom implies that a certain degree of Late Roman values and outlooks did endure throughout the sixth to eighth centuries in northern Italy.

For the moment let us suppose that gradually over the course of the sixth to eighth centuries it became of increasing importance for the Roman population to interact with the Lombard aristocracy as a means to maintaining either a degree of social mobility and independence, or also to engage in military service or political office. While this is similar to the situations we looked at in Visigothic Spain and Merovingian *Francia*, they differ in their socio-political contexts. It must be remembered that these three successor states were not directly tied together by any 'Germanic' tradition or system of values, certainly not through any biological ethnic or cultural associations, and that they established themselves as regional identities and kingdoms under very different circumstances, by employing different strategies of incorporating the local inhabitants into the new structures which gradually emerged over generations.

It is not so surprising that the immediate adoption of the projected identities of the new ruling classes by certain individuals took place as well; the processes of ethnogenesis took long periods of time to occur within the overall populace, but that is no reason a Gallo-Roman, Hispano-Roman, or Roman inhabitant of northern Italy could not swallow his pride and make an effort to adjust to the new situation if it was beneficial to do so. It must also be acknowledged that we are looking at this question with the gift of hindsight, and that for many individuals residing within the early medieval West, this stark contrast between Roman and, for example, Frankish customs, may not even have

Gallo-Roman traditions and emerging regional identities

The situation in early medieval *Francia* from the sixth to mid-eighth centuries was largely one of the Frankish aristocracy providing the mainstay of military service, and the Gallo-Roman sector providing ecclesiastical and civil services to the royal courts,⁴⁷ although it should be emphasized that we are not necessarily talking in terms of biological ethnicity, but rather assumed or projected identities according to the career path an individual aspired to within the Merovingian kingdoms. On top of this, there is a clear regional element to the identities that emerge under the Merovingians, for example, in the constant rivalry between Neustria and Austrasia into the eighth century; Fredegar can clearly be viewed as a partisan of the Austrasian Pippinid line in his writings, and serves as an example of this local political affiliation.⁴⁸ Despite this, there still existed an overall sense of ‘Frankishness’, largely due to the fact that the Merovingian rulers had interests all across the various kingdoms, not just within their own realms, a point which prevented the kingdoms from contracting.⁴⁹ It was often important for a Gallo-Roman

⁴⁷ Guy Halsall, *Barbarian Migrations*, p. 305.

⁴⁸ F. Curta, ‘Slavs in Fredegar and Paul the Deacon: medieval gens or ‘scourge of God’?’ in *Early Medieval Europe*, Vol. 6, No. 2, (Oxford, 1997) p. 146, and it should also be noted that these regions varied in their previous levels of exposure to Roman customs, see W. Pohl, ‘The barbarian successor states,’ in M. Brown and L. Webster, edd., *The Transformation of the Roman World AD 400-900* (London, 1997) p. 42.

⁴⁹ R. Collins, ‘The Western Kingdoms,’ in *Cambridge Ancient History XIV: Late Antiquity: Empire and Successors, A.D. 425-600* (Cambridge, 2000) p. 120, and another example of this regional identity existing amidst an overarching Frankish one can possibly be seen in the offer of the Austrasian aristocracy to defend both themselves and

subject to adopt a Frankish identity in order to attain a broader political reach,⁵⁰ as this ethnic and cultural mode was applicable in all of the Merovingian kingdoms, despite the development of a degree of regional ethnogenesis as well.

The impact of the new ruling classes was not limited to the sphere of social mobility; the introduction of ‘meat-eating’ to the aristocratic feast, which has been advocated as a non-Roman custom, represents another potential example of Frankish influence.⁵¹ However, it should be noted that the concept of feasting, while often being associated with ‘Germanic’ or pagan traditions, was also an important point of social interaction for the Christian communities in the early medieval era. “Indeed, holy men and women in the early Middle Ages were widely known to experience highly positive encounters with perishable goods, even in the most mundane of circumstances.”⁵² What distinguished these holy feasts from those attributed to pagan ones largely had to do with their consecration and location within a holy context, such as a church or monastery. While the Franks perhaps introduced certain stylistic or dietary changes, it is worth remembering that feasting was an established method for social interaction, gift giving and patronage.⁵³ It is very difficult to trace such developments and signs of everyday life in the literary or archaeological records available for the Merovingian period, but it is important to recognize the social changes taking place during the sixth century. The

also their Frankish neighbours against the Wends, see Fredegar, *Fredegarii et aliorum chronica*, B. Krusch, ed., (Hanover, 1888) IV.75. p. 63.

⁵⁰ G. Halsall, ‘Villas, Territories and Communities in Merovingian Northern Gaul,’ in W. Davies, G. Halsall and A. Reynolds, ed., *People and Space in the Middle Ages, 300-1000* (Turnhout, 2006) p. 227.

⁵¹ C. Wickham, *The Inheritance of Rome*, p. 100.

⁵² B. Effros, ‘The ritual signification of vessels in the formation of Merovingian Christian communities,’ *The Construction of Communities in the Early Middle Ages: Texts, Resources and Artefacts* (Leiden, 2003) p. 217.

⁵³ *Ibid*, p. 219.

cultural exchanges taking place, in this case the adoption of Christianity by the Frankish elite, led to new displays of prestige and wealth, while modifying pre-existing forms at the same time. In the sphere of archaeology it has recently been convincingly demonstrated that the aristocratic element of early medieval *Francia* disseminated their values to the lower levels of society, in the sphere of burial goods and rituals during the sixth century.⁵⁴ It is logical that such patterns also occurred in the area of banqueting, not in the quality of goods or displays of wealth which would obviously favour the elite, but in the overall context in which meals and feasts were perceived.

With respect to ethnic or cultural exchange the various legal codes attributed to the Merovingians shed little light, as they are theoretical approaches to how Frankish and Gallo-Roman subjects should be treated, although these will be examined in full during the fifth chapter of this work.⁵⁵ The Frankish aristocracy had been exposed to Late Roman culture long enough that they could espouse either traditionally ‘Germanic’ customs or those of the previous Late Roman government, depending on a given situation and when either was socially or politically beneficial.

Conflicting definitions of the *civitas* and relative urbanism

It is generally accepted by modern historians that beginning in the third century AD, the Western Roman Empire experienced a localization of social and political power, and

⁵⁴ G. Halsall, *Cemeteries and Society in Merovingian Gaul: Selected Studies in History and Archaeology, 1992-2009* (Leiden, 2010) p. 212, and for some further reading on how grave goods can represent local identities, see C. Wickham, ‘Introduzione: tesori nascoti e tesori esposti,’ in S. Gelichi and C. La Rocca edd., *Tesori: Forme di accumulazione della ricchezza nell’alto medioevo (secoli V-XI)*, (Rome, 2004) p. 10.

⁵⁵ Namely the *Pactus Legis Salicae*, K.A. Eckhardt, ed., (Hanover, 1962), and the *Lex Ribuaria*, F. Beyerle and R. Buchner, edd., (Hanover, 1854).

along with this gradual erosion of centralized authority there came a fortification of urban centres and a degree of militarization of their function within the surrounding territory. There was also a gradual localization of trade which took place, particularly during the fifth to eighth centuries, as Mediterranean trade became a secondary process and catered to local elites at a high cost.⁵⁶ The extent to which this decline in the economic and social vitality of the city took place has been hotly debated for decades now, and it is also a matter of perspective.⁵⁷ For example, there has been a tendency for Italian historians to view the early medieval period as one of considerable collapse, whereas the British point of view has been more optimistic.⁵⁸ That does not necessarily imply that they express these stances strictly within their own regions, as Peter Heather has promoted the idea that in Spain, Gaul and Italy, towns generally survived the end of imperial government in the fifth century, a point that has been generally accepted by historians. Chris Wickham has also raised the point that even if a city is facing a crisis or period of economic depression, that does not necessarily make it suddenly less urban in character.⁵⁹ An example might be seen in the city of Constantinople when it fell to the Ottoman forces in

⁵⁶ S. Lebecq, 'Routes of change: Production and distribution in the West (5th-8th century),' in *The Transformation of the Roman World, AD 400-900*, p. 73, and for some detail on the decrease of overall Mediterranean commerce in the sixth century see G.P. Brogiolo, 'Risultati e prospettive della ricerca archeologica sulle campagne altomedievale italiane,' in G.P. Brogiolo, A. Chavarría Arnau, and M. Valenti, ed., *Dopo la fine delle ville: le Campagne dal VI al IX secolo*, Documenti di Archeologia, 40 (Mantova, 2005) p. 10.

⁵⁷ Bryan Ward-Perkins has advocated that the term 'decline' is not often used when discussing early medieval urban structures due to its catastrophist image, see B. Ward-Perkins, 'The Making of Late Antiquity', in J. Drinkwater and B. Salway, ed., *Wolf Liebeschuetz Revisited* (London, 2007) p. 14.

⁵⁸ B. Ward-Perkins, 'Urban Continuity?' in N. Christie and S.T. Loseby, ed., *Towns in Transition: Urban Evolution in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages* (Aldershot, 1996) p. 13.

⁵⁹ C. Wickham, 'La città altomedievale: una nota sul dibattito in corso,' *Archeologia Medievale*, XV (Florence, 1988) p. 650.

1453. Even with its greatly reduced population and garrison following the preceding two centuries, it nevertheless remained a very highly urbanized area, despite the adversities and troubled times it had been experiencing up until the next crisis reached its gates.

In these three cases, the administration of urban settlements was either continued or modified from the Late Roman era under three very different political systems, with the Visigoths in Spain eventually establishing a united royal rule, the Merovingians in *Francia* setting up parallel kingships, and finally, the Lombards relying largely on a combination of royal and ducal authority.⁶⁰ Modern scholars have also emphasized the degree of local autonomy which early medieval *civitates* possessed, and that they could often organize their own local defences or political interests, for example, in the use of embassies to prevent their becoming a theatre of warfare.⁶¹ This localization of authority, which had been gradually emerging over centuries, along with the new political structures the urban centres found themselves in, influenced the ways the aristocracy and their subjects viewed the urban landscape.

Politically, it was the change from vast territories managed and administered by cities owned and run collectively by their wealthy elites, to the hierarchy of larger and smaller fiefs to which conquerors like Clovis had to devote their powers of control and exploitation, because they were equipped with no other means of minimally holding on to what they had won.⁶²

The above statement, while admittedly undervaluing the role of the *civitates* in their exploitation of local territories during the early medieval era, nevertheless illustrates the fact that the purchasing power of the king, or in the case of the Lombards the king and also the more autonomous duchies, was of central importance to the continued

⁶⁰ A. Gillett, 'Was Ethnicity Politicized in the Early Medieval Kingdoms?' *On Barbarian Identity*, p. 115.

⁶¹ A. Gillett, *Envoys and Political Communication in the Late Antique West, 411-533* (Cambridge, 2003), p. 274.

⁶² A. Southall, *The City in Time and Space* (Cambridge, 2000) p. 97.

economic and socio-political vitality of a given centre.⁶³ It can be difficult to label urban centres in the early medieval realms simply as *civitates*, due to the economic functions and terminologies in the sources often overlapping, and it is for this reason that the expression ‘urban centres’ will be used as a more general term when appropriate.⁶⁴ Although Adriaan Verhulst was primarily concerned with the Flemish region of the Northwest, an area long considered militarized and without a major urban infrastructure even in the Late Roman period,⁶⁵ the situation is not much clearer as to the role the urban centres played in either the direct royal and aristocratic representations of authority in the surrounding areas, or in the more localized social and economic functions of the community.

Regarding how early medieval peoples viewed the urban environment, it has been convincingly argued that these peoples defined towns strictly in administrative terms, that is to say, a centre could be considered a *civitas* if it was the seat of a bishopric and/or a centre of secular administration.⁶⁶ Historians have also implied that due to the lack of the *pagus* administrative unit in the Merovingian *Teilreiche*, a continuity of the previous Late Roman *civitates* system existed more or less without direct alteration by the new Frankish elite.⁶⁷ This view was further reinforced by Guy Halsall, emphasizing the particular importance of the *civitates* system in the region of Aquitaine which had a long heritage of

⁶³ A. Verhulst, ‘The Origins of Towns in the Low Countries and the Pirenne Thesis,’ in *Past and Present*, No. 122 (Oxford, 1989) pp. 7-8.

⁶⁴ For the overlap in economic function between the *castellum*, *castrum*, *civitas*, *burgus*, and *vicus*, see *Ibid*, p. 11.

⁶⁵ A. Verhulst, *Rural and Urban Aspects of Early Medieval Northwest Europe* (Aldershot, 1992) pp. 179-182.

⁶⁶ B. Ward-Perkins, ‘Urban Continuity?’ p. 6.

⁶⁷ M. Innes, *State and Society in the Early Middle Ages: The Middle Rhine Valley, 400-1000*, (Cambridge, 2000) pp. 120-121.

Roman urban culture.⁶⁸ It is logical that as the inhabitants of these kingdoms gradually sought to identify themselves with the new ruling elite, they would also do so at the urban level; those cities or towns which received royal or aristocratic patronage would have been associated with the personal identities of the elite class itself. Even if the aristocracy tried to maintain the Late Roman urban system, albeit with the shift away from a tax-based to land owning economy these centres had to change accordingly, or at the very least if they tried not to interfere with it too often, those urban centres that were either the residence of the royal courts or directly tied to the political centres would have been viewed as having particular importance by the local subjects.

It is important to bear in mind that with the localization of political authority that had been taking place, there emerged two particular points of interest: First, the degree of autonomy exercised by these urban centres allowed for the establishment of local identities and affiliations, and along with this they were able to control local trade networks and economics. Second, the importance of either royal patronage or representation of political authority, for example, with the residence or court of the king being located at a particular urban centre, was one crucial factor in this city being elevated above other centres within the same kingdom. Given the three different forms of royal and aristocratic rule that emerged in the Visigothic, Merovingian, and Lombard kingdoms, this relationship between the centre and periphery varied, although these general points seem to have been more or less true to some extent for all three kingdoms.

Despite the above points, it is worth bearing in mind the view put forth by Chris Wickham recently regarding the matter of aristocratic residence and its impact on the

⁶⁸ G. Halsall, *Barbarian Migrations*, p. 480.

urban environment. “When aristocracies were rich enough, where they lived was immaterial for urban prosperity; towns could crystallize at the nodes of the communications networks between castles, on those very rare occasions when they were not founded by the aristocrats themselves.”⁶⁹ While this is a very reasonable observation, this does not mean the said aristocracy was excused from its urban responsibilities of administration on behalf of the royal court as a *comes* or *gastaldus*, and even if they resided outside the urban or suburban areas they would still have influenced urban life and prosperity through their own investment, patronage and socio-political activities which would at times required urban contact.

The relationship between Visigothic urban centres

The first thing that must be mentioned here is that the Iberian peninsula was by no means united under Visigothic dominance at the beginning of the sixth century, as it was at various times inhabited by peoples such as the Suevi, Basques, or Byzantines in *Spania*, but by beginning of the eighth century AD the Visigothic Kingdom of Toledo had established itself as the predominant political authority in the area. The overall picture which emerges in Visigothic Spain is one of a general continuity of urban vitality at the local level, for example in the holding of local senates and *curia*, although it should be noted that the majority of the urban centres in Spain had traditions as *municipia* rather than *civitates* during the Late Roman period.⁷⁰ In the realm of numismatics, D.M. Metcalf has demonstrated that although Toledo attracted commerce due to its position as

⁶⁹ C. Wickham, *Framing the Early Middle Ages, Europe and the Mediterranean, 400-800* (Oxford, 2005) p. 594.

⁷⁰ *Ibid*, p. 480.

the *sedes regia*, it was localized customer-led mints and moneyers that circulated and produced coinage.⁷¹ This is a sign of local identities becoming important to the inhabitants, and also of financial activity existing which justified the expenditure of resources in setting up such mints and institutions.

Historians have argued that the localized sense of identity led to economic conflict which was ultimately at the expense of the royal court at Toledo and the trade networks of the kingdom as a whole.⁷² The urban centres of Visigothic Spain such as Merida, Seville, or Barcino, did indeed demonstrate a high level of localized autonomy in the economic and social sphere, but the importance of Toledo and the central government should not be viewed as insignificant; the election of Wamba (672-680) and the subsequent need for his acclamation in Toledo represents the importance by the seventh century of this royal centre in the overall political network of the kingdom.⁷³ Another example of the centrality of Toledo to the kingdom can be seen earlier in the sixth century, with the Arian synod being held there in 580 AD.⁷⁴ Clearly Toledo held a degree of political and social importance prior to the seventh century, amidst competing local identities and settlements, and due to its royal position and patronage was gradually able to gain preeminence. The Hispano-Roman populace of the Visigothic kingdom, whether seeking local ecclesiastical or secular office, or a role in the central government

⁷¹ D.M. Metcalf, 'Visigothic Monetary History,' *The Visigoths: Studies in Culture and Society*, pp. 205-206.

⁷² K.E. Carr, 'A Changing World – African Red Slip in Roman and Visigothic Baetica,' in *The Visigoths: Studies in Culture and Society*, p. 224.

⁷³ P.S. Barnwell, 'Kings, Nobles and Assemblies in the Barbarian Kingdoms,' p. 16, and also see Julian of Toledo, *The Story of Wamba*, p. 179.

⁷⁴ John of Biclaro, *Juan de Biclaro, obispo de Gerona: su vida y su obra / introducción, texto critico y comentarios por Julio Campos*, 200-204, pp. 89-90.



An aerial photograph of Toledo, clearly showing the *civitas* proper and suburbs such as la Vega Baja and la Vega Alta. For the original source of this image see D. Peris Sánchez and R. Villa 'Territorio: Historia, cartografía e imagen,' in R. Villa et al., edd., *La Vega Baja de Toledo* (Toledo, 2009)

at Toledo, was able to maintain some degree of traditionally Roman values in this framework. However, the Visigothic element of the aristocracy, particularly in the military sphere of interest, meant that such identities were considered acceptable only in

Cities and political authority in the *regnum Langobardorum*

At first glance a scholar of early medieval history might think the situations in Visigothic Spain and Lombard Italy would be quite similar, in that they were both governed over by a single king and had relatively autonomous urban centres bound in varying degrees to the royal capitals, but the major difference in the case of the latter lies in the strength of the localized *duces*, who were themselves based in their own urban centres of power, and had also been largely responsible for the consolidation of Lombard authority during the interregnum of 574 to 584.⁷⁵ Walter Pohl has also stressed the relative autonomy and political strength of these *duces*, and provides a thorough description of the various possible methods of settlement the Lombards undertook.⁷⁶ The degree to which the Lombards influenced the cities of northern Italy, for better or worse, has been hotly debated,⁷⁷ although modern historians generally concur that a relatively high level of urban occupation and administration continued into the eighth century.

⁷⁵ Paul the Deacon, *Storia dei Longobardi*, II. 32.

⁷⁶ W. Pohl, 'The Empire and the Lombards: treaties and negotiations in the sixth century,' in W. Pohl, ed., *Kingdoms of the Empire: the Integration of Barbarians in Late Antiquity* (Leiden, 1997) pp. 118-131.

⁷⁷ G.P. Brogiolo has advocated that the 'scorched-earth' policy of the Lombards on entering Italy led to the decline of towns and the rise of *castra*, see G.P. Brogiolo, 'Ideas of the town in Italy during the transition from antiquity to the Middle Ages,' *The Idea and Ideal of the Town between Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages* (Leiden and Boston, 1999) p. 119, while Bryan Ward-Perkins has emphasized that despite the

The establishment of the Lombards in the urban centres of the Po Valley also differed from the Visigothic case in the political context they first encountered upon moving into Italy in the sixth century; the Gothic Wars (535-554) waged between Justinian (527-565) and the Ostrogoths had largely reduced the economic output of the Italian *civitates*, although it has been illustrated that despite this, the urban centres continued to be inhabited and to serve as socio-political focal points after the sixth century, with markets and local trade taking place.⁷⁸ Indeed, some historians have emphasized the tenacity of the Lombard cities and the royal or ducal building programmes which took place during the seventh to eighth centuries in particular.⁷⁹ The underlying concept is essentially that the *regnum Langobardorum*, like the Visigoths in Spain, was a network of urban centres which functioned with some level of autonomy from the royal court, although due to the social and political development of the Lombards as discussed earlier, the level of independent decision-making was more explicit on the peripheries.⁸⁰ What does this combination of central royal authority at Pavia and localized aristocratic power in the *civitates* of the Lombard kingdom say about how cultural exchange and perceptions of ethnic identity transpired? Taking into account the association of Lombard identity with the military and upper stratus of society, it is likely that the Roman customs and values were largely limited to the ecclesiastical sphere of interest within the *regnum Langobardorum*, and that, in order to ingratiate themselves

decreased quality of materials used, cities survived in some form from 550-750, see B. Ward-Perkins, 'Continuists, Catastrophists and the Towns of Post-Roman Northern Italy,' in *Papers of the British School at Rome*, 65, pp. 162-163.

⁷⁸ R. Balzaretto, 'Cities and Markets in the Early Middle Ages,' in G. Ausenda, ed., *After Empire: Towards an Ethnology of Europe's Barbarians* (Woodbridge, 1995) p. 120.

⁷⁹ C. La Rocca, 'Public Buildings and Urban Change in Northern Italy in the Early Medieval Period,' in J. Rich, ed., *The City in Late Antiquity* (London, 1992) p. 161.

⁸⁰ P. Delogu, 'Lombard and Carolingian Italy,' p. 292.

either with the local *dux* or to the royalty in the capital, individuals had to try and identify with the new political framework. It could also be that subjects desiring to cling to their Roman heritage tried to flee to Rome itself or to the Byzantine exarchate at Ravenna, although there is little literary or archaeological evidence pertaining to this, so it is unfortunately reduced to the realm of speculation.

The *civitates* and their role within Merovingian *Francia*

It has been advocated that there was a general decline in the level of urban administration during the seventh century in the Merovingian kingdoms, but that this was more a continuation of Late Roman trends that had already been taking place, rather than any direct policy choice on the part of the Frankish nobility.⁸¹ The ecclesiastical significance of the urban centres such as Tours was undiminished and enhanced during the Merovingian period, and if we are to assume that this piety transferred over time from the local elite to the Frankish kings, as has been suggested by H.J. Hummer, then it would have gone hand in hand with urban interests and their relationship to the royal courts.⁸² This is not to say royal interests were limited to the ecclesiastical sphere, even if we are sceptical of the stories concerning the attempts of Chilperic I (561-584) to reinstitute grand spectacles during the 570's, it was nonetheless of central importance to the royal prerogative that urban centres be controlled and maintained in some capacity.⁸³ As each Merovingian ruler aspired to gain the ascendancy, often with the hope of unifying the

⁸¹ S.T. Loseby, 'Urban failures in late-antique Gaul,' in T.R. Slater, ed., *Towns in Decline AD 100-1600* (Aldershot, 2000) p. 88.

⁸² H.J. Hummer, *Politics and Power in Early Medieval Europe: Alsace and the Frankish Realm, 600-1000* (Cambridge, 2005) p. 27.

⁸³ Gregory of Tours, *Libri Historiarum X*, B. Krusch and W. Levison, edd., *MGH, SRM*, I, 1, (Hanover, 1951) V.17.

entire Frankish realm under his own control, the economic and socio-political importance of each of the respective urban centres within his own domain would have increased as well.

The inverse form of the above point has also been argued by historians, that is, the divisions of the Frankish territory in 511, 524, and 561 were due largely in part to considerations of the revenues that could be extracted from the territories and *civitates* of each region.⁸⁴ It was also the case during the eighth century, as the rise of the Pippinid *maior domus* was based primarily upon the support of the urban centres in Austrasia.⁸⁵ Centres such as Paris, Soissons, Orleans, and Rheims had been associated with the Merovingian royal dynasty since the time of Clovis I (481-511),⁸⁶ and continued to be of central political importance onwards into the eighth century. We will now examine how this regional structure of competing Merovingian kings and its dependence upon the local networks of *civitates* possibly influenced, or was influenced by, the cultural exchanges discussed earlier.

The Gallo-Roman aristocracy in the sixth century provided the backbone for civil and ecclesiastical office while the military and immediate connections to the royal courts were best attained through the adoption of a Frankish identity, whether it be through clothing and style or the appropriation of traditionally Frankish names. The internecine military conflicts which took place throughout the Merovingian period, and the eventual cohesion of the Frankish realm brought about under the Carolingians during the eighth century, show that there was a gradual supplanting of Late Roman identities with those of

⁸⁴ I. Wood, *The Merovingian Kingdoms 450-751* (London and NY, 1994) p. 60.

⁸⁵ For the support of both the lay and ecclesiastical aristocracy behind the rise of Carolingian power, see C. Wickham, *The Inheritance of Rome*, p. 376.

⁸⁶ G. Halsall, *Barbarian Migrations*, p. 309.

the Frankish military ones, although the level of *romanitas* later emphasized by the Carolingian dynasty reflects a certain level of continuation of Gallo-Roman values.

Conclusion: Ethnogenesis and urban administration in the early medieval West

This first chapter of the thesis has laid some of the conceptual foundations modern historians have established, which will be employed when looking at the three case studies of Visigothic Spain, Lombard Italy and Merovingian *Francia*. It has briefly presented some of the current challenges scholars of the early medieval period face when confronted with questions relating to cultural exchange or the role of urban centres. The intent here was not to become bogged down in questions of ethnicity or urbanism themselves, which would require a far greater amount of both time and space to undergo a more thorough examination, but rather, to try and emphasize that historians need to refrain from grouping these various peoples under the label ‘Germanic’, since, as we have seen, they established themselves and their relationships with the urban landscape and its inhabitants in very different ways.

On top of this, the focus on the aristocratic element of society, those members fortunate enough to come from rich senatorial backgrounds such as Gregory of Tours or the Hispano-Roman wealthy elite in Visigothic Spain, and any suppositions we can derive concerning identities by looking at this group, should not automatically be applied to the broader populace as a whole by historians. This is largely because we can only trace immediate adoptions of Visigothic, Frankish, or Lombard cultural values by individuals such as Gundulf who had a direct political agenda at hand, and due also to the fact that for the majority of the respective populations identity formation would have

Chapter 2. Literary and Archaeological Records for Early Medieval Urban Settlement

The underlying premise and point of study for this second chapter will largely revolve around the issues of how primary sources and archaeological material records from the sixth to eighth centuries AD may be utilized in order to try and understand the processes of ethnic exchange and identity creation taking place, and more importantly, to what extent these sources directly relate to the above issues. The material available rarely goes into depth regarding such processes due to the fact that they often occurred gradually over generations, and it is usually through extrapolation or speculation that modern scholars have deduced their opinions on the matter. This chapter will provide an overall illustration of how the literary and archaeological material for the three regions can be examined concerning the creation of new identities during the early medieval period.

An interesting analogy and example of how various ethnic groups can inhabit a given area without undermining the overall sense of urban tradition is presented by Aidan Southall in his comparison of Shang dynasty and Roman patterns of settlement and urban structures. Essentially Southall emphasizes that under both systems the peripheral and local urban environments emulate the temples, palaces and structures of the capital on a smaller scale.¹ This raises some interesting considerations when one applies this way of thinking to the early medieval era following the end of centralized Roman government in the West following the latter fifth century. Did the peripheral urban centres within the

¹ A. Southall, *The City in Time and Space* (Cambridge, 2000) p. 126.

three post-Roman kingdoms aim to emulate the structures of their respective capitals, or had the process of localization which had been taking place since the third century become so dominant socially and politically that by the sixth century such notions no longer resonated to those responsible for governing the cities? The fragmentation of the former Western Empire into the various early medieval polities would have reinforced this shift away from the importance of emulating the capital, as the overarching and predominant centre that had been Rome during the earlier centuries was replaced by a number of lesser royal capitals and seats of power.

This chapter will be divided into six main sections that will lay the foundations for the subsequent chapters and their respective studies. The three case studies will be examined with two parts dedicated to each: First, a brief look at how questions such as ethnic exchanges, identity creation, and urban administration can be approached in the primary literature available for the region and period under question. Second, the archaeological evidence for each of these three regions will be evaluated in relation to the same issues mentioned above. The main objective here is to directly focus on the overall context in which the literature was written or from which the archaeological material is derived, and to examine what glimpses into issues such as ethnogenesis or urban administration can be ascertained

Local identities, urban life, and the literature of Visigothic Spain

The sources from early medieval Spain concerning the subjects of identity formation and systems of government at the local urban levels, while only providing a relatively small amount of information individually on such matters, as a larger whole they represent a

mixture of contexts, and it is important to avoid aggregating such material over different periods and then putting it forth as a more generalized picture of events.² For example, although an earlier reference by Ammianus Marcellinus describes the erection of walls by the *Tervingi* against the Huns during the fifth century, we should not automatically assume that this was a sign of social or political valuing of fortifications rather than it being constructed simply out of military necessity at the time, and at the same time it should not be taken for granted that such policies continued into the eighth century.³ The inverse of this statement is also true, as we should not dismiss such points as being unable to continue over generations; indeed, the importance of fortification and walls to the Visigothic kings was valued quite highly.

While bearing in the above points, what do the main sources for Visigothic Spain tell us about these questions and what problems do they raise for modern historians? The seventh-century *Vitae Sanctorum Patrum Emeritensium*, while discussing issues primarily of an ecclesiastical and local nature in the vicinity of Merida, does illustrate some interesting points regarding the above topics. Not only does the *VSPE* demonstrate the power of the Visigothic king at Toledo by the seventh century in his ability to appropriate the lands of one of his retainers, for example, in the granting of lands to the monk Nactus by Leovigild (569-86),⁴ but also that what had been the Hispano-Roman population of the peninsula maintained sufficient financial levels with which to give gifts

² G. Halsall, *Barbarian Migrations and the Roman West, 376-568* (Cambridge, 2007) p. 25.

³ Ammianus Marcellinus, *Ammiani Marcellini Rerum gestarum libri qui supersunt*, W. Seyfarth, ed., (Leipzig, 1978) 31.3, and for walls or fortifications being valued in ways other than as military structures, see W. Pohl, 'Frontiers and Ethnic Identities: Some Final Considerations,' *Borders, Barriers and Ethnogenesis: Frontiers in Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages* (Turnhout, 2005) pp. 256-257.

⁴ *Vitae Sanctorum Patrum Emeritensium*, M. Sanchez, ed., (Turnhout, 1999) III. 7-13.

and patrimony to the church.⁵ Although to what extent this gift was representative of the regular activities of the Hispano-Roman population at large is very difficult to judge, the above passages nonetheless demonstrate that by the seventh century the Visigothic rulers had asserted themselves over the aristocracy, and that the authors of the *VSPE* perceived certain sectors of society as having a continued Hispano-Roman identity.

While there is very little mention of social conflict between Visigoths or Hispano-Romans at the lower levels of society in the seventh century, there is nonetheless a clear distinction drawn between the *rusticus de ruralibus* and the *cives urbis* by the Bishop Masona of Merida;⁶ it seems quite clear that in the seventh century despite the proposed urban decline from the third century onwards and gradual localization of political authority which accompanied it, there nevertheless continued to some degree in Visigothic Spain the dichotomy between the urban and rural environment. That being said, in an earlier account from the latter sixth century on the capturing of Cordoba by Leovigild in 572, there is no distinction drawn and the populace are simply referred to as the ‘common people’.⁷ It could be that Masona used this distinction due to his high ecclesiastical role, as residents closer to the city would have had easier access to the bishopric than those in rural areas around Merida, a point which would have factored into many of his decisions regarding his office. Merida was also the site of one *dux* Claudius of a Roman background, which shows that Hispano-Romans were able to attain high military commands under the Visigothic kings, at least in the case of Merida.⁸ “Al

⁵ Ibid, IV. 11.15.

⁶ Ibid, V. III. 7.

⁷ John of Biclaro, *Juan de Biclaro, obispo de Gerona: su vida y su obra*, J. Campos, ed., (Madrid, 1960) p. 87. 162-163.

⁸ *VSPE*, V.X. 29-30.

paracer, muchos nobles romanos accedieron a la categoría de *dux*, pues concernos a algunos de ellos, así por ejemplo Claudius, que era *dux* de la Lusitania y fue encargado de enfrentarse a las Francos en el año 589.”⁹ The fact that Claudius saw battle against the Franks also reflects that this position was not simply honorary or given as a gesture of goodwill by the Visigothic ruler, but an active military posting with the responsibilities associated with it.

The *VSPE* as a whole emphasizes the general cooperation of Visigothic and Hispano-Roman elements of society in the sixth and seventh centuries, particularly following the official end of royal support for Arianism under Reccared I (586-601).¹⁰ The previous repeal of the law banning mixed marriages by Leovigild, followed by the conversion of Reccared both acted as catalysts in the process of integration. “Ce mélange des populations apparaît bien avant la révocation de la Loi de Léovigild interdisant les mariages mixtes et s’intègre dans le processus de reunification de la péninsule achève sous Récarède.”¹¹ The references to two individuals bearing the name Bulgaricus, one who died around 562 in southern Spain and another who was *dux* of Septimania under Gundemar (610-612),¹² also provide a possible example of a non-Visigothic person

⁹ G. Ripoll López, and I. Velázquez, *La Hispania Visigoda. Del rey Ataúlfo a Don Rodrigo*, Historia de España, 6 (Madrid, 1995) p. 60.

¹⁰ For some further information regarding the conflicts between the Arian and Nicene supporters within Visigothic Spain in the sixth century, see A. Isla Frez, ‘Las relaciones entre el reino visigodo y los reyes merovingios a finales del siglo VI,’ in *En La España Medieval*, Vol. 13, (Madrid, 1990) pp. 15-20.

¹¹ G. Ripoll López, ‘Materiales funerarios de la Hispania visigoda: problemas de cronología y tipología,’ in P. Périn ed., *Gallo-Romains, Wisigoths et Francs en Aquitaine, Septimanie et Espagne: actes des VIIe Journées internationales d’archéologie mérovingienne* (Toulouse, 1985) p. 119.

¹² L.A. Garcia Moreno, ‘Gothic immigrants in Spain: Researching the history of a nobility,’ in D. Quast ed., *Foreigners in Early Medieval Europe: Thirteen International Studies on Early Medieval Mobility* (Mainz, 2009) p. 173.

attaining high office, or in the case of the former at least residing within the realm. Prior to turning to the legal texts, let us now look at the overall sense of ethnic interplay and social interaction that can be gained from the chroniclers of Visigothic Spain from the sixth to eighth centuries and the challenges they present to modern scholars of the subject.

The problems one faces when dealing with the narrative accounts and chronicles of the *regnum Visigothorum* are in some ways very similar to those of the saints' lives, as there is a general lack of discussion or interest by contemporary writers in the exchange of cultural values or customs across the non-Roman and Roman traditions, assuming such changes could even be detected at the time; the information given regarding cities tends to be strictly in their function as spheres of military, political or ecclesiastical activity, with little or no attention given to the interaction of different peoples within the urban environment. One example of this can be found in Ildefonso of Toledo, as he generally does not directly refer to his home city and royal capital throughout his work outside of a sacred context, although he does refer to it simply as *gloriosa Toletanae urbis* on one occasion.¹³ However, whether this is due to his taking pride in the city itself or trying to ingratiate himself with the royal court is hard to tell. The Chronicle of 754 while not providing any further evidence for civic pride, does demonstrate that the kings in the seventh century valued their importance, as can be seen in its description of the renovation of Toledo in 674 under Wamba (672-80).¹⁴ One point that helps to resolve

¹³ Ildefonso of Toledo, *De virginitate Sanctae Mariae: De cognitione baptismi; De itinere deserti*, C. Codoñer Merino, ed., (Turnhout, 2007) Praef. 20.

¹⁴ 'The Chronicle of 754,' in *Conquerors and Chroniclers of Early Medieval Spain*, 2nd edition, K.B. Wolf, trans., (Liverpool, 1999) 35. p. 125, and for the Latin edition see *Crónica Mozárabe de 754*, J.E.L. Pereira, ed., (Zaragoza, 1980) 35. pp. 52-54.

the above problems lies in the writings of Isidore of Seville concerning the reign of Leovigild. In describing the conquests of this king in 568, Isidore emphasizes the number of rebellious cities captured, which indicates a degree of localized autonomous rule, along with which a certain level of civic pride would naturally be associated, and also that the focus upon such centres by Leovigild demonstrates their importance to the Visigothic kingship in the sixth century.¹⁵ Let us now turn our attention to the last two sources to be briefly discussed in relation to the issues of local identities and urban administration in early medieval Spain, those of Julian of Toledo and of the *Leges Visigothorum*.

The *Historia Wambae Regis*, or the Story of Wamba, was a latter seventh century work produced by Julian of Toledo that focused primarily on the events surrounding the reign of this Visigothic king. It will be worthwhile noting a few examples of ways in which this work sheds light on the issues of cultural identities and urban administration in Visigothic Spain by the late seventh century. In the recent translation of the work, J.M. Pizarro has emphasized that there was continuity by early medieval Spanish authors in referring to the region of Septimania as its former Roman name of Gallia Narbonensis, a point which would seem to be unique to Visigothic Spain and not viewed elsewhere in the Merovingian or Lombard realms.¹⁶ Along with this example of a certain degree of affection for Late Roman customs, the original writings also emphasize the importance of the *comes* within the urban environment, for example, in the ability of the rebel

¹⁵ Isidore of Seville, *History of the Goths, Vandals and Suevi*, G. Donini and G.B. Ford trans., (Leiden, 1970) p. 23. 49, for the Latin see Isidore of Seville, *Las Historias de los Godos, Vandalos y Suevos de Isidore de Sevilla*, C.R. Alonso, ed., (Leon, 1975) 49. pp. 252-256.

¹⁶ Julian of Toledo, *The Story of Wamba*, J.M. Pizarro trans., (Washington D.C., 2005) p. 175.

Hildericus of Nîmes to oust the bishop Aregius from his see and then send him as a hostage to the Franks.¹⁷ The cultural and urban landscape of Visigothic Spain was largely one of varying degrees of local authority by the ecclesiastical and secular officials, with the latter often emerging dominant, and a context in which a certain level of Hispano-Roman customs were maintained under an overall framework controlled by the Visigothic aristocracy.

Our last primary source to be examined, that of the *Leges Visigothorum*, particularly the edition known as the *forum iudicum*, will also receive much greater scrutiny in the third chapter, for the moment let us look at a key example of how the Visigothic elite desired to legislate over their subjects, and how modern historians have used this material to determine its reflection of cultural identities developing at the time. One of the most hotly debated subjects for decades, with regards to early medieval kingdoms, has been that of settlement and the strategies behind accommodation of newly arrived landowners; the *Leges Visigothorum* state that two-thirds of the lands were to be granted to the Gothic aristocracy, with the Hispano-Roman landowner maintaining the final third,¹⁸ although this may not have been the actual, physical land itself, but rather the revenues derived from the territory and its economic output. While this reinforces the notion that the Visigoths established themselves as the dominant political group within the region, it should also be noted that marriage between Visigoth and Hispano-Roman was permitted by the time the laws were written,¹⁹ and this policy allowed for a certain degree of cultural exchange to take place at all levels of society. Modern scholars

¹⁷ Ibid, p. 186, or the original Julian of Toledo, *Historia Wambae*, W. Levison, ed., *MGH, SRM*, V, (Hanover and Leipzig, 1910), Liber de historia Galliae, VI.

¹⁸ *Leges Visigothorum*, K. Zeumer, ed., *MGH I*, (Hanover, 1902) X. I. VIII, and XVI.

¹⁹ Ibid, III. I. II.

generally dismiss the laws as indicators of how life actually functioned within Visigothic Spain, but there is a consensus that they do represent how the aristocracy sought to identify itself vis-à-vis the population at large.

Cultural exchange and the archaeological record for the Visigoths

One of the major problems when dealing with Spanish archaeology and its application to the case of Visigothic Spain is that there is a discrepancy between the regions that produced the primary literature and those where material evidence has been excavated. The focus for archaeology has been primarily in the Northeast and Northwest regions of the peninsula, or in the areas surrounding Toledo, and the lack of Visigothic finds in Merida is a clear example of this difficulty, seeing as how this was a Visigothic centre that produced the *VSPE*, one of the most important literary sources for the early medieval period in Spain.²⁰ Although there is a lack of structural evidence in Merida, its prominent political role established by the sources alongside its economic output as one of the localized mints of Visigothic Spain for gold coinage, clearly demonstrates that it not only continued to exist as a vital urban centre at the local level, but was also of central interest and import to the royal capital at Toledo as well.²¹ This balance between localized government and centralized royal authority within an overall Visigothic framework, particularly in the seventh century, is a key focal point for historians.

²⁰ R. Collins, *Visigothic Spain, 409-711* (Oxford, 2006) p. 214.

²¹ The localization of the mints and their relative autonomy from Toledo, while at the same time their maintaining a high level of uniformity in style and quality has been attested for in D.M. Metcalf, 'Visigothic Monetary History,' *The Visigoths: Studies in Culture and Society* (Leiden and Boston, 1998) pp. 205-206, and K.E. Carr has emphasized that half of the 3500 gold *tremisses* came from the cities of Toledo, Merida, Sevilla, or Cordoba, see K.E. Carr, *Vandals to Visigoths: Rural Settlement Patterns in Early Medieval Spain* (Ann Arbor, 2002) p. 137.

There are a few other significant points worth identifying regarding the localization of urban administration during the rule of the Visigoths in *Hispania* in the early medieval period. The example of Clunia is an interesting one, as its surrounding area is dotted with smaller communities and fortified *castra* from the fifth century onwards, and the necropoleis tend to be situated in the vicinity of these more localized settlements, with the exceptions of Ventosilla and Tritium.²² There is also an example of a previous Late Roman tower, or *turris*, being converted into a more fortified *castrum* during the Visigothic period at Tedeja, possibly with the intention of using it as a focal point away from the more settled residential areas in the Vallejo de Santillán.²³ This decentralization of the urban landscape was not only limited to the territories surrounding the cities in early medieval northern Spain, but also occurred within the walls in varying degrees, for example, with the conversion of the Late Roman *insulae*, baths, and *domus* of Barcino into smaller homesteads during the sixth and seventh centuries.²⁴ It is clear to historians that there was a relative degree of localized autonomy taking place in the urban administration of Visigothic Spain, with the court at Toledo providing a loose, overall framework within which to operate particularly following the seventh century and the conquests of Leovigild.

With respect to the conversion of pagan temples to churches in Visigothic Spain, this process occurred relatively late in the sixth and seventh centuries, largely due to the

²² A. Cepas, 'The Ending of the Roman City: The Case of Clunia in the Northern Plateau of Spain,' in W. Davies, G. Halsall and A. Reynolds, ed., *People and Space in the Middle Ages, 300-1300* (Turnhout, 2006) pp. 203-206.

²³ I. Martín Viso, 'Central Places and the Territorial Organization of Communities: the Occupation of Hilltop Sites in Early Medieval Northern Castile,' in *People and Space in the Middle Ages, 300-1300*, p. 176.

²⁴ C. Godoy and J.M. Gurt, 'Barcino, de Sede imperial a urbs regia in epoca Visigoda,' in J.M. Gurt and G. Ripoll, ed., *Sedes Regiae, (ann. 400-800)*, (Barcelona, 2000) p. 450.

fact that removal of such structures was labour and time intensive, but also due to the fact that materials could be reused sporadically from the structures, for example, the recycling of stone from the Temple of Concordia in Merida into residences from the fifth century onward.²⁵

The issue of cultural exchange is directly linked to the question of what goods are found in the early medieval burial sites of Visigothic Spain, although it is more often than not very difficult to distinguish such evidence along ethnic lines. Roger Collins has demonstrated the challenges scholars face when using archaeological material to tackle this question; he discusses the *Reihengraber*, or ‘row graves’, found in the Meseta plateau region of northern Spain that could possibly be attributed to Visigothic settlement, but also emphasizes these excavations have not been well maintained or recorded.²⁶ The rural burials at El Carpio de Tajo have received more detailed analysis, and the fact that these two separate burials seem to merge together by the sixth century has been advocated as a sign that Visigothic settlers were reconstructing their identities alongside the Hispano-Roman inhabitants in the countryside.²⁷ This is not to say that it was a major urban centre demonstrating the trend, as there were about an average of 40 burials per generation at the site, making it a relatively small scale settlement,²⁸ and the notion that it represents a merging of ethnic identities and cultures is largely based in extrapolation by modern scholars rather than any exact evidence for this ethnogenesis

²⁵ J. Arce, ‘Fana, templa, delubra y *destrui praecipimus*: El final de los templos de la Hispania Romana,’ *Archivo Español de Arqueología*, LXXIX (Madrid, 2006) pp. 115-122.

²⁶ R. Collins, *Visigothic Spain, 409-711*, p. 174.

²⁷ M. Kulikowski, ‘Ethnicity, Rulership and Early Medieval Frontiers,’ *Borders, Barriers and Ethnogenesis: Frontiers in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages* (Turnhout, 2005) p. 251.

²⁸ R. Collins, *Visigothic Spain, 409-711*, p. 181.

taking place in the region from the fifth century onwards. All in all, the problem of defining ethnic and cultural affiliations and how individuals perceived themselves in the archaeological record remains very difficult to resolve, yet it is important to acknowledge steps and advances in the research that have been undertaken recently by archaeologists.

Urban administration and the sources for Lombard Italy

The situation regarding local urban administration in the Lombard kingdom of northern Italy from the mid-sixth through to the mid-eighth centuries differs greatly from those of the Visigoths in Spain or the Merovingians in *Francia*, in that the Lombards arrived into the Italian peninsula following an exhaustive sixth century for the Roman inhabitants due to the draining costs of the Gothic War (535-54), and also due to the fact that Theoderic (471-526) had pursued an explicit policy of *renovatio urbium* during his governance over Italy.²⁹ It has been suggested that the Lombards emulated Late Roman coinage and epigraphy, due to the highly urbanized environment having made a direct impression upon the Lombard elite, at least in the realm of urban administration and tools of government.³⁰ Although it has often been emphasized by historians that we should not assume the earlier periods of Lombard rule followed the patterns established in the writings of Paul the Deacon, at the same time his worth and contribution to the subject should not be undervalued. The lack of any native narrative sources, for example in the

²⁹ For a summary of the public works attributed to the reign of Theoderic, see G.P. Brogiolo, 'Ideas of the town in Italy during the transition from antiquity to the middle ages,' *The Idea and Ideal of the Town between Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages* (Leiden and Boston, 1999) p. 105.

³⁰ B. Trigger, *A History of Archaeological Thought* (Cambridge, 2006) pp. 48-49.

early medieval Burgundian or Bavarian cases,³¹ proves a greater problem to scholars than having to extrapolate from an admittedly late source such as the works of Paul the Deacon in the eighth century.

A couple of brief examples of this contribution to our understanding of urban administration and cultural identities regarding the *regnum Langobardorum* in the sixth to eighth centuries will now be presented. First, in describing the eighteen provinces of Italy and their respective urban areas, townships and territories, Paul demonstrates not only his understanding of the landscape of Lombard Italy, but also that he perceived the importance of such urban centres on a personal level as well.³² His attention to detail regarding the individual circumstances for the Lombard centres and their continuity or breaking from Late Roman *civitates* is also evident within this listing, for example, in his description of how Cividale del Friuli rose to prominence at the expense of Aquileia for strategic purposes.³³ Second, with respect to the question of cultural exchanges taking place within the Lombard territories, Paul makes an interesting case for the ‘Lombard’ identity gaining in importance within the military and aristocratic spheres, when he states that in the defence of Cividale against the Avars, the *dux* Gisulf rallied all ‘Lombards’ to resist the attack.³⁴ This label cannot be viewed as necessarily referring to individuals of a Lombard ethnic background, and may have been applied as a broader term for those serving in a military capacity to the local aristocracy or Lombard kings. That being said, given the fragmentary social and political structures of sixth to eighth century Italy, it is

³¹ C.R. Bowlus, ‘Ethnogenesis: the tyranny of a concept,’ *On Barbarian Identity: critical approaches to ethnicity in the Early Middle Ages* (Turnhout, 2002) pp. 249-250.

³² Paul the Deacon, *Storia dei Longobardi*, L. Capo, ed., (Milan, 2006) II. 14-22.

³³ *Ibid*, II. 14.

³⁴ *Ibid*, IV. 37. 3-5.

perhaps not surprising that individuals within the *regnum Langobardorum* would seek to identify themselves as Lombards vis-à-vis the Roman or Byzantine governments and peoples to the southwest and southeast.

Although Paul the Deacon provides us with some insight into these matters, particularly within the context of the latter seventh and early eighth centuries, questions of ethnic identities, exchanges and interactions between different cultures, and the micromanagement of urban areas as represented by these groups, did not generally factor into the mindsets or ways of thinking of the primary authors at the time. For example, even though Fredegar discusses the Scandinavian origin stories of the Lombards,³⁵ he takes these stories at face value and does not elaborate on how the Lombards, or Franks for that matter, sought to maintain their own sense of identity in relation to the Late Roman subjects within the kingdoms, or whether there was a clear incentive or trend for the latter to adopt the values and systems of the new landowning elite classes. The charter evidence, as has been illustrated by Stephen Fanning, suffers from both the problems of an overrepresentation of the eighth century and also this above lack of concern or attention to issues of ethnic interaction or how it impacted localized urban governance.³⁶ It is largely due to these considerations that tracing these processes in fifth to seventh century Lombard Italy often proves elusive to modern historians when using the primary sources as the basis for such studies.

In looking at the earlier centuries of Lombard rule in northern Italy, Gregory of Tours in his discussion of the failed attempt by Childebert II (570-95) to oust the

³⁵ Fredegar, *Fredegarii et aliorum chronica*, B. Krusch, ed., *MGH, SRM*, II, (Hanover, 1888) Lib. III, 65.

³⁶ S. Fanning, 'A Review of Lombard Prosopography,' in *Medieval Prosopography*, 2: 1, (Kalamazoo, 1981) p. 17.

Lombards from their newly established position in the Po valley, demonstrates an interesting point regarding how the overall polity of the Lombard peoples was viewed by contemporaries. In describing how Childebert had promised the Byzantine emperor Maurice (582-602) to rid the Italian peninsula of the Lombard presence,³⁷ Gregory provides a potential illustration of two things: First, his work distinguishes the Merovingians from the Lombards in terms of how they were viewed by Eastern rulers and the favours which could be gained in attempting to support imperial policy within the Italian peninsula. Second, it also reflects the fact that the Lombards were viewed in the last decades of the sixth century as a threat to the interests of both the Frankish and Byzantine rulers. Surrounded by hostile peoples, this earlier context supports the idea that by the seventh and eighth centuries a Lombard identity, at least in the aristocratic and military circles, would have continued to grow in importance, although whether this was deliberately maintained along the lines of the *traditionskern* model or a more organic process engaged in by the people is hard to tell.

There is one other account for the earlier centuries of Lombard development that we should discuss prior to looking at the *Leges Langobardorum*, and it provides an example of why the term ‘Germanic’ should only be used when there is a direct and undeniable common tradition between peoples originating in what would have been *Germania* to Roman sources. In his description of the war waged by the Heruls on the Lombards in the sixth century, Procopius portrays the latter as having been victimized

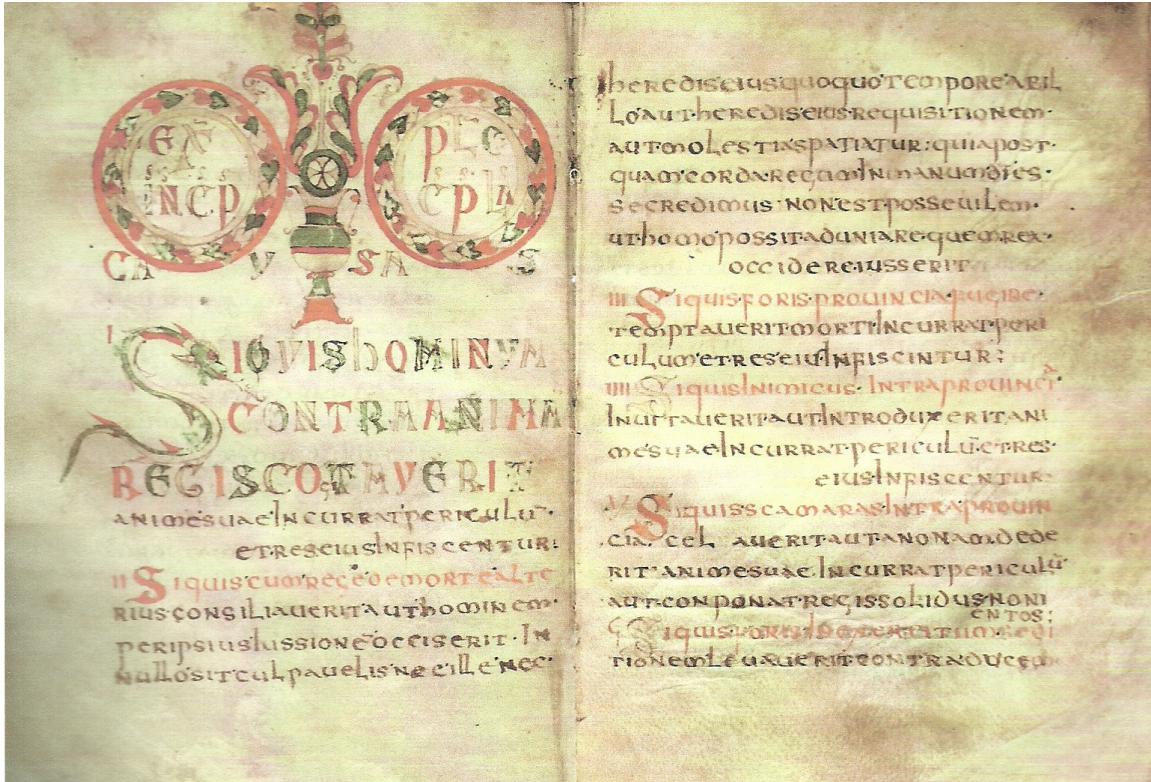
³⁷ Gregory of Tours, *Libri Historiarum X*, B. Krusch and W. Levison, edd., *MGH, SRM*, tom. 1.1, (Hanover, 1951) IX. 25.

after continual gestures of goodwill to the former by means of political envoys.³⁸ The amount of distinction Procopius emphasizes between the various peoples involved in the conflict and the subsequent repercussions shows that even to sixth century authors of a Late Roman heritage and cultural affiliation, the differences between various peoples and how they interacted with one another was apparent. The long established modern notion that the primary sources sought to group peoples together under convenient or more manageable labels, while this is often the case and can be attested in a wide array of the material, does not mean that these authors were totally inept at identifying or distinguishing the smaller communities when it was important to do so.

One interesting point raised by the *Leges Langobardorum* is that the royal court at Pavia by the time of Rothari (636-52) emphasized the ties of the *duces* to the king, and that the former was a direct representative of royal authority over his respective territory.³⁹ This is an example of the royal prerogative trying to bind the relatively autonomous and independent duchies of the Lombard kingdom through means of legal precedent, yet this personal system of loyalties to the crown reinforces the notion that the aristocracy and landowning classes had much to gain by either maintaining their Lombard identities or in the case of the Roman subjects adopting them. It was not until the *Liutprandi leges* that the *civitas* as an administrative unit is mentioned for the first time. These seventh century laws, with regards to the cities, focus primarily on the relationship between creditor and debtor payment agreements, and clearly identify the

³⁸ Procopius, *History of the Wars, Secret History and Buildings*, A. Cameron, trans., (New York, 1967) p. 214, and for the events surrounding the war between the Heruls and Lombards see Procopius, *Procopii Caesariensis opera omnia*, J. Haury, ed., (Leipzig, 1962-64) pp. 209-214.

³⁹ *Le Leggi dei Longobardi: Storia, Memoria e Diritto di un Popolo Germanico*, C. Azzara and S. Gasparri, edd., (Rome, 2005) p. 16. *Edictum Rothari*, 6.



An eighth-century edition of the Edict of Rothari, the original image can be found in O. Huck, 'Les droits barbares,' in Aillagon, J.J., dir., *Rome et les Barbares: La Naissance d'un Nouveau Monde* (Venice, 2008) p. 521.

civitas as the key for economic transactions or political decision-making.⁴⁰ The primary sources indicate an adoption of Lombard identity in the military and elite sectors of society, even if this label was used by contemporaries as an overall term for individuals in the aristocracy by the eighth century, while the high level of urban administration from

⁴⁰ Ibid, p. 148, *Liutprandi leges*, 16.

the Late Roman period continued to be maintained, although the system and network of these cities in northern Italy did not go without modifications under the new ruling elite.

Cultural interaction and the material evidence for the Lombards

In discussing the urban structures and fortifications of Late Roman Italy, particularly those in the northern regions such as Milan or Ravenna, archaeologists have emphasized that the archaeological record does not usually reflect the claims of literary sources from the period. The case of Procopius and the purported public works of the Eastern Empire not showing up in the material evidence is used as a direct example of this problem which modern scholars must face.⁴¹ In the cases of Verona and Brescia, which maintained a relatively high degree of continued urban structural integrity and administrative significance, G.P. Brogiolo has illustrated that they were largely rebuilt in the fifth century following a period of strong decline.⁴² Although this occurred earlier than our period in question from the mid-sixth to mid-eighth centuries, it nonetheless represents the discrepancy between literary and archaeological materials pertaining to urban occupation in the late antique or early medieval periods.

The above problem of interpretation is not limited to a discourse between the literary and archaeological sources, it can in fact take place within each of these approaches themselves. For example, in discussing the case of Verona, Neil Christie mentions how the abandonment of its circus and theatre have been overlooked by

⁴¹ N. Christie, 'War and Order: urban remodeling and defensive strategies in Late Roman Italy,' in L. Lavan, ed., *Recent Research in Late Antique Urbanism* (Portsmouth, 2001) p. 111.

⁴² G.P. Brogiolo, 'Brescia: Building Transformations in a Lombard City,' in K. Randsborg, ed., *The Birth of Europe: Archaeology and Social Development in the First Millennium A.D.* (Rome, 1989) pp. 157-159.

archaeologists in favour of the continuity of its walls and water supply as indicators of urban continuity during the Lombard period of government.⁴³ Clearly then, any methodological approach to the question of urban administration and settlement under the *regnum langobardorum* must address these types of considerations.

A further problem scholars of urbanism in early medieval Italy face is whether or not continuity and urban vitality is measured simply by continual occupation of a site, or by the quality of materials used in constructing new urban structures or in the modification of existing ones. The views surrounding this matter that have been put forth by modern authors are wide ranging, and the issue of urban occupation and government under the Lombards is not an easy one to resolve. One school of thought has emphasized that while the quality of building materials decreased from the mid-sixth to mid-seventh centuries, there nonetheless continued to be a relatively high level of urban culture and identification with these centres at the local levels of society.⁴⁴ Another view takes a more pessimistic stance regarding the impact of the Lombards upon the urban environment; the emphasis upon the mid-seventh to ninth centuries as a time of urban revival and optimism,⁴⁵ coupled with the notion that the Lombards engaged in a 'scorched earth' policy upon their entering the peninsula,⁴⁶ projects an overall sense of significant urban decline towards more fortified *castra* during our earlier period of study. These problems are further exacerbated by the continued occupation of many of these

⁴³ N. Christie, *From Constantine to Charlemagne: An Archaeology of Italy AD 300-800* (Aldershot, 2006) pp. 183-185.

⁴⁴ B. Ward-Perkins, 'Continuists, catastrophists, and the towns of post-Roman northern Italy,' in *Papers of the British School at Rome*, 65, (Rome, 1997) p. 163.

⁴⁵ G.P. Brogiolo, 'Ideas of the town in Italy during the transition from antiquity to the middle ages,' *The Idea and Ideal of the Town between Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages*, p. 101.

⁴⁶ *Ibid*, p. 119.

sites into modern times, and Ross Balzaretto has emphasized the need for a higher level of urban archaeology in the Po valley, in order to reconcile some of these considerations.⁴⁷ For the time being let us accept the general agreement between historians that although the quality of materials and structures within the Lombard cities remains difficult to determine, the urban centres either continued to provide the dominant focal point of social and political activity, or reasserted themselves as such once the new ruling elite had established itself over the local territories.

Within this network of *civitates* and *castra* in northern Italy, serving as social, economic and political centres at the local level with varying degrees of direct connection to the royal court at Pavia, what can be said about the cultural exchanges taking place between the Lombard and Roman inhabitants? It has been suggested that the Lombard *arimanniae* were largely settled within existing fortified *castra* or *civitates* due to a lack of military colonies or institutions in the earlier phase of Lombard occupation of the area,⁴⁸ a point that would be feasible granted the relatively low number of Lombards vis-à-vis the Roman populace,⁴⁹ while others have proposed a more gradual and cautious approach to settlement. Along the lines of this second opinion it has been argued that by the end of the sixth century, Lombard settlement shifted away from gates and extramural patterns to more urban patterns of residence.⁵⁰ Stefano Gasparri has also advocated this view, along with a gradual synthesis and fusion of Lombard and Roman settlement,

⁴⁷ R. Balzaretto, 'Cities and Markets in the Early Middle Ages,' in G. Ausenda, ed., *After Empire: Towards an Ethnology of Europe's Barbarians* (Woodbridge, 1995) p. 120.

⁴⁸ D. Harrison, *The Early State and the Towns: Forms of Integration in Lombard Italy AD 568-774* (Lund, 1993) p. 69.

⁴⁹ N. Christie, *From Constantine to Charlemagne*, p. 59.

⁵⁰ C. La Rocca, 'Public Buildings and Urban Change in Northern Italy in the Early Medieval Period,' in J. Rich, ed., *The City in Late Antiquity* (London, 1992) pp. 168-169.

regarding the case of Pavia in particular, which would support the notion that Lombard identity was becoming preferable to a Roman one in the military and aristocratic spheres of society.⁵¹ These types of shifts are difficult to pinpoint in the archaeological record, this is largely conjecture between the evidence that is available, however scarce, and the literary sources discussed earlier in the chapter.

Despite the above points, Roman cultural traits did impact the new *regnum Langobardorum*, as we have already established such processes are highly dynamic; the emulation of Byzantine style cameos and columns in the eighth century at Brescia provide one example of continued Roman culture, at least at the level of art and architecture.⁵² When we take both the literary and archaeological sources for the Lombards into account, they paint a picture of a loose network of relatively autonomous urban centres, tied to the kingship with respect to their geographical location at either the centre or periphery. Under such a system, it was of benefit to those individuals seeking military service or high office to adopt a Lombard identity following the sixth century. That being said, it also allowed for Roman styles, customs, and traditions, so long as they did not conflict with the aristocratic or royal policies that were in turn largely determined by the hostility from surrounding Byzantine, Frankish or Roman governments.

Chroniclers and legal texts for the early medieval Franks

The backbone for any study relating to urban administration or ethnic interaction taking place within the Merovingian *Teilreiche* during the sixth century is undoubtedly that of

⁵¹ S. Gasparri, 'Pavia longobarda,' in *Storia di Pavia, II: L'Alto Medioevo*, (Milan: 1987) p. 31.

⁵² G.P. Bognetti, 'Brescia dei Goti e dei Longobardi,' in G. Alfieri, ed., *Dalle origini alla caduta della signoria viscontea (1426)*, (Brescia, 1963-64) pp. 440-445.

Gregory of Tours. His position as both the bishop of Tours and also his Gallo-Roman heritage, along with his attention to details and relative accuracy of his *decem libri historiarum*, have established Gregory as one of the most important chroniclers for the early medieval era. Although Gregory does not often focus upon issues such as cultural interaction within the urban environment, he does discuss the high political events with constant reference to the *civitates* of the Merovingian realms. For example, with the division of the kingdom upon the death of Chlothar I (511-61), his son Sigibert I (635-75) became the King of Austrasia and immediately demanded the city of Arles be placed under his governance by sending troops from Clermont-Ferrand against it under the *comes* Firminus.⁵³ This demonstrates the importance of urban centres and local administration as focal points for military service and recruitment in the latter sixth century to the Merovingian rulers,⁵⁴ and numerous other cases such as the one mentioned above can be viewed in the work of Gregory which also support this notion of *civitates* playing a primary socio-political role during this period, and they will be presented in the respective case study.

The *libri decem historiarum* do focus for the most part upon high political events surrounding the local aristocracy or the royal courts of the Merovingians, and their vested interests in the countryside or urban landscape. An example of the former case can be seen in his description of the defences of the *comes* and *patricius* Mummolus against the

⁵³ Gregory of Tours, *Libri Historiarum* X, IV. 22.

⁵⁴ S.T. Loseby has also supported the view that a city-based form of military service continued as a 'hangover' from the Late Roman period, see S.T. Loseby, 'Gregory's Cities: Urban Functions in Sixth-Century Gaul,' *Franks and Alamanni in the Merovingian Period: An Ethnographic Perspective* (Woodbridge, 1998) p. 247.

Lombards centred around Avignon,⁵⁵ but they occasionally illustrate the matter of urban administration and life regarding the lower levels of society as well. The claims that construction of a circus and theatre took place under Chilperic I (561-84) at Soissons and Paris are generally viewed as false by modern historians due to a lack of any corresponding archaeological evidence in the area, and are considered to be a possible goal that Chilperic hoped someday to accomplish.⁵⁶ Even if this is indeed the case, it nonetheless reflects that in the sixth century the Merovingian kings understood the importance and potential for their *civitates* as social gathering points in which high levels of interaction could be organized, for example, in the form of spectacles mentioned above. The importance of these centres as economic points of administration for the overall populace can also be seen in the works of Gregory of Tours when he refers to the existence of a *domus negotiantum* in Paris as well.⁵⁷ Although such examples are centred around the royal capitals, there is also evidence for economic administration of other cities by the crown; the punishment of the people of Limoges under Chilperic I for their having killed one tax collector Mark clearly indicates that some form of tax system and local government was in place, which was directly under the authority of the royal court.⁵⁸ The network of cities in the region continued to be of political and social relevance into the latter sixth century under the Merovingians, although to what extent

⁵⁵ Ibid, VI. 26, and for a detailed analysis of the military strategies of Mummolus and their relationship to the urban landscape as portrayed by Gregory of Tours, see B.S. Bachrach, 'Gregory of Tours as a Military Historian,' *The World of Gregory of Tours: Cultures, Beliefs and Traditions* (Leiden, 2002) pp. 357-360.

⁵⁶ Gregory of Tours, *Libri Historiarum X*, V. 17, and for the lack of archaeological evidence regarding the matter see Y. Hen, *Culture and Religion in Merovingian Gaul A.D. 481-751* (Leiden, 1995) p. 225.

⁵⁷ Gregory of Tours, *Libri Historiarum X*, VI. 32, and VIII. 33.

⁵⁸ Ibid, V. 28.

this system was maintained or altered during their rule will undergo further scrutiny in the fifth chapter.

On the subject of ethnic exchanges between peoples within the *Teilreiche* Gregory of Tours is less directly concerned, but his own Gallo-Roman heritage and high position in the Church, along with the overall image presented by his writings represents that the Roman inhabitants, at least in the upper stratus of society, were encouraged by the Frankish royalty to maintain their positions within the ecclesiastical sphere. For example, the power of royal bestowal of positions as being absolute and being granted to Gallo-Romans can be seen in his description of Chlothar I giving 'title deeds' to Anastasius.⁵⁹ The king was also a direct arbiter of the ecclesiastical offices in a given city, as can be attested for in the petitioning of the people of Tours for Eufremanus to serve as their bishop to the Merovingian authority.⁶⁰ Although the matter was not always so clearly defined, there was a high level of continuity of Gallo-Roman identity within the ecclesiastical sector of Merovingian society, with the Frankish nobility serving as the central and local secular authorities to which the former were directly bound and with whom constant interaction must have taken place.

In dealing with the seventh and eighth centuries in *Francia* our literary sources become more sporadic and lack the overall sense of narrative provided by Gregory of Tours, and historians must unfortunately make use of more fragmentary material. The *Liber Historiae Francorum* on the subject of royal succession in the seventh century, shows a high degree of localized power being maintained by the Frankish nobility with respect to the central governments of the kingdoms, particularly in the case of their

⁵⁹ Ibid, IV. 12.

⁶⁰ Ibid, IV. 15.

selection of Clovis II (637-c. 658) as successor to his father Dagobert I (623-39) upon the latter's death.⁶¹ The events surrounding the 'Grimoald coup' following this demonstrate that in the mid-seventh century the Frankish nobility had already begun to aspire to the highest secular positions within the kingdoms, and that the kingships along with their respective urban bases of power were viewed as important to attaining these goals.⁶² Although a regionally based system of government often existed, Fredegar provides one indication that a Frankish identity was overarching this more varied framework, when he writes that despite military commanders from a wide range of backgrounds being sent to fight the Gascons under Chadoind in 635, the army was referred to as the *exercitus uero francorum*.⁶³ The legal texts reinforce the notion that a Frankish identity was preferable in this area of society as well. For example, the murder of a member of the king's *trustis* was viewed with greater severity than the murder of a Roman member of the royal court.⁶⁴ There was a clear incentive within the Merovingian territories and cities to adopt a Frankish self-perception at the highest political and military spheres, but at the same time a Gallo-Roman heritage was not viewed as tantamount, since Roman members of the court and military figures are attested for in the sources.

Local identities and archaeology for the Merovingian period

The situation in what is now France differs slightly from the cases of Spain or Italy, in that archaeological excavations have been undertaken in recent years to a greater extent

⁶¹ *Liber Historiae Francorum*, B. Krusch, ed., *MGH, SRM*, II (Hanover, 1888) 43.

⁶² *Ibid*, 43. pp. 315-316.

⁶³ Fredegar, *Fredegarii et aliorum chronica*, IV. 78. 17.

⁶⁴ *Pactus Legis Salicae*, K.A. Eckhardt, ed., *MGH, LS*, I, 4, 1, (Hanover, 1962), LVI. 5, and LVI. 8.

in what were major urban centres during the Early Middle Ages. Part of the problem though is the regional differences between the various Frankish realms, particularly the northern areas around Austrasia when contrasted with those of Neustria or Aquitaine; much of the recent archaeological work has been conducted primarily in the northern regions, which has led to much conjecture regarding the other Merovingian areas and their archaeological records. Guy Halsall, in his study on early medieval Metz, has advocated that the archaeological record for the Austrasian region represents a society in which Roman and Frankish identity were virtually indistinguishable from one another in the sixth century, at least in terms of the burial evidence, style, and traceable signs of identity.⁶⁵ The regional distinction between Neustria and Aquitaine on the one hand, and Austrasia and Thuringia on the other, is reflected in the legal texts of the Merovingians; the classification of Franks or Romans as *peregrini* in the *Lex Ribuarica* as opposed to their regular inclusion within the *Pactus legis Salicae* is an example of this division of local identities.⁶⁶ This paints a very different picture from the more southern regions with which the literary sources are primarily concerned, in which there exists a relatively clear distinction between the two social groups at the aristocratic level.

Historians have proposed that Merovingian burials could possibly be divided into three general categories depending on whether they were found to contain a sword, spear and arrowheads, or no weaponry, with each of these cases representing an *ingenuus*, *laeti*, or *servus* respectively.⁶⁷ However, as has been emphasized by Alain Dierkins and

⁶⁵ G. Halsall, *Settlement and Social Organization: The Merovingian Region of Metz* (Cambridge, 1995) p. 9.

⁶⁶ *Lex Ribuarica*, F. Beyerle and R. Buchner, edd., *MGH, LS*, I, 3, 2 (Hanover, 1854) LV. 36. p. 92.

⁶⁷ E. James, *The Franks*, (Oxford, 1988) pp. 217-218.

Patrick Périn, it is almost impossible in the context of early medieval archaeology to determine ethnicity or local identities based upon material finds such as these.⁶⁸ While there may be a greater amount of material relating to the cities of Merovingian *Francia*, it is clear that the obstacle of determining ethnic or cultural identities or levels of social interaction remains as much a barrier in this case as it does to those of the Visigoths and Lombards previously discussed.

There is a possible line of argument that can be pursued based on the current state of archaeological research for this regional difference, one which takes into account the various factors so far examined in the literary and archaeological materials. In discussing the cemetery of Ennery near Metz, the strong representation of female burial goods and jewelry, with an absence of weaponry or traditional signs of early medieval male burial objects has been emphasized.⁶⁹ If we take into account that this region has been considered under-urbanized in contrast with the other post-Roman kingdoms and with the other Merovingian realms,⁷⁰ alongside the notion that Frankish identities were preferable within military circles of activity, could this be an indication of a higher level of Frankish self-perception felt by the inhabitants of Austrasia, albeit one that was forced to view itself in direct contrast to the other Merovingian aristocracies of the neighbouring kingdoms? This is a potential question worth pursuing in future research by archaeologists, but much depends on the state of French archaeology for the Merovingian

⁶⁸ A. Dierkens and P. Périn, 'Death and burial in Gaul and Germania, 4th-8th century,' in M. Brown and L. Webster, edd., *The Transformation of the Roman World AD 400-900*, (London, 1997) p. 89.

⁶⁹ G. Halsall, 'Female status and power in early Merovingian central Austrasia: the burial evidence,' in *Early Medieval Europe*, Vol. 5, (Oxford, 1996) p. 6.

⁷⁰ S.T. Loseby, 'Urban failures in late-antique Gaul,' in T.R. Slater, ed., *Towns in Decline AD 100-1600*, (Aldershot, 2000) p. 91.

period in the counterparts to this one region around Metz. Bearing this in mind, let us look at a few other ways in which archaeological material provides insights into the urban administration or cultural exchanges within *Francia* during the sixth to eighth centuries.

Archaeologists have often emphasized the general continuity of urban settlement during the Merovingian period, at least in terms of the continued occupation of the *civitates* to some degree. The continued usage of Late Roman extramural structures such as aqueducts, highways and cemeteries, and the general street layouts within the walls of the city have been promoted as indicators of this continuity, although they were used for different functions and in a different overall context by the Frankish elite.⁷¹ Historians have also supported the general continued occupation of urban centres and burial sites under the Merovingians, even in those northern centres such as Metz or Rheims, and have argued that a high level of localization of the aristocracy took place around such settlements.⁷² Stéphane Lebecq has argued for this continuity from the Late Roman period along numismatic lines, in the continued use of gold coinage under the Merovingians as opposed to the lack of such evidence for its usage during the later Carolingian era.⁷³ The continuity of certain Late Roman urban functions such as these and the city-based tax system mentioned in the primary sources, makes pinpointing Frankish impact upon the *civitates* of the Merovingian *Teilreiche* difficult to judge with any degree of certainty. Despite these obstacles to scholars of the subject, it is important to take on board any evidence or views that can be gained from the archaeological record

⁷¹ P. Périn, 'Settlement and Cemeteries in Merovingian Gaul,' *The World of Gregory of Tours*, pp. 68-69.

⁷² G. Halsall, 'Villas, Territories and Communities in Merovingian Northern Gaul,' in *People and Space in the Middle Ages, 300-1300*, pp. 214-215.

⁷³ S. Lebecq, 'Routes of change: production and distribution in the west (5th-8th century),' in *The Transformation of the Roman World AD 400-900*, p. 76.

for the period, as it is through archaeology that we have the best chance of viewing processes such as cultural exchange or urban life for those members of society who were not directly tied to the crown or clergy through offices of high authority.

What do these points regarding the material evidence for early medieval *Francia* tell us about the methods of urban administration and cultural interaction? The burial finds and urban archaeology largely correlate with the insights gained from the primary sources, in that a loose network of *civitates* continued to serve the populace as a socio-political and economic focal point. At the same time the trend of localization of power that had been taking place since the third century continued to develop into new forms of administration. With respect to the actual vitality or functionality of these cities, it is difficult to tell given the lack of coherent, chronological urban excavations at this point in time. Periodic regional division of the Merovingian territories into constituent kingdoms makes it even more difficult to approach the questions of urban administration and local identity from an archaeological perspective. The idea that the Franks first settled outside the cities and gradually assimilated into the overall population, while maintaining political supremacy and their identity at the upper strata of society would seem to correspond with the primary accounts discussed in the preceding section of this chapter.

Conclusion: Urban identities in the material records

The purpose of this chapter has largely been to highlight some of the key methodological problems and conceptual challenges any scholar of subjects such as early medieval urban government or ethnic identity during the Early Middle Ages must come to terms with when engaging with the available evidence. In all three cases the broader issues such as

The following three chapters will expand upon these questions and go into the specific detail for Visigothic Spain, Lombard Italy, and Merovingian *Francia* respectively, while at the same time they will avoid becoming weighted down in issues of terminology and application of labels as we examined during the first chapter of this work. After having presented the case studies and demonstrated their individual points regarding the matters of localized government at the city level and exchanges of cultural values or construction of identities, the final chapter of this work will compare and contrast the three cases, with the ultimate objective of determining to what extent they can be considered to have engaged in similar strategies of settlement and techniques of accommodation within the former Western Empire, and to what extent they developed along different lines into the eighth century. Alongside this, we will be comparing and contrasting to what extent the Roman traditions and customs of the region were maintained, or modified to fit into the new political framework.

The Visigothic Kingdom of Toledo, c. 700 AD



Modified and based upon R. Collins, Visigothic Spain 409-711, (Oxford, 2006) p. 175.

Chapter 3. The Spanish Kingdom of the Visigoths, 507-711 AD

This chapter will assess the impact of the Visigothic ruling elite upon pre-existing urban and socio-political structures in the area which today consists of Portugal, Spain and Languedoc in France. The increased archaeological activity of recent years combined with revised interpretations of the contemporary sources concerning Visigothic Spain has helped to shed light on certain aspects of its governance and social fabric that had traditionally been oversimplified or lacking in tangible evidence; the classical view of Hispano-Romans and Visigoths living in isolation from one another is a case in point.¹ Building upon such recent work and with the hope of bringing together the archaeological and literary studies into a coherent and plausible image of early medieval Spain, it will be argued that despite such insular notions having become outdated the Visigothic ruling classes nevertheless maintained a sense of identity vis-à-vis the Hispano-Roman populace, which in turn impacted the social order and its governance, particularly within the cities and more urbanized areas of the kingdom.

Although it is certainly true that the Visigoths experienced prolonged exposure to Roman martial, political and social institutions while serving as *foederati* long before establishing their *sedes regia* at Toledo in 580 AD,² the ruling elite had continued to

¹ For what is perhaps the most striking case of this traditional polarization, particularly in terms of land ownership, see E.A. Thompson, *The Goths in Spain* (Oxford, 1966) pp. 117-18.

² A detailed synopsis and account of the selection of Toledo can be found in F. Retamero, 'As Coins Go Home: Towns, Merchants, Bishops and Kings in Visigothic Spain,' *The Visigoths from the Migration Period to the Seventh Century: An Ethnographic*

maintain a sense of Visigothic identity to some extent, at least until the end of the 6th century AD, as can be seen in the adoption of more Hispano-Roman or Byzantine forms of dress and personal adornment following their conversion to Catholicism.³ It is logical to assume that, since such changes are noticeable following the Third Council of Toledo (589) and the subsequent conversion of the Visigoths to the Nicene doctrine that prior to this there was a degree of group consciousness in the Visigothic residents of Spain.⁴ Unfortunately it is difficult to tell whether this cultural difference could be attributed to specifically ‘Germanic’ or Arian traditions remains rather elusive given the present state of archaeological finds.⁵ Despite these problems, to say that the new Visigothic rulers would not have differed in any respect from the previous Late Roman governors or Hispano-Roman senatorial class would be very unlikely.

The views of historians and archaeologists at the current time lean towards the Visigothic element of early medieval Spain being gradually assimilated into the much

Perspective (Woodbridge, 1999) p. 273, see also L. Olmo Enciso, ‘Ciudad y estado en época visigoda: Toledo, la construcción de un nuevo paisaje urbano,’ in *Espacios Urbanos en el Occidente Mediterráneo (S. VI-VIII)*, D. Peris and L. Olmo Enciso, ed., (Toledo, 2010) pp. 89-90.

³ The archaeological support for this idea, based largely around finds from El Carpio de Tajo, can be seen in G. Ripoll López, ‘Symbolic Life and Signs of Identity in Visigothic Times,’ *The Visigoths from the Migration Period to the Seventh Century: An Ethnographic Perspective*, p. 414.

⁴ It is also worth noting that not everyone adopted the new faith, as late as the seventh century ecclesiastical councils at Toledo still referred to pagan and Christian focal points in the kingdom, although to what extent the pagan element consisted of non-Nicene Christian sects is difficult to ascertain, see R. Sanz Serrano, ‘Aistocracias paganas en Hispania Tardía (S. V-VII),’ *Gerión, Rivista de Historia Antigua*, Vol. Extra (Madrid, 2007) p. 463.

⁵ Problems of identifying exclusively Germanic identities are further exacerbated, due to the lack of male adornments or weapons found, in a society which was both patriarchal and focused around a warrior kinship in its earlier periods. For the absence of weaponry found in Visigothic graves see R. Collins, *Visigothic Spain, 409-711* (Oxford, 2006) pp. 182-183. As for the complete lack of male finds in general, refer to G. Ripoll López, ‘Symbolic Life and Signs of Identity in Visigothic Times,’ pp. 409-414.

larger Hispano-Roman regional identity over time. It has been argued that unlike the previous Visigothic kingdom at Toulouse (418-508) which was Arian and only nominally independent,⁶ the later *regnum Visigothorum* at Toledo was more secure and better able to reconcile the cultural differences between its peoples, largely due to the conversion of King Reccared (586-601) to Catholicism in the year 587.⁷ While there is clearly evidence in the sources and material record for this transition taking place in the late-sixth to eighth centuries, it is not entirely accurate when we examine the elite ruling classes of the kingdom.

A degree of traditional 'Gothic' group consciousness was maintained and promoted throughout this period, and while the specific processes of cultural exchange remain somewhat abstract, it was not simply a case of the smaller Visigothic population abandoning their identities. Arianism was one particular aspect associated with the earlier Visigoths, but it was not the sole defining feature of their culture. Their distinct styles of coinage, relationships with foreign powers, and usage of the term *Gothi* within the military sphere are all examples of the Visigothic ruling elite preserving a degree of their traditional values. To what extent these were no longer socially predominant and only utilized under specific circumstances is difficult to judge in the records, but for now

⁶ Others have argued that the Visigothic Kingdom of Toulouse was much more autonomous and ready to transfer to *Hispania* prior to 507, see C. Delaplace, 'Wisigoths et Ostrogoths en Gaule et en Espagne (411-534)' *XVIII^e Journées Internationales d'Archéologie Mérovingienne* (Paris, 2007) p. 13.

⁷ Y. Hen, *Roman Barbarians: The Royal Court and Culture in the Early Medieval West* (Basingstoke and NY, 2007) pp. 124-125, and for styles of burials brought into Spain by the Visigoths which continued into the late sixth century see P. Périn, 'L'armée de Vidimer et la question des dépôts funéraires chez les Wisigoths en Gaule et en Espagne,' in M. Kazanski and F. Vallet edd., *L'Armée Romaine et les Barbares du III^e au VII^e siècle* (Paris, 1993) p. 412.

it has been worthwhile to emphasize the dynamic and reciprocal nature of cultural exchange taking place, and to avoid seeing it as a one way process.

Although the first two chapters of this dissertation addressed such broad issues as ethnogenesis, settlement patterns, processes of assimilation, and various other crucial problems historians face, some of the specific problems pertaining to a study of the Visigoths should be put forth. First, the logical starting point will be to examine some of the problems surrounding the literary evidence for the Visigoths in the sixth and seventh centuries, both in terms of the availability of records and also their historical accuracy or worth in terms of determining Visigothic influences upon urban centres and early medieval Spanish society. Second, the various archaeological issues will be discussed, and the ability of existing archaeological evidence to successfully supplement, reinforce or contradict the literary evidence will be required. Finally, broader questions of identity, social groups, and identity formation specifically pertaining to the Visigoths will be looked at; some of the methodological problems will be examined in this last section, such as the lack of any tangible evidence for certain Visigothic urban centres; the case of *Ologicus* or *Olite* which was supposedly built by the Basques after being subdued by Suintila (621-31) serves a useful example.⁸ After presenting these problems, the focus of the chapter will then turn to the specific cases regarding the Visigothic urban administration, particularly in Toledo, Merida, Reccopolis and Barcelona, but also incorporating evidence from other sites as well. This case study is not intended as a

⁸ Isidore of Seville, 'History of the Kings of the Goths,' in *Conquerors and Chroniclers of Early Medieval Spain*, K.B. Wolf, ed., and trans., (Liverpool, 1999) pp. 106-107, and the Latin in Isidore of Seville, *Las Historias de los Godos, Vándalos y Suevos*, C.R. Alonso, ed., and trans., (Leon, 1975) 63. pp. 276-278.

chronological narrative on the Visigoths, but it will provide chronological detail when it is related to the question of their impact on pre-existing socio-political structures.

Specific issues surrounding the literature of Visigothic Spain

It is unfortunate that the Visigoths lack a detailed and elaborate chronicler in the mould of Gregory of Tours, although Gregory himself provides the occasional glimpse into the Visigothic kingdom, for example, in his discussion of Leovigild (569-86) and his feud with his eldest son Hermanigild from 583-84.⁹ For the most part the Gallo-Roman chronicler's mention of the Visigoths is when they are seeking a wedding alliance,¹⁰ or fighting against the Merovingians,¹¹ and as fascinating as such descriptions may be, they do not offer much insight into the Visigothic *civitates* or perceptions of ethnicity. The sixth century is relatively sparse for such literary evidence from a Visigothic author, although John of Biclaro does provide some interesting information concerning Leovigild, when he writes *Liuugildus muros Italicae antiquae civitatis restaurant, quae res maximum impedimentum hispalensi populo exhibuit*.¹² It is clear that the Visigothic king valued not only cities as centres of importance,¹³ but also the need for fortifications

⁹ Gregory of Tours, *The History of the Franks*, L. Thorpe, trans., (London, 1974) pp. 302-303.

¹⁰ An example is the marriage of Hermanigild to Ingund, *Ibid*, p. 310.

¹¹ The Visigothic sack of Arles and Beaucaire, *Ibid*, p. 488.

¹² John of Biclaro, *Juan de Biclaro, Obispo de Gerona: su vida y su obra/ introducción, texto crítico y comentarios por Julios Campos* (Madrid, 1960) p. 92, 234-35.

¹³ Not only the Visigothic king, but local aristocracy also felt strong ties to the *civitates* as well, see I. Martín Viso, 'Poblamiento y estructuras sociales en el Norte de la Península Ibérica, siglos VI-XIII,' *Acta Salamanticensia. Estudios Históricos y Geográficos*, III (Salamanca, 2000) p. 123.

and defences.¹⁴ Although this could be viewed as a sign of Romanization in the Visigothic elite, the above passage in no way implies that the walls of Italica were restored up to a Late Roman standard.

Apart from John of Biclaro and his *Chronicle* spanning the years 567-90, there are no other chroniclers in the sixth century to provide us with any information, let alone invaluable glimpses into Visigothic city life or government. The remainder of sixth-century sources survive in the form of Council records, Saints' Lives, and ecclesiastical documents. Jose Vives translated the numerous council records in Visigothic Spain and gives the original Latin edition, but apart from the occasional reference to 'Flavius Reccaredus' and signs of quasi-imperial titulature the councils almost entirely focus upon issues of dogma, heresy and ecclesiastical affairs rather than city administration;¹⁵ the list of signatories at the Third Council of Toledo (589) is interesting in that it shows just how much support was behind Reccared and his conversion to Catholicism.¹⁶ The ability of Reccared and the later seventh-century kings to consolidate the conquests and expansions of Leovigild would have been greatly facilitated by such support from the numerous Nicene bishops who attended the synod.

The fragmentary nature of Visigothic sources was a contributing factor to the perception of the *regnum Visigothorum* by contemporaries and early medieval writers as being relatively fragile when contrasted with *Francia* or Lombard Italy. It has been

¹⁴ Leovigild had served as *dux Hispaniarum* under Liuva, and would have gained some knowledge of military affairs while acting in this command, see P. de Palol I Salellas and A. Pladevall I Font, dir., *Del roma al romanic. Historia, art i cultura de la Tarraconense mediterrania entre els segles IV i X* (Barcelona, 1999) p. 40.

¹⁵ III Council of Toledo, and Flavius Reccaredus title used as first signatory on the conversion to Catholicism, see J. Vives et al., *Concilios Visigóticos e Hispano-Romanos* (Barcelona, 1963) p. 30.

¹⁶ List of signatories at the III Council of Toledo, *Ibid*, pp. 30-32.

convincingly argued that by putting the pieces together from such a wide array of disconnected material, early medieval scholars reflected this in their work; the lack of an overarching narrative and chronological context made the Visigothic administration seem unstable and unruly.¹⁷ This problem in the sources is further exacerbated for modern historians, due to the fact that we must constantly refer directly to the primary accounts while paying particular focus to their individual contexts and what they represent specifically for the period in question. While this is undoubtedly true for the study of history in general, the lack of a ‘grand narrative’ for Visigothic Spain makes this problem even more of a concern than usual.

Unfortunately the tarnishing of the Visigothic elite does not end there, as events during the twentieth century have also contributed to the general feeling of apathy and antagonism modern scholars have sometimes directed towards them. The support of General Francisco Franco for the Visigoths as symbols of traditional Spanish unity and strength has to an extent turned historians off of them as a focal point for research, due to the association of Franco himself with fascist ideology and the Right Wing.¹⁸ This is largely an unfair judgment on the Visigothic rulers and their society in associating them with political developments taking place over a millennium later in Spain, as their policies and socio-political structures were established within an early medieval context. Although they cannot be held accountable for their later promotion as national symbols under Franco, his decision to use them demonstrates that by the twentieth century historians could see signs of strength and stability represented by the *regnum*

¹⁷ Y. Hen, *Roman Barbarians: The Royal Court and Culture in the Early Medieval West*, pp. 126-127.

¹⁸ *Ibid*, p. 127.

Visigothorum when looking at the sources. The earlier views of early medieval scholars emphasizing the instability of Visigothic rule have clearly been realized as flawed by historians for quite some time, despite the negative ramifications mentioned above.

Another important factor concerning the list of councils is not so much what was said in the individual records, but the list of host cities themselves. Urban centres such as Barcelona, Toledo, Merida or Egara obviously maintained a certain level of prestige as *civitates* due to both their ecclesiastical and royal prominence as centres of authority. The representation of royal power at the councils varied, in nearly every case it was represented by different classes of *comites* who most likely constituted the *fides* of the king. Whether such individuals would have had the title of *dux* or *gardingus* during different ceremonies remains vague, and in some instances both the titles of *comes* and *dux* are used simultaneously.¹⁹ The royal officials will be discussed later in the chapter, at this point it is important to emphasize that these centres were able to host and provide for a multitude of bishops and secular aristocrats during the councils, and for this reason should be viewed as *civitates* of some degree of prestige and self sufficiency.

The last exclusively sixth-century source to be discussed is perhaps the most valuable in terms of what it tells us about everyday Visigothic administration and life within the cities, but unfortunately most of the descriptions are confined to one city, that of *Emerita Augusta*, or Merida. This Lusitanian *civitas* had become the most prominent ecclesiastical and secular centre in Spain, due largely to the ‘Christianization’ of its

¹⁹ The *comites* who attended the synods should not necessarily be confused with the territorial governors of cities, and were often directly attached to the centre of power at Toledo as the *seniores Gothorum* of the *officium palatinum*. For a detailed list of titles and attendance of secular figures at the various councils see A. Isla Frez, “El ‘officium palatinum’ visigodo: Entorno region y poder aristocrático,” in *Hispania: Revista Española de Historia*, Vol. 62, No. 212, (Madrid, 2002) pp. 823-48.

edifices and elevation of the city into a major centre of worship,²⁰ at least prior to Toledo being decided upon as the royal capital in 580. Despite consisting of Saints' Lives, it provides a fundamental contribution to any study of Visigothic Spain, ecclesiastical or secular.

The *Vitae Sanctorum Patrum Emeritensium* focuses on the lives of Paul, Fidelis and Masona who served as bishops in Merida during the latter half of the sixth century AD. The work has been attributed to Paul the Deacon by A.T. Fear,²¹ although it remains unclear as to the accuracy of this claim. Although it demonizes Leovigild as a complete tyrant of the worst kind due to his being Arian and coming into conflict with the Catholic Bishop Masona,²² which is most likely nothing more than anti-heretical propaganda, the *VSPE* produces important glimpses into the social structure and hierarchy to be found at Merida. For example, in describing *dux* Claudius of Merida, it states that *idem uero Claudius nobili genere ortus romanis fuit parentibus progenitus*.²³ Not only does this reflect that a Roman was distinguished by ethnicity from the Gothic elite, but also that Romans could obtain high office and positions of military command. The depiction of Leovigild as a tyrannical heretic should also be seen in its context, as an attempt both to portray Arianism as a heretical sect, and also to bolster the support and glory for his successor Reccared; indeed the reforms of the legal codes by Leovigild point

²⁰ P. Mateos, 'Augusta Emerita, de capital de la *dioceses hispaniarum* a sede temporal Visigoda,' in J.M. Gurt and G. Ripoll, edd., *Sedes Regiae (ann. 400-800)*, (Barcelona, 2000) p. 498.

²¹ *Lives of the Visigothic Fathers*, A.T. Fear, trans., (Liverpool, 1997) p. 45.

²² *Vitae Sanctorum Patrum Emeritensium*, M. Sanchez, ed., (Turnhout, 1999) V.IV.

²³ *Ibid*, V.X.32-33.

towards a more accommodating and seemingly benevolent ruler.²⁴ More will be said about the *Vitae* in the respective section on Merida itself, but insights such as these help make it perhaps the most valuable sixth century source for Visigothic administration and city life.

The first half of the seventh century in Visigothic Spain is largely devoid of any significant literary evidence with relevance to urban life and the influences of the secular administration upon buildings or cultural interaction. Although Isidore of Seville briefly mentions the foundation of Reccopolis by Leovigild in 578,²⁵ any information directly pertaining to civil administration and its long term impact, whether in his sixth century accounts of Leovigild or in the seventh century, is virtually non-existent; Isidore focuses predominantly on ecclesiastical affairs and rarely feels the need to elaborate on the condition or changing nature of the cities themselves or on the formation of group identities taking place. A student of Isidore in the seventh century, Braulio of Saragossa, also demonstrates this lack of consideration for secular urban affairs, although he does offer an interesting point on cities in his *Vita Sancti Emiliani*, when he writes *dictauerat ei fama esse quondam heremitam nomine felicem, uirum sanctissimum cui se non immerito praeberet discipulum, qui tunc morabatur in castellum bilibium*.²⁶ This mortuary record demonstrates that seventh-century writers in Spain saw some distinction between *civitates*, *castra* and *castella*, at least to a certain extent, although to what extent these centres differed in their construction or level of urbanism is difficult to ascertain.

²⁴For the reforms and centralization of the royal court under Leovigild, see R.L. Stocking, *Bishops, Councils, and Consensus in the Visigothic Kingdom, 589-633* (Ann Arbor, 2000) pp. 52-53.

²⁵ Isidore of Seville, *Las Historias de los Godos, Vándalos y Suevos*, 51. p. 259.

²⁶ Braulio de Saragossa, *Vita Sancti Emiliani*, L. Vázquez de Parga, ed., and trans., (Madrid, 1943) II.9.

Although the writings of Isidore do not focus upon issues such as cultural interaction or identity formation in the cities of the Visigothic kingdom, they were a major contribution to the scholastic environment of the realm itself. This in turn influenced how the Visigoths were viewed by foreign contemporaries due to their patronage and affiliation with this Hispano-Roman individual. Isidore provided a new religious culture by regenerating past classical styles and he was a driving force behind reconciliation of the various peoples within Spain following the conversion of Reccared to Catholicism.²⁷ On an individual level he directly impacted the relationship between the Visigothic and Merovingian rulers, or rather, he influenced an attempt by the former towards reconciliation. The close association of King Sisebut (612-21) with Isidore has been promoted as one potential reason for the composition of the *Vita Desiderii* by the former as a sign of goodwill towards the Merovingians following a long period of hostility.²⁸ As Sisebut was an avid reader of the writings of Isidore, his direct influences on the Visigothic kingship were significant regarding how it wished to be perceived by foreign rulers. In this way at least, Isidore of Seville contributed to the area of regional identity and early medieval cultural exchanges in the upper strata of society, and should not be dismissed as completely irrelevant to this type of study.

Thus far the literary records for seventh-century city governance or signs of Visigothic impact upon the existing Roman centres in the way of ethnic identity or cultural fusions of groups have proven rather sparse in their detail. The works of Ildefonso of Toledo do not improve this literary gap, despite his references to the

²⁷ For the 'Isidorian Renaissance' see Y. Hen, *Roman Barbarians: The Royal Court and Culture in the Early Medieval West*, pp. 143-150.

²⁸ *Ibid*, p. 137.

reigning Visigothic kings at the conclusion of each bishop's life.²⁹ Fortunately the second half of the seventh century benefits from a greater source of information regarding city life, due to the accounts written by Julian of Toledo concerning the events surrounding King Wamba (672-80) in the *Historia Wambae Regis*. Julian describes the elevation of Wamba to the kingship by 'priestly unction' and by the common consent of the people,³⁰ and he also shows the importance of Toledo as the *sedes regiae* to the aristocracy and also personally to Wamba, since he postponed his coronation until returning to Toledo from the estate in Gerticos where the proclamation occurred.³¹ The writings of Julian provide the best account of latter seventh century Visigothic kingship, military activity and urban life, and in the subsequent section dealing with Toledo it will provide the backbone of literary study for that period.

Historians are also very fortunate in that Julian describes urban centres and fortified sites outside of the capital in some detail, due to the campaigns of Wamba against various rebellions, starting with that of *comes* Hildericus of Nimes in 672.³² The anonymous *Chronicle of 754* also discusses the reign of Wamba and the late Visigothic kings, and even refers to a period of famine and plague in seventh-century Spain.³³ The purpose of the chapter thus far has been to demonstrate the gaps in the literary evidence

²⁹ An example of this can be found when Ildefonsus writes *Uixit in sacerdotio fere undecim annis, regnantibus Chintila, Tulgane et Chindasuinto regibus*, in Ildefonso of Toledo, *De viris illustribus*, C. Codoñer Merino, ed., (Turnhout, 2007) Capitula XII, 189-190.

³⁰ Julian of Toledo, *The Story of Wamba*, J.M. Pizarro, trans., (Washington D.C., 2005) p. 179, and the original *Historia Wambae Regis*, W. Levison, ed., *MGH, SRM*, V, (Hanover and Leipzig, 1910), *Liber de historia Galliae*, II.

³¹ *Ibid*, p. 181.

³² Julian states that Hildericus ejected Bishop Aregius from his see and sent him to the Merovingians, to be replaced by the abbot Ranimirus, *Ibid*, p. 186.

³³ *Crónica Mozárabe de 754*, 37. p. 56.

concerning sixth and seventh-century Visigothic Spain, and to also emphasize that what material is available often neglects issues such as secular administration, city planning and renovation, taxation, coinage and other such spheres of activity that would allow for a direct insight into the impact of the Visigothic aristocracy.

The evolution of the *forum iudicum*, more often referred to as the *leges Visigothorum*, was based upon the largely Romanized code of Euric compiled in 469, and then updated on several occasions in 654, 681 and 693 AD, as described by Giorgio Ausenda in his work entitled ‘Kinship and Marriage among the Visigoths,’ which explores both the motives and repercussions of such modifications to the Visigothic legal system.³⁴ The final version of the LV consists of 12 books covering a wide breadth of subjects, often with relevance to the urban and rural environments.³⁵ For example, in Book VII there is a law which states that if a judge is unable to successfully enforce his verdict upon the convicted, he may appeal directly to the city governor for aid, and this governor is in turn legally bound to provide such requested assistance in the capture or detention of the suspect.³⁶ To what extent this law was enforced is unknown, although it demonstrates that the local governor was viewed as a valid source of strength to maintain and restore order, at least from the royal perspective. Not only was he encouraged and

³⁴ Ausenda discusses some of the reasons for these alterations or reviews, and also presents a very interesting table contrasting the Gothic kinship terminology with modern English, in which the similarities of legal terms are strikingly similar to one another. For the evolution of the *forum iudicum* and kinship chart, see G. Ausenda, ‘Kinship and Marriage among the Visigoths,’ *The Visigoths from the migration period to the seventh century: an ethnographic perspective*, pp. 140-141.

³⁵ The legal codes in general use land ownership and agrarian issues as constant points of reference, see I. Velázquez Soriano, *Las pizarras visigodas entre el latín y su disgregación. La lengua hablada en Hispania, siglos VI-VIII* (Madrid, 2004) pp. 88-89.

³⁶ *Leges Visigothorum*, K. Zeumer, ed., (Hanover, 1902) VII. IV. II.

legally bound to assist the local judges, but that the judges were able to demand his assistance with impunity, at least on paper.

Despite this impressive civil power of the city governor, before one concludes from this that the secular Visigothic authorities maintained a role in the city superior in daily administration to that of the local bishop, another law must be taken into account. In Book II of the legal code, it is stated that the local bishop may serve as a second authority to any person who feels his case has been decided upon unjustly by the local magistrate, and that said magistrate is bound by law to allow such recourse.³⁷ This ability of the local bishop to second guess or undermine the civil governor is interesting, although it does not explicitly state that the bishop could overrule the city governor, or someone of the status of *comes* or *dux*. One, perhaps speculative, interpretation of this concerns the reforms of the code and their relation to the power of the bishop. The revisions of the Visigothic laws take place at least one generation after the Third Council of Toledo in 589, and could it be that this ability of the bishop to overrule the local city judge did not legally exist prior to such revisions? Due to the lack of documentation for the original Visigothic legal codes, and when one also considers the prominent socio-political role of the bishopric in Spain even prior to the conversion of the Visigoths to Catholicism, this may not be the case. Nevertheless, such laws reveal much about life and governance within the Visigothic Kingdom of Toledo, at least in terms of how the royal court expected and hoped it to function at the urban level.

Although the legal texts provide valuable insight into the context and agenda of the royal court at the time, such official documents should not be used as absolute

³⁷ Ibid, II. I. XVIII.

authorities on the level of unity, homogeneity or practical legal treatment of individual communities within the kingdom. “One of the most noticeable features of such official documents is their all encompassing intent, which tries to project an image of inclusiveness on a society that in reality is extremely complex and fragmented.”³⁸ This is not necessarily referring simply to ethnic or religious divisions which certainly existed, at least prior to the seventh century following the legal reforms under Leovigild in 580,³⁹ but also to the legal status of individuals in terms of their economic or financial duties or functions within the realm; for example, the separation of *fiscales* and *privati* and their differing economic duties to the court at Toledo or to the government officials in charge of taxation.⁴⁰ Various other laws from the *leges visigothorum* will be presented in the case studies, yet for the moment it will suffice to have shown the central importance of such documents to any study of early medieval Spain and the influences of the Visigothic elite on its administrative structures.

Urban settlement, grave finds, and numismatic evidence

When one is embarking upon a study of archaeological material with the aim of determining specifically Visigothic finds that serve as potential indicators of ethnic

³⁸ S. Castellanos, ‘The Political Nature of Taxation in Visigothic Spain,’ in *Early Medieval Europe*, Vol. 12, No. 3 (Oxford, 2003) p. 205.

³⁹ For information surrounding the repeal of the marriage between Romans and barbarians, which had been issued in the last quarter of the 4th century, by Leovigild in 580 and its later mention in the legal codes, see G. Ripoll López, ‘The Arrival of the Visigoths in Hispania: Population Problems and the Process of Acculturation,’ and H. Sivan, ‘The Appropriation of Roman Law in Barbarian Hands: Romano-Barbarian marriage in Visigothic Gaul and Spain,’ *Strategies of Distinction: The Construction of Ethnic Communities, 300-800*, p. 164, and p. 200 respectively. Also the direct reference to this earlier repeal by Leovigild can be found in *Leges Visigothorum*, III.I.I *antiqua*.

⁴⁰ S. Castellanos, ‘The Political Nature of Taxation in Visigothic Spain,’ pp. 205-206.

identity and separation, or of cultural exchange and acculturation with the local populace in *Hispania*, the lack of tangible evidence quickly becomes apparent. This is not to take away credit from the exhaustive work of current archaeologists or historians working on Visigothic Spain, particularly that of Javier Arce, Roger Collins, Lauro Olmo Enciso and Gisela Ripoll López,⁴¹ whose recent work features in this chapter amongst several others; rather, it is to say that the evidence which has emerged from such research is often impossible to clearly label or associate with the Visigoths as an ethnically and territorially separate entity from their contemporaries.⁴² Although there are occasional signs of what might be dubbed *Germanitas* in Visigothic Spain, if we use that term to simply to imply a breakdown in traditional Late Roman urban or social systems due to the settlement of non-Romans, for example, in the conversion of a Late Roman villa complex near Merida into a series of smaller residences with basic hearths,⁴³ our ability to distinguish the ethnic composition of those new residents remains virtually non-existent based upon material goods.

These difficulties can be clearly seen when one looks at the site which is currently considered the best option in terms of both migration period Visigothic finds and evidence for their living in the same communities as Hispano-Romans, that of El Carpio

⁴¹ The most comprehensive listing of recent work on the Visigoths is to be found in A. Ferreiro, *The Visigoths in Gaul and Iberia: A Supplemental Bibliography, 1984-2003* (Leiden and Boston, 2006), for the original listing prior to the 2006 release, see A. Ferreiro, *The Visigoths in Gaul and Spain A.D. 418-711: a bibliography* (Leiden, 1988).

⁴² For a strong case against labeling ethnic groups in general, but also for a concise summary of the polyethnic composition of early medieval societies see I. Wood, 'Conclusion: Strategies of Distinction,' *Strategies of Distinction*, pp. 298-299.

⁴³ R. Collins, *Spain: An Oxford Archaeological Guide* (Oxford, 1998) p. 198.

de Tajo.⁴⁴ Located in Castilla-La-Mancha in the modern Spanish province of Toledo, this site consists of 285 inhumations with personal adornments,⁴⁵ ranging from late fifth century foundation graves based upon the supposed kinship system of the Visigoths to the ‘family group’ style of burial in the early sixth century; the ability to distinguish between Roman and Visigothic burial becomes virtually impossible in this latter organization.⁴⁶ Gisela Ripoll López provides statistical analysis of the site which further demonstrates the problem: 68.42% of the graves have no material finds, that is to say 195 of 285 graves, and then of the 90 graves which do have any evidence, only 4.4% or 4 graves have any bronze coins.⁴⁷ This not only shows the lack of low level or fractional coinage used for funerary purposes,⁴⁸ but it also demonstrates that the majority of graves leave no material evidence whatsoever.

Apart from the few bronze coins, the other finds at El Carpio de Tajo consist largely of brooches, buckles, and *fibulae* which have been convincingly shown to belong predominantly to female members of the burial group;⁴⁹ the evidence from the site is still relatively scarce. “Le testimonianze archeologiche dell’installazione dei Visigoti sul

⁴⁴ For a skeptical view on the finds from El Carpio de Tajo in terms of showing an ethnic identity perceived by the Visigothic aristocracy, supported by the lack of finds of an expensive nature on site, see R. Collins, *Visigothic Spain, 409-711*, pp. 182-183.

⁴⁵ G. Ripoll López, ‘Symbolic Life and Signs of Identity in Visigothic Times,’ p. 409.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 409-411.

⁴⁷ G. Ripoll López, ‘The arrival of the Visigoths in Hispania: Population Problems and the process of acculturation,’ p. 167.

⁴⁸ For some of the problems and considerations surrounding the use of fractional coinage by the Visigoths, and the existence of independent moneys and mints unconnected to the government, see D.M. Metcalf, ‘Visigothic Monetary History,’ *The Visigoths: Studies in Culture and Society* (Leiden and Boston, 1998) pp. 201-205.

⁴⁹ For a listing of the various materials found at El Carpio de Tajo, see G. Ripoll López, *La necrópolis visigoda de el Carpio de Tajo* (Madrid, 1985) pp. 23-24.

suolo ispanico sono diverse e caratterizzate da una certa eterogeneità .”⁵⁰ Although Ripoll López emphasizes such difference between the Visigoths and other residents during the initial stages of settlement, and supports this view with the supposed abandonment of Visigothic style in favour of Hispano-Roman clothing following 589,⁵¹ a point which implies that some degree of differentiation and ethnic identity must have previously existed, the fact is that archaeology has not yet revealed the respective settlement which El Carpio de Tajo represents as a cemetery,⁵² and therefore we can not be sure to any degree as to the ethnic composition, level of separation, or even population levels in this as of yet undiscovered *vicus* or settlement.

Thus far there has been one archaeological excavation regarding early medieval Spain which does not adhere to this general trend of insufficient connection between settlement and burial sites, that of El Bovalar. Located near Lerida in modern Catalonia, this supposed *vicus* was occupied in the Visigothic Kingdom of Toledo until its fall in 714, most often attributed to the Arab expansion into the Ebro valley.⁵³ Various bronze and liturgical items have been unearthed at this particular site,⁵⁴ and it is of particular numismatic importance; El Bovalar not only provides the first coins to be minted at Caesaraugusta/Zaragoza, but is also home to some of the latest Visigothic coinage found

⁵⁰G. Ripoll López, ‘Archeologia visigota in Hispania,’ in V. Bierbrauer et al., edd., *I Goti*, (Milan, 1994) p. 302.

⁵¹G. Ripoll López, ‘Symbolic life and signs of identity in Visigothic times,’ p. 414.

⁵²The lack of correlation between cemeteries and urban settlements which can be directly associated with one another is made clear by G. Ripoll López, ‘The arrival of the Visigoths in Hispania: Population Problems and the process of acculturation,’ p. 163.

⁵³For information on the occupation of El Bovalar based upon the archaeological material, see R. Collins, *Visigothic Spain, 409-711*, p. 212, R. Collins, *Spain: An Oxford Archaeological Guide*, p. 126, and G. Ripoll López, ‘The arrival of the Visigoths in Hispania: Population Problems and the process of acculturation,’ p. 163.

⁵⁴R. Collins, *Spain: An Oxford Archaeological Guide*, p. 124.

to date, ranging from the reign of Egica (687-692/4) to that of Achila II (710-13/14).⁵⁵

The initial excavations of the church occurred in 1963,⁵⁶ and by 1976 under a new excavation a village was confirmed to the south of the ecclesiastical centre.⁵⁷

Unfortunately there is no written or literary evidence pertaining to El Bovalar, so it is impossible to correlate the archaeological evidence within any overall historiographical event or context. The problem of viewing El Bovalar as a site of resistance to the Arab conquests of Spain by the late Visigothic rulers,⁵⁸ or as a case study due to its proximity of the burials with the village, is exacerbated by the fact that not all areas necessarily experience the same pattern of settlement or occupation.⁵⁹ This problematic concept can be expanded even further when one examines the traditional polarities in archaeological and historical studies of the 'town and country': Firstly, that town and countryside must be seen as polar opposites, and secondly, that there exists an equilibrium in which one

⁵⁵ Ibid, p. 126.

⁵⁶ R. Collins, *Visigothic Spain, 409-711*, p. 213.

⁵⁷ For details of the 1976 excavation and the structures or finds related to the village at El Bovalar, see P.de Palol, "Las excavaciones del conjunto de 'El Bovalar'," in *Los visigodos: historia y civilización* (Murcia, 1986), pp. 513-25.

⁵⁸ For information regarding the fall of Visigothic Spain following 711 to the Umayyad forces, in particular the conversion of Visigothic elite to Islam in order to retain their positions of power, see A. Christys, 'How the royal house of Witiza survived the Islamic conquest of Spain,' in M. Diesenberger, and W. Pohl, ed., *Integration und Herrschaft: ethnische Identitäten und soziale Organisation im Frühmittelalter* (Vienna, 2002) pp. 234-238. It should also be noted that not all of the Visigothic elite made pacts and chose conversion, for information on the resistance of Agila II (710-716) see E. Manzano Moreno, *Conquistadores, Emires y Califas: Los Omeyas y la Formación de al-Andalus* (Madrid, 2006) p. 49.

⁵⁹ This refers to the occupation of *castra* by the Visigoths in the Pyrenees, but the same concept could logically be applied to *vici* or lesser communities within the Visigothic kingdom as well. See I. Martín Viso, 'Central Places and the Territorial Organization of Communities: The Occupation of Hilltop Sites in Early Medieval Northern Castile,' in W. Davies, G. Halsall and A. Reynolds, ed., *People and Space in the Middle Ages, 300-1000* (Turnhout, 2006) p. 168.

increases thereby causing the other to decrease in importance.⁶⁰ Nevertheless, El Bovalar provides archaeologists and historians with some of the most important *tremisses* and late Visigothic coinage of the early eighth century, and despite such problems of chronology or context, should be valued due to this rare collection of material finds.

Unfortunately, neither of the above sites represent a major urban centre, at the very most El Bovalar represents a *vicus* as has already been established; the number of burials at El Carpio de Tajo, approximately 40 per generation over about 150 years of occupation,⁶¹ would certainly seem to indicate a settlement of similar size and socio-political significance. When attention is turned to the archaeological record concerning Visigothic ethnic identity, and the impact of both the aristocracy and everyday settlers upon the social and administrative structures of the realm, the situation generally becomes even more difficult to pinpoint. Prior to continuing on with the examination of broader questions such as ethnogenesis, identity formation, or processes of cultural exchange,⁶² let us first illustrate some of the urban examples for Visigothic archaeological finds. However, most of the information regarding the individual case studies of Toledo, Merida and Reccopolis, along with several other centres, will be

⁶⁰ M. Kulikowski, 'The Interdependence of Town and Country in Late Antique Spain,' in J.W. Eadie and T.S. Burns, ed., *Urban Centers and Rural Contexts in Late Antiquity* (East Lansing, 2001) p. 147.

⁶¹ R. Collins, *Visigothic Spain, 409-711*, pp. 181-182.

⁶² For some of the most recent work concerning the creation of identity labels or ethnic groupings, and the interaction of society at various levels, see N. Christie, ed., *Landscapes of Change: Rural Evolutions in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages* (Aldershot, 2004), A. Gillett, ed., *On Barbarian Identity: Critical Approaches to Ethnicity in the Early Middle Ages* (Turnhout, 2002), F. Curta, ed., *Borders, Barriers and Ethnogenesis: frontiers in Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages* (Turnhout, 2005), and finally M. Diesenberger and W. Pohl, ed., *Integration und Herrschaft: ethnische Identitäten unde soziale Organisation im Frühmittelalter* (Vienna, 2002).

presented in their respective sections.⁶³ For the time being, an indication of the general issues surrounding the excavations for early medieval Spain will be put forth.

The largest problem one encounters when trying to glimpse the influences upon pre-existing Late Roman cities in *Hispania* lies in our inability to determine an accurate chronology of urban construction, and also to determine what is of Roman or Visigothic construction following the ‘Christianization’ of urban centres starting from the fourth century AD. Michael Kulikowski sums up this changing urban landscape very succinctly when he writes that “In place of the several hundred *civitates* of the imperial period, we find a new and simpler ecclesiastical geography.”⁶⁴ This describes the shifting focus of the landscape and its urban centres around ecclesiastical centres of worship, and indeed many centres such as Lucentum, Saguntum, and Portus Ilicitanus disappear entirely from the Late Roman or Visigothic region.⁶⁵ This is not to say that the Visigothic administration was unable to maintain civil or military centres that did not centre around places of worship; the maintained occupation of various *castra* such as Coviacensis castrum, Castrum Septe, Castrum Osseter, and numerous others,⁶⁶ indicates some level of secular and military interest in non-ecclesiastical strategic centres. “Ninguno de estos lugares recibe el título de Urbs o Civitas, que si reciben Hispalis, Asturica, Osca,

⁶³ A brief analysis of the developments surrounding Toledo and Recopolis can be found in G. Ripoll and I. Velazquez, ‘Tolède – Recopolis: le développement de la ville à l’époque wisigothique,’ *Rome et les Barbares: La Naissance d’un Nouveau Monde* (Venice, 2008) pp. 454-56.

⁶⁴ M. Kulikowski, *Late Roman Spain and Its Cities* (Baltimore, 2004) p. 287.

⁶⁵ S. Gutiérrez Lloret, ‘La ciudad en la antigüedad tardía en el sureste y levante: la reviviscencia urbana en el marco del conflicto greco-gótico,’ in L.A. García Moreno and S. Rascón Marqués, edd., *Complutum y las ciudades hispanias en la antigüedad tardía* (Alcalá de Henares, 1999) pp. 104-105.

⁶⁶ For a detailed summary of the various *castra*, see A. Jiménez de Furundarena ‘Castrum en la Hispania Romana y Visigoda,’ in *Hispania Antigua*, Vol. 18., (Vitoria, 1994) pp. 441-455.

Palentia, Narbo, Calagurris, Barcinona, Nemausus o Arelate.”⁶⁷ The fact that various Visigothic urban centres received these titles demonstrates a degree of respect for urban culture held by the Visigothic aristocracy and ruling elite.

The extent to which the cities of the Iberian peninsula had been evacuated during the fifth and sixth centuries is unclear given the nature of the archaeological record, but in the last decade continuity of urban settlement has been emphasized. The later successes of the Visigothic rulers are used as examples, particularly in the late-sixth and seventh centuries, were largely based upon a Late Roman city-based administration, which in turn required a degree of stability regarding population levels and demographics.⁶⁸ This view, while sound in its logical deduction and speculation, cannot be proven in the archaeological material available for early medieval urban sites. Unfortunately we are unable to distinguish structures along ethnic lines, nor are we able to determine the specific chronological contexts of such urban architecture in most cases. The extent to which the Visigothic rulers and local elite were able to repopulate the urban environment, with peoples from all ethnic groups, once the kingdom became more settled following the late-sixth century is also difficult to tell.⁶⁹ However, when one takes into account the important social, economic, and political roles the cities fulfilled throughout the Visigothic period, we can logically conclude that even if the population levels were not maintained and later settlement occurred, the importance of the city as a crucial

⁶⁷ Ibid, p. 454.

⁶⁸ W. Liebeschuetz, ‘The refugees and evacuees in the age of migrations,’ *The Construction of Communities in the Early Middle Ages: Texts, Resources and Artefacts* (Leiden, 2003) pp. 66-67.

⁶⁹ The problem of identifying the aristocracy in the archaeological record for the countryside is even more difficult, see A. Chavarría Arnau, ‘Dopo la fine delle ville: le campagne ispaniche in epoca visigota (VI-VIII secolo),’ in G.P. Brogiolo et al., edd., *Dopo la fine delle ville: le Campagne dal VI al IX secolo* (Mantova, 2005) p. 281.

administrative unit to the ruling classes was not diminished. The establishment of new urban structures by the local elite from the sixth to eighth centuries further reinforces this point.

There are occasional references to the Visigoths maintaining or even building new urban structures or fortifications, for example, in the construction of the *xenodochium* in Merida by the Bishop Masona,⁷⁰ or also the immediate restoration of Nîmes by Wamba upon taking it from the rebel Paul in 673.⁷¹ Although the occupation of military sites and reconstruction of fortifications or secular buildings was important to the Visigothic court, the internal orientation of the city and its focal points had largely shifted to ecclesiastical ones, as was the case across Western Europe during the late antique and early medieval periods in general.⁷² This further obscures our ability to distinguish between Late Roman and Visigothic ethnicity and impact upon urban life, and it is unfortunate that no explicitly Arian centres of worship have been discovered in Spain with which we could perhaps contrast various ethnic or religious elements. The lack of archaeological evidence for Visigothic city life, while it does often prevent a sense of chronology from being established,⁷³ there are archaeological finds such as the hoard of 20 gold *tremisses* at Merida found in 2003 which do provide a valuable insight into Visigothic urban

⁷⁰ The passage in the *VSPE* surrounding the *xenodochium* is an interesting one for a study of the ethnic composition of Visigothic Merida, as it clearly states that medical attention must be provided for all members of the city, be they free, slaves, Christian or Jew. For information concerning this structure which served as a hospice in Merida, along with information concerning its staff consisting of ministers and doctors, see *VSPE*, V.3.4.

⁷¹ Julian of Toledo, 'The Book of the History of Gallia,' in *The Story of Wamba*, XVI.

⁷² For the changing nature and function of Spanish cities under the Late Roman and Visigothic periods, see G. Ripoll López, 'Changes in the Topography of Power: from *civitates* to *sedes regiae* in *Hispania*,' *Transformation of the Roman World*, Vol. 12 (Leiden, 2003) p. 125.

⁷³ L. Olmo Enciso, 'Ciudad y procesos de transformación social entre los siglos VI y IX: de Recópolis a Racupel,' *Visigodos y Omeyas*, p. 386.

structures,⁷⁴ for example in terms of which urban centres maintained mints during the Visigothic period. Unfortunately, such hoards of material finds directly associated with the Visigoths are rare indeed, and this literal “pot of Gold” at Merida cannot be used as a case which would be generally applicable to the majority of early medieval cities in Spain.

No detailed comparison can be made between Merida and any other Visigothic city, not even the royal cities of Toulouse or Toledo, because comparable evidence does not exist: and the few short comments on other cities to be found in the chronicles are likely to refer to exceptional circumstances.⁷⁵

The final part of this section will now focus on the numismatic evidence which has been produced in Visigothic Spain, paying particular care not to undervalue or overestimate the importance of such finds to illustrate any images of Visigothic urban life, both at the level of *honorati* and *inferiores* within society.⁷⁶ The first reference point for any study of Visigothic numismatics is that of G.C. Miles, and although this collection of Visigothic monetary evidence is now quite dated,⁷⁷ it nevertheless continues to provide the most in depth account of Visigothic titlature to date. Of particular interest

⁷⁴ For information concerning the Merida coin hoard or the various mints which they represent, see P. Mateos Cruz, A. Pizzo, and R. Pliego Vázquez, ‘Un tesoro de tremises visigodos hallado en el llamado (foro provincial) de Augusta Emerita,’ *Archivo Español de Arqueología*, LXXVIII, No. 191-92 (Madrid, 2005) pp. 251-71.

⁷⁵ R. Collins, ‘Merida and Toledo, 550-589,’ in E. James, ed., *Visigothic Spain: New Approaches* (Oxford, 1980) pp. 190-191. This problem of inadequate evidence is further compounded by the polyethnic composition of cities in Visigothic Spain, see I. Wood, ‘Social relations in the Visigothic Kingdom from the fifth to seventh century: The example of Merida,’ in *The Visigoths from the Migration Period to the Seventh Century*, pp. 193-194., and also G. Ripoll López, ‘The arrival of the Visigoths in Hispania: Population Problems and the process of acculturation,’ p. 155.

⁷⁶ For an interesting and diverse account of the legal statuses of *civitates* or of various social communities and groups in Visigothic Spain, see A. Cepas, ‘The Ending of the Roman City: The Case of Clunia in the Northern Plateau of Spain,’ in *People and Space in the Middle Ages, 300-1300*, p. 189.

⁷⁷ G.C. Miles, *The Coinage of the Visigoths of Spain: Leovigild to Achila II* (New York, 1952).

and significance, are the illustrations of all Visigothic *tremisses* prior to 1952; the coin labeled as ‘21’ depicting Wittiza (687-710) is an especially good example of non-Roman and ‘Gothic’ ethnic identity as perceived by the ruling class.⁷⁸ That being said, perhaps it was a genuine attempt at *imitatio* of imperial coinage, and simply of a very poor quality compared with some of the earlier Visigothic coins, such as those of ‘Suintila Rex’,⁷⁹ but when one views the image of Wittiza, it is hard not to see this as a direct Visigothic impact upon urban life: the decreased caliber and quality of moneys and mints within *Hispania*. The notion that various mints worked independently of the royal court at Toledo,⁸⁰ is difficult to trace in terms of Visigothic impact upon coinage. Were these moneys of Visigothic or Hispano-Roman background, and if they were of the latter group, did a significant contact with local Visigothic communities influence their seemingly poor quality of coins issued? At this point in time it is difficult to judge, yet it remains an interesting question for future study.

K.E. Carr takes a pessimistic stance regarding the economic vitality of Visigothic Spain, and attributes the lack of Visigothic trade to numerous elements, including a lack of imports or exports, increased coastal piracy, a lack of large scale mining, and declining road networks to name a few.⁸¹ Carr also places importance upon the Vandal occupation of Spain when it comes to the decline in urban vitality, and to sum up the repercussions of this she writes that “There were few sailors, longshoremen, or merchants to buy goods

⁷⁸ Ibid, p. 55.

⁷⁹ J. López Vilar, ‘Aportacio a la numismatica visigoda: nous trients de Suintila I Khindasuint,’ in *Acta Numismática*, 32 (Barcelona, 2002), p. 46.

⁸⁰ D.M. Metcalf, ‘Visigothic monetary history,’ p. 205.

⁸¹ K.E. Carr, ‘A Changing World- African Red Slip in Roman and Visigothic Baetica,’ in *The Visigoths: Studies in Culture and Society*, pp. 222-224.

or services, and so restaurants, public baths, theaters, and brothels shut down.”⁸² In opposition to this pessimistic stance, Gisela Ripoll López emphasizes the Visigothic building programs at Merida and Reccopolis, along with the recycling of Roman inscriptions to build new walls at El Tolmo de Minateda,⁸³ and paints a picture of relative self-sufficiency of the Visigothic kingdom.

The site at El Tolmo de Minateda, also known as Iyih or Eio, represents a complex frontier site in the eighth century, organized for different functions and spaces, such as the palatium and basilica.⁸⁴ Also, the reuse of Roman materials, for example columns and pillars, along with the style of cruciform designs found at El Tolmo de Minateda closely resemble those found in Merida.⁸⁵ This type of frontier urban centre, which administered a relatively large *territorium* which had been established in previously Byzantine lands,⁸⁶ could be paralleled with Cividale or Metz in its function to the kingdom as a defensive post, albeit on a much smaller scale. Nevertheless it reflects the policy of the Visigothic rulers to establish such centres and their understanding of

⁸²K.E. Carr, *Vandals to Visigoths: rural settlement patterns in Early Medieval Spain* (Ann Arbor, 2002) p. 134.

⁸³G. Ripoll López, ‘The Transformation and Process of Acculturation in Late Antique Hispania: Select Aspects from Urban and Rural Archaeological Documentation,’ in *The Visigoths: Studies in Culture and Society*, pp. 269-273, and for the unified design employed by the Visigothic *maesters*, despite having to improvise with materials, see P. Cánovas Guillén and S. Gutiérrez Lloret, ‘Construyendo el siglo VII: arquitecturas y sistemas constructivos en El Tolmo de Minateda,’ in L. Caballero Zoreda et al., edd., *El Siglo VII frente al Siglo VII: Arquitectura* (Madrid, 2009) p. 92.

⁸⁴S. Gutiérrez Lloret, ‘Los orígenes de Tudmir y el Tolmo de Minateda (siglos VI-X),’ *Regnum Murciae: Génesis y configuración del Reino de Murcia* (Murcia, 2008) p. 65.

⁸⁵S. Gutiérrez Lloret and J. Sarabia Bautista, ‘El problema de la escultura decorativa visigoda en el sudeste a la Luz del Tolmo de Minateda (Albacete): Distribución y tipologías funcionales y talleres,’ *Anejos de Archivo Español de Arqueología*, XLI (Madrid, 2006) p. 311.

⁸⁶L. Abad Casal et al., ‘Una ciudad en el camino: pasado y futuro de El Tolmo de Minateda (Hellín, Albacete),’ in L. Olmo Enciso ed., *Recópolis y la ciudad en la Época Visigoda* (Alcalá de Henares, 2008) pp. 322-333.

urban organization, although the walls represent a strong Byzantine influence in their construction.⁸⁷ It is not always that material finds are non-existent, but our ability to place them in a proper context, in terms of how the Visigothic settlers lived alongside the Hispano-Roman, Greek, Jewish, Vandal, Suevi or African neighbours, is sorely lacking due to chronological and methodological gaps. Unfortunately the lower levels and *inferiores* have not left much literary or archaeological evidence to posterity, and our ability to gauge the degree of cultural exchange that took place suffers as a result.

Problems of identity perception, titulature and urban settlement

The previous sections have covered both the literary and archaeological challenges specific to the Visigothic Kingdom of Toledo, and despite the preceding chapter and its discussion of general questions pertaining to the literary and material evidence for early medieval urban studies, they nevertheless required elaboration in terms of problems directly related to the study of *Hispania* itself. Let us now turn our attention to some of the specific obstacles or difficulties which relate to the Visigothic settlement and rule in Spain. The question of ethnicity is a very abstract and fluid one,⁸⁸ which is often difficult to assess with any degree of certainty. How then did the Visigothic aristocracy or settlers view themselves vis-à-vis the Hispano-Roman or other settled groups? The first thing to remember is our earlier look at the population discrepancy, and the fact that the

⁸⁷ L. Abad Casal and S. Gutiérrez Lloret, 'Iyih (El Tolmo de Minateda, Hellín, Albacete). Una *civitas* en el *limes* Visigodo-Byzantino,' *Antigüedad y Cristianismo: Monografías históricas sobre la Antigüedad tardía*, No. 14 (Murcia, 1997) pp. 593-596.

⁸⁸ W. Pohl, 'Ethnicity, Theory, and Tradition: A Response,' *On Barbarian Identity*, p. 223.

Visigothic settlers were much less numerous,⁸⁹ but particularly following the expansion of Leovigild across the Iberian peninsula in the late sixth century,⁹⁰ they would have constituted if not the majority, then at least a significant percentage of the ruling aristocracy. Indications of self-perceived Gothic identity can be seen in the repeal of the marriage ban as was presented earlier; if such distinctions continued to exist well into the latter half of the sixth century, then the populace must have been able, at least to a certain degree, to distinguish the Visigoths from Hispano-Romans. Following the repeal of the ban, a possible sign of Gothic identity may be represented by Julian of Toledo, when he describes how Wamba emphasized the superiority of the *Gothi* to the Franks in military valour.⁹¹ This not only reflects a degree of Gothic consciousness in the ruling king, but also the ability of his troops to identify with Visigothic traditional warrior *ethos*.

Although Julian may have been trying to deliberately label the host of Wamba as Gothic in relation to the Frankish supporters of the rebel Paul, if the speech of Wamba was recorded with any level of accuracy, it would indicate a level of Visigothic self-perceived ethnicity going right up until the late seventh century.

When we turn to the topics of nomenclature or titulature the situation becomes even more complex. There is certainly a degree of *imitatio imperii* to be found in the various administrative titles of the *officium palatinum*, ranging from the use of the name *flavius* by the monarch, to the usage of a multitude of various *comites*, such as the *comes*

⁸⁹ For example, J.D. Dodds gives a figure of no more than 200,000 Visigoths vis-à-vis 8 million previously settled people, and even this is a high estimate compared with other scholars. See J.D. Dodds, *Architecture and Ideology in Early Medieval Spain* (London, 1990) p. 8.

⁹⁰ An example of this expansion can be seen when John of Biclaro writes *liuugildus rex orospedam ingreditur et civitates atque castella eiusdem provinciae occupant et suam provinciam facit*, see John of Biclaro, *Juan de Biclaro*, p. 87. 162-163.

⁹¹ Julian of Toledo, *The Story of Wamba*, pp. 191-193. IX.

scaniarum or *comes patrimonii*.⁹² Although there could also be a sign of Visigothic impact upon the urban and social environments visible here: the decreased certainty of what authority or socio-political position such titles confer upon the individual. The overlapping and often abstract use of titles such as that used for Ella, *comes et dux* and *uir inluster officii palatini*, his attendance recorded at the ninth Council of Toledo in 655 AD,⁹³ reflect an inability of the Visigothic elite, no matter how ‘Romanized’ they have been traditionally been considered,⁹⁴ to apply Late Roman titlature with concrete and definable socio-political functions. Also, there are a few instances of Visigothic titles being used by the Kings of Toledo, and they are: *Sisebutus rex Wisigothorum*, *Recharedi regis Gothorum*, and *Reccaredo regi Visigothorum*.⁹⁵ It is interesting that Reccared features as the main royal figure to use such titles; perhaps he wanted to reestablish himself as a truly Gothic king after converting to Catholicism? This allowed him to gain the favour of his Hispano-Roman Nicene subjects, while at the same time maintaining support from certain Arian subjects who could at least view him as a true *rex Visigothorum*.

⁹² For a detailed listing of the various titles and names employed by the Visigothic aristocracy as recorded in attendance at councils, see A. Isla Frez , “El ‘officium palatinum’ visigodo: Entorno regio y poder aristocrático,” pp. 832-837.

⁹³ For the figure Ella, see L.A. García Moreno, *Prosopografía del Reino Visigodo de Toledo* (Salamanca, 1974) p. 45, No. 48.

⁹⁴ For example, the assistance of King Wallia (415-19) given to the Empire in forcing the Vandal, Suevi and Alan Confederation out of *Hispania* has often been used as an example of pro-Roman tradition in the Visigothic aristocracy. See Hydatius, *The Chronicle of Hydatius and the Consularia Constantinopolitana: Two Contemporary Accounts of the Final Years of the Roman Empire*, R.W. Burgess, ed., and trans., (Oxford, 1993) *Chronica*. XII.

⁹⁵ For these titles used by the Visigothic kings, on both coinage and in the literary sources, see A. Gillett, ‘Was Ethnicity Politicized in the Early Medieval Kingdoms?’ *On Barbarian Identity*, pp. 100-102.

One interesting point regarding the continued ethnic identity of the ruling class is attested for at the Sixth Council of Toledo in 638, where the criteria for kingship is specifically determined. Not only does it state that the king cannot be tonsured or have his hair shorn, but it also explicitly states that he must be of free status and belonging to the Gothic ethnic group.⁹⁶ This clearly demonstrates that to those individuals of both the ecclesiastical and secular elite, who were inherently tied to the issue of royal succession, were in the mid-seventh century still able to distinguish Visigothic features and heritage, at least in theory. The exact protocol for determining the lineage and ethnic composition of a potential ruler is unclear, and it could possibly have been rigged or manipulated when required. However, when we take into account that it was in the elite sector of society that traditional ‘Gothic’ identities were fostered and cultivated, it is logical to assume that the king himself, at the very centre of this group, represented a member of the kingdom whose Visigothic ethnicity was apparent to his contemporaries. Whether this was the case or not, the above criteria of kingship represents an even more significant point regarding the matter of cultural identities within the Visigothic kingdom in the early medieval period. Even if the king himself was not of Visigothic descent, the aristocracy in the mid-seventh century felt compelled to emphasize such an identity as fundamental to their ruler to whom they owed allegiance. The elite sector desired and expected their king to display traditionally ascribed Visigothic characteristics, and it is clear that ethnicity was of some importance to this social group. It was not simply a question of which Christian creed one followed, there continued to be significant cultural matters outside of this dogmatic divide between Arian and Catholic.

⁹⁶ M. Diesenberger, ‘Symbolic capital in the Frankish kingdoms,’ *The Construction of Communities in the Early Middle Ages*, p. 190.

Up until now the section has focused upon the maintenance and creation of Visigothic identity through the elite sector of society, as is the main purpose of *traditionskern* ethnogenesis theory, yet it is still important to try and present the evidence for the common members of society, and whether they possessed any degree of ethnic separation from their Hispano-Roman or various other neighbours. The exact details relating to methods of settlement or taxation are unclear, but as the previous discussion of places such as El Bovalar or El Carpio de Tajo has indicated, it is probable that the Visigothic common folk would have been distributed across areas where their services to their social superior, whether military or not, would be easily maintained. In legal terms, during the partitioning of land between Visigoths and Hispano-Romans, the former were entitled to two-thirds of the land in question,⁹⁷ however, this tells us virtually nothing about how such procedures or allocations were practically undertaken. The problem of identifying the *subiecti* or *subditi* of Visigothic origin,⁹⁸ is further compounded by the fact that although we have a general idea as to the theoretical tax system, for example the existence of the offices of the *teloneum* and *cataplus*,⁹⁹ we have virtually no idea which individuals belonged to the *fiscus* or lived as *privati*, or who served as local *actores*.¹⁰⁰ Unfortunately the life of common Visigothic settlers can only be glimpsed when they are directly related to discussions of the Gothic aristocracy.

⁹⁷ *Leges Visigothorum*, X.I.VIII.

⁹⁸ S. Teillet, *Des Goths à la nation gothique: les origines de l'idée de nation en Occident du Ve au VIIe siècle* (Paris, 1984) p. 555.

⁹⁹ F. Retamero, 'As Coins go Home: Towns, Merchants, Bishops and Kings in Visigothic Spain,' *The Visigoths from the Migration Period to the Seventh Century: An Ethnographic Perspective*, p. 280.

¹⁰⁰ The continued use of *actores* as representatives of landowners is discussed in E.A. Thompson, *The Goths in Spain*, p. 117.

In terms of military functions, it is clear that the *compulsores* were in charge of local military recruitment,¹⁰¹ but scholars are not sure as to what exact criteria they used for selection of troops, especially in terms of their ethnic background or perceived identities. The *leges Visigothorum* only provide theoretical information, for example, that a free subject was to provide ten percent of his slaves in service to the *exercitus*,¹⁰² but nothing in the way of practical application. Finally, the possibility that the term *gardingus* referred to someone who rose from the ranks into the *officium palatinum*,¹⁰³ is impossible to prove as only Hildigisus, a supporter of the revolt against Wamba,¹⁰⁴ is referred to in the literature by name. It is also worth mentioning that prior to expanding across the Iberian peninsula in the late sixth and seventh centuries, the Visigoths were not the dominant power in their region, whether in Gaul or later Spain following their defeat at the hands of Clovis at Vouillé in 507.¹⁰⁵

After having looked at some of the various problems in attempting to identify the Visigoths as a distinct ethnicity or identity throughout their settlement in *Hispania*, and in terms of their impact upon urban or social systems, it is clear that the aristocracy did indeed maintain certain degrees of Gothic affiliation. The traditional problem in such studies has been the tendency to polarize Late Roman and Gothic consciousness away from one another, instead of understanding the ability of Visigothic kings or leaders to

¹⁰¹ K.E. Carr, *Vandals to Visigoths*, p. 180.

¹⁰² *Leges Visigothorum*, IX.II.IX.

¹⁰³ A. Isla Frez, "El 'officium palatinum' visigodo: Entorno regio y poder aristocrático," pp. 846-847.

¹⁰⁴ E.A. Thompson, *The Goths in Spain*, p. 253.

¹⁰⁵ For a clear illustration of rival powers to the Visigoths in Gaul or Spain, and how such political or military pressures influenced the decision making of late fifth to sixth century rulers, see G. Halsall, *Barbarian Migrations and the Roman West, 376-568* (Cambridge, 2007) pp. 296-298.

use both ethnic labels when it served their interests, as we have seen with Reccared and his conversion to Catholicism on the one hand, and his usage of clearly Gothic titlature on the other. This clearly depicts a ruling elite which was able to incorporate local Hispano-Roman aristocrats such as Claudius, the *ducem emeritensis civitatis*,¹⁰⁶ while at the same time maintaining a level of Gothic consciousness which could be brought to the surface at suitable and opportune moments, as was shown with the speech of Wamba and his mockery of the Frankish forces in relation to the great strength of the *Gothi*.

If we maintain this view, that the aristocracy of early medieval Spain was able to successfully maintain traditional forms of Gothic ethnic identification, while operating within a society largely composed of Hispano-Roman subjects, which in turn necessitated the need for various forms of integration, acculturation, and varying functions of ethnic labeling, then we are ready to proceed to the individual case studies of Toledo, Merida and Reccopolis. We must also bear in mind the inherent methodological problems and gaps in the material evidence as was discussed earlier, so that both the author and the reader can refrain from making overly optimistic or pessimistic interpretations of the cases. The reason these three centres have been selected is due to their greatly differing circumstances in which they existed or were created in Visigothic Spain. First, Toledo was the royal capital of the kingdom, built upon a Roman city of secondary significance, which evolved into the political and economic heart of the realm. Second, Merida had existed for centuries as *Emerita Augusta* and despite its being supplanted by Toledo as the capital, it maintained a high level of economic, political and ecclesiastical importance, and could perhaps be labeled as the second most important centre in seventh

¹⁰⁶ *VSPE*, V.X.33.

century *Hispania*. Finally, the case of Reccopolis is different in that it was established by Leovigild independent of any previous foundations, which is a clear indication of both *imitatio imperii* and aims at dynastic succession,¹⁰⁷ and despite perhaps being intended as a new *sedes regia* it had the shortest lifespan of the three cities.

The *Sedes Regia* of Toledo, 580-711 AD

The actual level of urbanism which existed in early medieval Toledo, both in terms of population and infrastructure or settlement, can prove elusive despite its prominence as a royal capital of the Visigothic Kingdom. Not only is archaeological evidence relating to the sixth to eighth centuries scarce, despite recent developments and excavations such as those at la Vega Baja which will be examined, but in the literary records its urban character is rarely discussed; the royal centre is simply accepted and taken for granted as a major urban centre of the kingdom. We know that it must have represented a fairly respectable city by the early eighth century, and one viewed as a worthwhile target by foreign powers, as it was greatly valued as a prize alongside Cordoba by Tariq ibn-Ziyad and the Umayyad forces who then went on to overthrow the Visigothic kingdom in *Hispania*.¹⁰⁸ The geographical situation of Toledo within the centre of the Iberian peninsula is evident viewed from any modern map, and such strategic considerations were certainly a factor when Leovigild decided to establish his court at the city;¹⁰⁹ it was not based upon *Toletum* as a major pre-existing Roman centre, as it had served as a

¹⁰⁷ Isidore of Seville, *Las Historias de los Godos, Vándalos y Suevos*, 51. p. 259.

¹⁰⁸ R. Collins, *The Arab Conquest of Spain: 710-97* (Oxford, 1989), p. 43.

¹⁰⁹ For the geographic importance of Toledo and its selection as the Visigothic capital, see D. Peris Sánchez and R. Villa, 'Territorio: Historia, cartografía e imagen,' in R. Villa et al., edd., *La Vega Baja de Toledo* (Toledo, 2009) p. 21.



A view from above of La Vega Baja *suburbium* of Visigothic Toledo, image found in R. Villa et al edd., *La Vega Baja de Toledo* (Toledo, 2009) p. 19.

secondary city to *Carthago Nova* in the province of *Carthaginensis*.¹¹⁰ Following the turmoil of the preceding decades, mainly in the internal conflict between Agila (549-54) and Athanagild (554-68) which had resulted in the loss of a large tract of *Baetica* to the Byzantine forces that had supported the victorious Athanagild,¹¹¹ the Visigothic kingdom required a strong, centralizing figure to reverse their precarious strategic situation.

Leovigild (569-86) was able to expand the Visigothic holdings in *Hispania* in a series of

¹¹⁰R. Izquierdo Benito, 'Toledo en época visigoda,' *Toledo y Bizancio* (Cuenca, 2002) p. 45.

¹¹¹F. Salvador Ventura, 'Los Siglos VI y VII en el Sur de Hispania: De Periodo de Autonomía Ciudadana a Pilar del Reino Hispano-Visigodo,' in F. Salvador Ventura, ed., *Hispania Meridional durante la Antigüedad* (Jaen, 2000) pp. 189-193., A. Isla Frez, 'Las relaciones entre el reino visigodo y los reyes merovingios a finales del siglo VI,' *En La España Medieval*, Vol. 13 (Madrid, 1990) p. 11, and H. Wolfram, *The Roman Empire and Its Germanic Peoples*, T. Dunlap, trans., (Berkeley and London, 1997) pp. 264-265.

successful campaigns,¹¹² and to establish a form of equilibrium with Byzantine *Spania* by fortifying his realm through use of ‘doble limes’ networks along the Greco-Gothic march.¹¹³ Leovigild was able to campaign successfully across the Iberian peninsula largely due to the power vacuum surrounding Toledo at the time, and according to Gisela Ripoll López, it was largely for this reason, alongside the lack of pro-Roman sentiment and availability of *agri deserti* in the region,¹¹⁴ that Leovigild decided to establish it as the capital of his kingdom.

If such reasons did indeed influence the royal decision, they would provide for interesting possibilities as to the *Gothi* element of his forces: If Leovigild desired both empty land with which to settle his followers or troops, and if these said lands were in an explicitly anti-Roman region at the time, then logically one could assume that his followers distinguished themselves from Romans with some degree of Visigothic or non-Roman ethnicity or self-perception. This is of course speculation, but it nevertheless suggests a level of Gothic identity in the common followers of Leovigild, right from the very beginnings of Toledo serving as the socio-political focal point of the kingdom. The selection of Toledo as the *sedes regia* was followed by its important political, religious and economic role within the kingdom. The political importance is to be expected due to its increased status and prestige, and the establishment of the *officium palatinum*, and

¹¹² For the campaigns, military endeavors, and strong royal command of Leovigild, see R. Collins, ‘¿Dónde estaban los arrianos en el año 589?’ *El Concilio III de Toledo: XIV Centenario, 589-1989* (Toledo, 1991) pp. 214-220., L.A. García Moreno, ‘History through Family Names in the Visigothic Kingdoms of Toulous and Toledo,’ *Cassiodorus: Rivista di studi sulla tarda antichità*, 4 (Calabria, 1998) p. 164., and R.L. Stocking, *Bishops, Councils and Consensus in the Visigothic Kingdom, 589-633*, p. 52.

¹¹³ M.R. Martí Matias, *Visigodos, Hispano-Romanos y Bizantinos en la zona valenciana en el siglo VI (España)*, (Oxford, 2001) p. 24.

¹¹⁴ G. Ripoll López, ‘Changes in the Topography of Power: from *civitates* to *sedes regiae* in *Hispania*,’ p. 145.

indeed the *aula regia* which served as a sort of assembly in which both secular and major ecclesiastical figures were present,¹¹⁵ serve as a clear demonstration of its political importance to the aristocracy and ruling elite. When we turn to the religious role of Toledo, the fifteen ecclesiastical councils hosted at Toledo between the years 589 and 702,¹¹⁶ despite saying virtually nothing about everyday Visigothic life or its impact upon Toledo, along with the various ecclesiastical structures including that of Santa Leocadia at which several councils took place,¹¹⁷ shows a strong central role in the Catholic hierarchy within the peninsula.¹¹⁸ Also, the Arian synod which was held at Toledo in 580 demonstrates that it was a place of ecclesiastical prestige to the Visigothic community and aristocracy,¹¹⁹ prior to the later conversion under Reccared.

Unfortunately no Arian structures survive, either because they have been converted into Catholic churches or their archaeological evidence has not been unearthed, and this makes assessment of pre-589 Visigothic urban influences particularly difficult to trace. Fortunately, the financial and economic role of Toledo as the royal capital is somewhat easier to determine, largely due to the existence of crucial offices and structures which relate to this element of government. The archaeological information regarding Toledo and its *suburbium* and *territorium* also provides us with evidence

¹¹⁵ R. Izquierdo Benito, 'Toledo en época visigoda,' *Toledo y Bizancio*, p. 57.

¹¹⁶ For a listing and detailed record of the numerous Toletan Councils, see J. Vives et al., *Concilios Visigóticos e Hispano-Romanos*.

¹¹⁷ R. Collins, *Spain: An Oxford Archaeological Guide*, p. 276.

¹¹⁸ The Third Council of Toledo (589) also confirmed the city as the *sedes regia* in its reference to Toledo as *ciuitatem regiam toletanum* and its predominant ecclesiastical role within the kingdom following the sixth century reflects this as well, see G. Ripoll and I. Velázquez, 'Toletum, la construcción de una *urbs regia*,' *Sedes Regiae (ann. 400-800)* p. 522.

¹¹⁹ John of Biclaro, *Juan de Biclaro*, pp. 89-90. 234-235.

regarding the economic vitality and industrial activities taking place in the capital during the sixth and seventh centuries.

When we view the Visigothic capital of Toledo in terms of its economic function as *sedes regia*, not only was it home to one of the royal mints,¹²⁰ but also the administrative centre of the *fiscus* and *patrimonia*; this formed one of the major functions of the royal administration at Toledo, alongside military command and also municipal administration.¹²¹ It has been emphasized that the various *comites* which were represented in the *officium palatinum* were not necessarily territorially based,¹²² and if we adhere to this view then it makes sense that the *comes patrimonii* would have the central buildings relating to the treasury within Toledo, although no extant structures can be defined archaeologically as such.

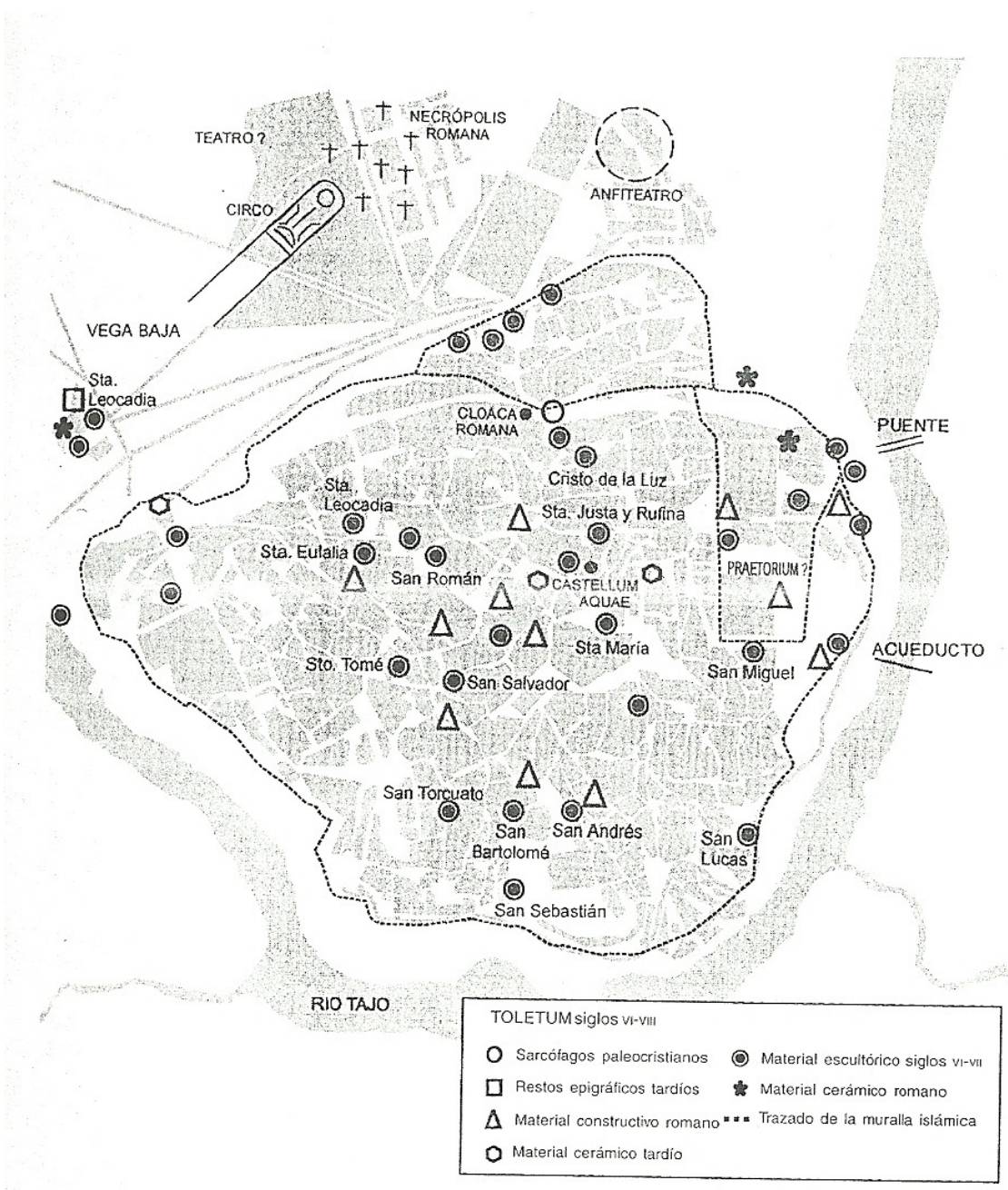
The only secular structures within the urban space of Toledo itself that can be clearly examined are the fortifications, and even then the north wall in particular is difficult to put into chronological context.¹²³ Unfortunately the literary records do not give much information as to the Visigothic influences upon the royal city, although as was discussed earlier, the fact that Wamba, who with his speech emphasizing the strength of the *Gothi* against the rebel Paul, was absolutely adamant about returning to Toledo prior to ascending the throne demonstrates that it had some resonance to the aristocracy after almost a century as *sedes regia*. Ildefonso of Toledo, a native author of the city,

¹²⁰ For information about the royal mints, the best detailed analysis can still be found in G.C. Miles, *The Coinage of Visigothic Spain*, pp. 69-147., and also D.M. Metcalf, 'Visigothic monetary history,' p. 216.

¹²¹ L.A. García Moreno, 'Dos capítulos sobre administración fiscalidad del reino de Toledo,' *De la Antigüedad al Medioevo: siglos IV-VIII* (Avila, 1993) p. 293.

¹²² A. Isla Frez, "El 'officium palatinum' visigodo: Entorno regio y poder aristocrático," p. 831.

¹²³ R. Collins, *Spain: An Oxford Archaeological Guide*, p. 278.



This detailed map illustrates the main ecclesiastical focal points of Visigothic Toledo, as well as La Vega Baja and secular structures. For the original source see G. Ripoll López and I. Velázquez, 'Toletum, la construcción de una *urbs regia*,' in J.M. Gurt and G. Ripoll edd., *Sedes Regiae (ann. 400-800)*, (Barcelona, 2000) p. 555.

simply refers to Toledo as *gloriosa Toletanae urbis*,¹²⁴ but gives no real account of the Visigoths or their influences over Toledo in civil administration.

At the time of its elevation to the status of *sedes regia* and during the early medieval period Toledo followed the path of the river Tajo,¹²⁵ and three of its five sides were directly facing it providing a natural border.¹²⁶ A strong defensive and strategic position, along with ready access to a major waterway, were both crucial elements behind the establishment of Toledo as the capital of the Visigothic realm. The communication between Toledo and other urban centres such as Merida through its position in the Tajo valley was a crucial factor in its success as capital,¹²⁷ and its rise facilitated increased settlement of *possessores* and suburban development around the urban centre, which had been taking place since the fourth and fifth centuries.¹²⁸ The *suburbium* of Toledo which has received the greatest amount of archaeological study in recent years is that of la Vega Baja which lies to the North of the city, and has since 2006 been protected as a patrimonial zone in Castilla-La-Mancha.¹²⁹ A wide array of material evidence has been unearthed in this suburban area, such as first to third century Roman pottery, sixth to seventh century Visigothic ceramics, various styles of coinage, early medieval glasswork,

¹²⁴ Ildelfonso of Toledo, *Praefatio*, XX.

¹²⁵ D. Peris Sánchez and R. Villa, 'Territorio: Historia, cartografía e imagen,' p. 22.

¹²⁶ D. Peris Sánchez, 'Vega Baja. Arqueología, ciudad y paisaje,' in *La Vega Baja*, p. 159, and D. Peris Sánchez, 'Un territorio urbano en la Vega Baja de Toledo,' in *Espacios Urbanos en el Occidente Mediterráneo (S. VI-VIII)* p. 7.

¹²⁷ L. Olmo Enciso, 'La Vega Baja en Época Visigoda: Una investigación arqueológica en construcción,' in *La Vega Baja de Toledo*, p. 69.

¹²⁸ L. Olmo Enciso, 'Ciudad y estado en época visigoda: Toledo, la construcción de un nuevo paisaje urbano,' p. 87.

¹²⁹ D. Peris Sánchez, 'Vega Baja. Arqueología, ciudad y paisaje,' p. 156.

bone cosmetic items, and a large number of metallic artifacts.¹³⁰ The importance of the *suburbium toletanum* to the development of the kingdom, and in turn its own urban revitalization that occurred alongside the stabilization of the Visigothic realm during the latter sixth century and first half of the seventh century, is a reflection of the changing socio-political focal points emerging within early medieval urban areas.

The establishment of residences and industrial complexes in la Vega Baja during the Visigothic period was not simply a matter of population growth or haphazard settlements being established around the royal and ecclesiastical administrative centres. While there was a growth in population during the sixth and seventh centuries and a relatively high level of urban development taking place,¹³¹ the archaeological evidence has demonstrated a regulated and planned zone set up by the authorities for residential, ecclesiastical and economic activities. “En estas se constata la existencia de una trama urbana regular, estructurada en manzanas de edificios organizados en torno a patios centrales.”¹³² The main excavations of la Vega Baja took place from 2001 to 2006, with the eastern areas of the suburb being examined since 2005.¹³³ Due to the arid summer heat and humid winters, particular concern for the degradation of la Vega Baja, along with methods Spanish archaeologists are utilizing in order to preserve the site, have

¹³⁰ For a catalogue listing the various finds at la Vega Baja see J. de Juan Ares, M. Gallego García and G. González, ‘La cultura material de la Vega Baja,’ in *La Vega Baja de Toledo*, p. 115.

¹³¹ For some examples of urban development see C. Equiluz Méndez, “Ravenna e Toledo: due modelli di ‘capitale imperiale’,” in C. Equiluz Méndez and S. Gasparri edd., *Le trasformazioni dello spazio urbano nell’alto medioevo (secoli V-VIII). Città mediterranee a confronto* (Florence, 2010) p. 11.

¹³² L. Olmo Enciso, ‘La Vega Baja en Época Visigoda: Una investigación arqueológica en construcción,’ pp. 81-82.

¹³³ A. J. Gómez-Laguna and J.M. Rojas Rodríguez-Malo, ‘Intervención arqueológica en la Vega Baja de Toledo. Características del centro político y religioso del reino visigodo,’ *El Siglo VII frente al Siglo VII: Arquitectura*, pp. 45-46.

recently been discussed in an article by María Dolores Ortín Arranz who works in restoration at the site.¹³⁴ Fortunately the protected status of la Vega Baja since 2006 and the boon of research taking place over the last decade in the area will likely allow for the necessary measures to be taken in preventing future degradation of the early medieval context and structures.

The fourth and fifth centuries witnessed an increased population density developing in la Vega Baja, with suburban *villae* and the circus being used until the end of the fifth century. “Estos edificios estarían testimoniando la existencia de una ocupación más densa en esta zona de la Vega Baja sobre la que posteriormente se desarrollará el nuevo programa urbana de época visigoda.”¹³⁵ With the establishment of the bishop of Toledo as the predominant see in the kingdom following 527,¹³⁶ there was an increased level of religious construction in Toledo in the sixth and seventh centuries, often paid for with royal patronage. The Visigothic rulers and aristocracy reutilized the Roman *suburbium* as a complex urban space,¹³⁷ with the basilicas of Santa Leocadia and San Pedro y San Pablo acting as major social and religious focal points; the latter adjoined the royal palace and served as the location for the Toledan councils.¹³⁸ The level of urbanism attested for in the archaeological record for sixth and early seventh

¹³⁴ For the preservation of la Vega Baja against the elements, see M.D. Ortín Arranz, ‘La conservación del yacimiento arqueológico de la Vega Baja,’ *Espacios Urbanos en el Occidente Mediterráneo*, pp. 305-309.

¹³⁵ L. Olmo Enciso, ‘La Vega Baja en Época Visigoda: Una investigación arqueológica en construcción,’ p. 71.

¹³⁶ *Ibid*, p. 73.

¹³⁷ D. Peris Sánchez, ‘Vega Baja. Arqueología, ciudad y paisaje,’ p. 159.

¹³⁸ A.J. Gómez-Laguna, A.J., and J.M. Rojas Rodríguez-Malo, ‘Intervención arqueológica en la Vega Baja de Toledo. Características del centro político y religioso del reino visigodo,’ pp. 60.

century Toledo was directly tied to the stability of the *regnum* and the emergence of the bishop of Toledo as being preeminent within the realm.

Además, Toledo había salido bien librada de las convulsions que azotaron Hispania antes del colapso imperial y contaba con un buen número de infraestructuras romanas que hacían de la ciudad una perfecta candidate a la capitalidad del nuevo Estado.¹³⁹

While it is certainly true that rulers such as Teudis (531-548) and Leovigild affected a degree of *imitatio imperii* in their styles of governance and treatment of the urban environment,¹⁴⁰ there did exist a genuine sense of urban identity and pride felt by the Visigothic and Gallo-Roman elite in the seventh century, long after the loss of Roman administration. An example of this can be seen in the rivalry between residents of Toledo and Merida in the areas of piety and sanctity. For example, the elevation of the relics of Santa Leocadia in importance in the seventh century has been put forth as an attempt to rival the tunic of Santa Eulalia in Merida.¹⁴¹ Like its Merovingian and Lombard counterparts, Toledo was a capital that thrived on royal patronage and prestige, bolstered and reinforced by a strong ecclesiastical role. The Visigothic rulers were able to reuse materials to construct their own buildings, for example, the removal of materials from the circus and theatre in the south of Toledo to build new structures in the sixth century.¹⁴² Visigothic Toledo and its level of urban vitality was a strong reflection of the conditions surrounding the *regnum* as a whole due to its status as *sedes regia*, and was greatly impacted and influenced by the new ruling elite with respect to urban administration.

¹³⁹ R. Barroso Cabrera, and J. Morin de Pablos, 'La civitas regia toletana en el contexto de la Hispania de la séptima centuria,' p. 124.

¹⁴⁰ Equiluz Méndez, C., "Ravenna e Toledo: due modelli di 'capitale imperiale'," p. 8.

¹⁴¹ R. Barroso Cabrera and J. Morin de Pablos, 'La civitas regia toletana en el contexto de la Hispania de la séptima centuria,' p. 114.

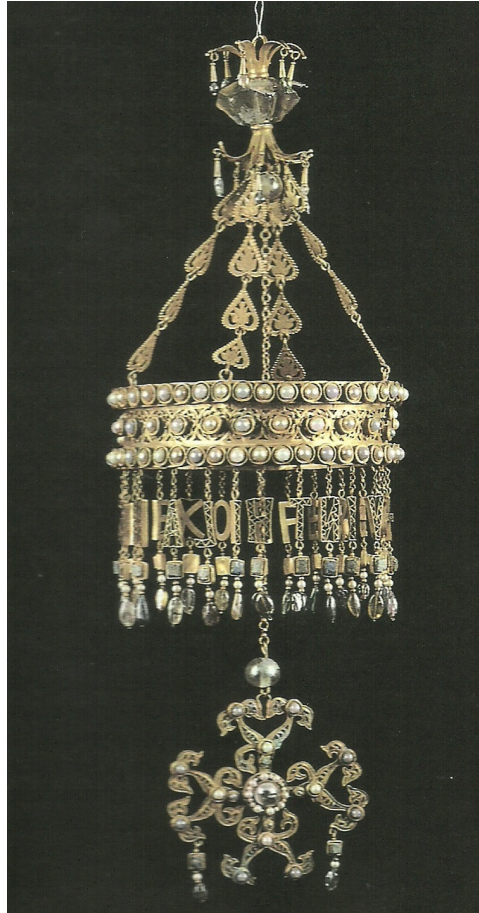
¹⁴² A.J. Gómez-Laguna and J.M. Rojas Rodríguez-Malo, 'Intervención arqueológica en la Vega Baja de Toledo. Características del centro político y religioso del reino visigodo,' p. 83.

The clear planning laid out by the Visigothic administration for city organization, as was the case at the Vega Baja and less densely populated Vega Alta, also demonstrates that the Roman sense of *civitas* was not lost upon the new aristocracy in the region.

What does all of this tell us about the level of Visigothic impact upon the city itself? The establishment of Toledo as the capital and its subsequent civil administration and royal structures, without having a major Roman foundation to build upon, can perhaps explain why the many titles applied to the *honorati* and *uiri inlustres* of the court often lack clear definition in terms of socio-political functions within the kingdom, which is in itself an example of ‘Gothic’ impact. The selection of a Roman city of secondary importance not only shows a degree of anti-Roman self-perception, but also the intent to expand from this strategic point to subdue *Hispania* to the new Visigothic court.

The royal mint at Toledo indicates its importance for economic reasons as well as strategic, and indeed the gold content of the votive crowns from the treasure of Guarrazar suggests the continued use of local gold mines around Toledo and the River Tagus.¹⁴³ The variety and richness of the inlaid gemstones from the various crowns and crosses also indicate a significant level of trade with the East, most likely through Byzantine *Spania* in the late sixth to early seventh centuries AD. The trade was not one way though, as circulation of Visigothic goods also took place, for example in the expansion

¹⁴³ A contrast of Suevic and Visigothic gold coinage under ion-beam techniques, as well as jewelry, taking into account the mints used for the various coins, demonstrated that the lack of tin or zinc in the Guarrazar finds and their high level of gold content, around 85 to 95 percent, was likely due to the use of southern Iberian gold mines for the production of such costly items. For more technical detail and specific information regarding this study, see T. Calligaro, et al., ‘The Treasure of Guarrazar: Tracing the Gold Supplies in the Visigothic Iberian Peninsula,’ *Archaeometry*, 49. 1 (Oxford, 2007) pp. 53-74, and for some further information on votive crowns found in the southeast of the peninsula, see A. Perea ed., *El Tesoro visigodo de Torredonjimeno* (Madrid, 2009)



The above image is a replica of the original votive crown of King Suintila dating to c. 621-31 AD and found as part of the treasure of Guarrazar. For the above image and more detail see G. Ripoll López and I. Velázquez, 'L'Espagne wisigothique,' in J.J. Aillagon, dir., *Rome et les Barbares: La Naissance d'un Nouveau Monde* (Venice, 2008) p. 362.

of seventh-century Toledan art to the southeast Levant region.¹⁴⁴ With the defeat of Rodrigo, or Roderic (710-712) by Tariq ibn Ziyad (d.720) at Guadalete in 711, upon entering Toledo in November of that year Tariq encountered no military resistance as the

¹⁴⁴ For a discussion Toledan art in the Levant see R. Barroso Cabrera and J. Morin de Pablos, 'La civitas regia toletana en el contexto de la Hispania de la séptima centuria,' in J. Carrobes Santos ed., *Regia sedes Toletana, vol I: La topografía de la ciudad de Toledo en la tardia antigüedad y alta edad media* (Toledo, 2007) p. 98.

aristocracy and population had largely fled North by the time of his arrival.¹⁴⁵ However, his swift movement to take Toledo due to its administrative and financial importance reflects that by the eighth century Toledo had established itself as the *sedes regia* and the predominant urban centre in the Visigothic kingdom. The next case will provide further insight regarding urban developments in early medieval Spain; Merida not only acted as a prominent *civitas* of the Visigoths, but it also had a stronger Roman tradition than that of *Toletum*, which should prove useful in emphasizing the Visigothic element in relation to the Hispano-Roman populace.

Merida and urban vitality in the Visigothic kingdom

As the ancient city of *Emerita Augusta*, which would become known as Merida in the early medieval period, has a rich history spanning centuries of Roman rule in *Hispania*, to fully appreciate the chronology and evolution of Merida would take a chapter in itself. This section will instead deal with the role of Merida during the Visigothic period, to emphasize civil administration and its changes from the Late Roman era where possible, and focusing upon the literary and archaeological evidence. Historians aiming to examine the ecclesiastical and secular administration in Merida benefit from a greater sense of chronology in the literature, thanks to the *VSPE*, and there have also been significant archaeological finds and excavations which shed some light into the workings of the city on a more basic level.

The layout and urban character of sixth to eighth century Merida can be difficult to determine, as it has been suggested that following the possible Suevic damage inflicted

¹⁴⁵ R. Izquierdo Benito, ‘¿De complejo palatino visigodo a arrabal Islámico?’ *La Vega Baja de Toledo*, p. 96.

upon the city in c. 429, the physical limits of the urban area may have been reduced.¹⁴⁶ Others have claimed that Merida did not experience critical sacking or damage in the fifth century,¹⁴⁷ and that the contraction was of a more organic nature, likely with the intention of preventing such attacks. Nevertheless, by the second half of the sixth century Merida underwent a process of urban reinvigoration, evident in the construction of a basilica, Episcopal palace and xenodochium as well.¹⁴⁸ Despite this reduction of size, Roger Collins nevertheless paints an image of prosperity and continued importance in Merida from the fifth century, when he writes: “Of course, it had been a thoroughly Roman city, an important administrative centre and fortunate in its fate in both the third and fifth centuries, but the experience of other major Roman cities of Spain, especially in the South and the East, may not have been dissimilar.”¹⁴⁹ Indeed the Visigoths had repaired the bridge across the Gaudiana River in 484,¹⁵⁰ which would have helped the urban area to maintain trade and transportation of goods from its *territorium* and further afield. While Toledo acted as the predominant urban centre for commercial activity in the Tajo valley, Merida provided the same economic function in the regions around the Guadiana.¹⁵¹ As to what condition this fifth-century bridge would have been in during the reign of Leovigild, there is no direct literary reference or archaeological information

¹⁴⁶ R. Collins, *Visigothic Spain, 409-711*, p. 215.

¹⁴⁷ J. Arce, ‘Augusta Emerita en los siglos IV-V. d.C.: la documentación escrita,’ *Repertorio de Arquitectura Cristiana en Extremadura: Época Tardoantigua Altomedieval*, p. 131.

¹⁴⁸ L. Olmo Enciso, ‘“Ciudad y procesos de transformación social entre los siglos VI y IX: de Recópolis a Racupel,” p. 389.

¹⁴⁹ R. Collins, *Early Medieval Spain: Unity in Diversity 400-1000* (London, 1983) p. 90.

¹⁵⁰ K.E. Carr, *Vandals to Visigoths*, p. 131.

¹⁵¹ M. Cruz Villalon, ‘La escultura visigoda de la Lusitania,’ in P. Périn, ed., *Gallo-Romains, Wisigoths et Francs en Aquitaine, Septimanie et Espagne: actes des VIIe Journées internationales d’archéologie mérovingienne* (Toulouse, 1985) p. 63.

to provide an insight. Merida in the middle of the sixth century acted as the base of operations for Agila in the aforementioned war with Athanagild,¹⁵² which reflects a degree of both security in its fortifications and strategic importance within *Hispania*, as the attention of the Visigothic kings and aristocracy began shifting from the North to the South of the peninsula during that period.¹⁵³ As was the case with both Toledo and Reccopolis, Merida experienced a degree of urban decline in the second half of the seventh century due to the volatile political circumstances of the period which the Visigothic kings and aristocracy were faced with.¹⁵⁴ It is nevertheless clear that Merida continued as a *civitas* of secular, administrative and strategic importance in relation to the urban network of *Hispania*, so let us now turn to the social composition, economic and political significance of the city.

The prominence of both Gothic and Hispano-Romans within the administration of the city demonstrates a high degree of interaction and co-existence took place, at least in the upper stratus of its social hierarchy.¹⁵⁵ The continued prosperity and prestige of Hispano-Roman *senatores* is affirmed in the *VSPE*, when it describes the events surrounding a certain wealthy husband of senatorial background in *Lusitania*, and his pleas with the Bishop of Merida to save his sick wife; the *VSPE* states that *tanta namque*

¹⁵² G. Ripoll López, 'Changes in the Topography of Power: from *civitates* to *sedes regiae* in *Hispania*,' pp. 130-131.

¹⁵³ F. Salvador Ventura, 'Los Siglos VI y VII en el Sur de Hispania: De Periodo de Autonomía Ciudadana a Pilar del Reino Hispano-Visigodo,' p. 189.

¹⁵⁴ L. Olmo Enciso, 'Ciudad y procesos de transformación social entre los siglos VI y IX: de Recópolis a Racupel,' pp. 391-392.

¹⁵⁵ The co-existence in administrative roles, or ecclesiastical office, of both Goth and Roman in Merida, is discussed in J. Arce, 'The city of Merida (Emerita) in the *Vitae Sanctorum Patrum Emeritensium* (VIth century AD),' *East and West: modes of communication: proceedings of the first plenary conference at Merida* (Leiden and Boston, 1999) p. 11.



The above map of early medieval Merida can be found in M. Alba Calzado and P. Mateos Cruz, 'El paisaje urbano de Emerita en época visigoda,' in Olmo Enciso, L., ed., *Recópolis y la ciudad en la Época Visigoda*, Zona Arqueología, No. 9 (Alcalá de Henares, 2008) p. 265.

illis inerat copia rerum et nullus senatorum in provincia lusitaniae illis reperiretur

*locupletior.*¹⁵⁶ It is clear that this individual is of senatorial background, which continues to serve as a prestige symbol in Merida, but to what extent this family represents the

¹⁵⁶ *The Vitae Sanctorum Patrum Emeritensium: Text and Translation with an Introduction and Commentary*, J.M. Garvin, trans., (Washington, D.C., 1946) p. 167. IV.XI.15, and for more information on *honores* and *senatores* continuing as landholders into the fifth and sixth centuries see S. Castellanos, 'Aristocracias y dependientes en el Alto Ebro. (siglos V–VIII),' *Studia Historica. Historia Medieval*, 14 (Salamanca, 1996) p. 43.

typical Hispano-Roman aristocrat at the time, we can only speculate. The wording used in the *VSPE* implies that there are several wealthy Hispano-Roman senatorial families that continued to thrive in *Lusitania*, or else it would not have emphasized that this particular man was richer than all of his peers. Braulio of Saragossa also refers to the Hispano-Roman senatorial class throughout the *Vita Sancti Emiliani*, but as Santiago Castellanos had demonstrated, there is no reference or clear indication as to the function or social responsibilities of these classes.¹⁵⁷ The same problem plagues the *VSPE*, with the exception of the *dux* Claudius who was discussed earlier in this chapter.

There is an implication in the *Vitae* which shows Merida and its aristocracy maintained a strong sense of distinction between the urban environment and the countryside; Bishop Masona continues to distinguish between *civibus urbis* and *rusticus de ruralibus*,¹⁵⁸ although there is no mention as to the level of Gothic or Hispano-Romans within these two spheres of lower to middle class society. Although there is a tendency to rely on the *VSPE* as the authoritative and most important of primary sources concerning early medieval Merida, it should perhaps be pointed out that two major problems are to be found within its writings, as has been clearly illustrated by Javier Arce. First, issues such as edition, interpolation, authenticity and date are common within the document. Second, its historical accuracy and interpretation of events is often questionable.¹⁵⁹ Despite these setbacks, it nevertheless provides the reader with an invaluable glimpse into the socio-political mechanisms of Visigothic Merida, and if the

¹⁵⁷ S. Castellanos, *Poder Social, Aristocracias y Hombre Santo en la Hispania Visigoda: La Vita Aemiliani de Braulio de Zaragoza* (Logrono, 1998) pp. 42-43.

¹⁵⁸ *VSPE*, V.III.VII.

¹⁵⁹ For a detailed analysis of the historiographical problems one faces when working with the *VSPE*, see J. Arce, *Merida tardorromana, 300-50 d.C.* (Merida, 2002) p. 199.

above points are taken into account while reading, it can be a useful tool in determining the social context of the city. For example, the arrival of the *transmarini negotiatores* and the story of the young Fidelis arriving at Merida,¹⁶⁰ not only demonstrates that foreign merchants and political embassies were not considered a completely uncommon occurrence at Merida, but also that at least amongst the upper strata of society, enough capital and wealth continued to exist in the sixth century for *munusculi* or personal gifts to be distributed.¹⁶¹ This points towards a society in which the aristocracy possessed a respectable level of wealth, coming from both Gothic and Hispano-Roman background, while it also demonstrates the existence of a polyethnic social mixture within the region itself.

In keeping with the general trend of changing urban functions and focal points for interaction which seem to be so common in the early medieval period, archaeology in Merida does indeed indicate what Roger Collins has called ‘market gardening’ in the seventh century, a term he uses to describe the increasing levels of rural activities within the traditional boundaries and walls of the urban area.¹⁶² There is also evidence that suggests *villae* such as Torreáguila were reutilized for agrarian purposes at some point during the Visigothic reign.¹⁶³ The division of the Late Roman *domus* into ‘casas de

¹⁶⁰ *VSPE*, IV.III.2-11.

¹⁶¹ F. Retamero, ‘As Coins Go Home: Towns, Merchants, Bishops and Kings in Visigothic Spain,’ p. 271.

¹⁶² For rural activities taking place in Merida see R. Collins, *Visigothic Spain, 409-711*, p. 216, and L. Caballero Zoreda, ‘Arquitectura tardoantigua y altomedieval en Extremadura,’ in L. Caballero Zoreda and P. Mateos Cruz edd., *Repertorio de Arquitectura Cristiana en Extremadura: Época Tardoantigua Altomedieval* (Merida, 2003) p. 159.

¹⁶³ M. Alba Calzado and P. Mateos Cruz, ‘El paisaje urbano de Emerita en época visigoda,’ *Recópolis y la ciudad en la Época Visigoda*, p. 270.

vecinos',¹⁶⁴ which also reflects the commonplace early medieval partitioning of large estates or structures into a series of smaller residences, has also been discovered in the archaeological record at Merida. The discovery of a 'second forum' via a door in the Arch of Trajan by Almagro Basch in 1976, and its breakdown into smaller residential structures at some point in the fifth century,¹⁶⁵ serves as further material evidence for this urban phenomenon. The conversion of Late Roman structures such as a *domus* were not limited to being compartmentalized into smaller residential sections. "Por tanto, pensamos que en el momento de la creación de la necropolis, la *domus*, ya abandonada, conservaba aún en pie algunas de sus estructuras que fueron reutilizadas como mausoleos."¹⁶⁶ The establishment of urban burials and crypts coincides with the overall Christianization of Merida and its territories during the sixth and seventh centuries. The numerous *martyria* constructed outside the walls, such as Santa Lucrecia, represent the spread of Christian urban values and structures into the *territorium* of Merida.¹⁶⁷ Whether or not this was due to specific Visigothic influences upon the city remain difficult to prove, as figures of presumably Visigothic background such as Masona had already established themselves within the ecclesiastical framework, thus obscuring the line between Roman Catholic or 'Germanic' influences. However, it is clear that converting abandoned structures for religious purposes took place.

¹⁶⁴ P. Mateos, 'Augusta Emerita, de capital de la *dioceses hispaniarum* a *sede temporal* Visigoda,' p. 506.

¹⁶⁵ P. Mateos Cruz et al., 'Un tesoro de tremises visigodos hallado en el llamado (foro provincial) de Augusta Emerita,' pp. 251-253.

¹⁶⁶ P. Mateos Cruz, *La Basílica de Santa Eulalia de Mérida: Arqueología y Urbanismo* (Madrid, 1999) p. 52.

¹⁶⁷ P. Mateos Cruz, 'Arquitectura y urbanismo en las ciudades de la actual Extremadura en época tardoantigua,' *Repertorio de Arquitectura Cristiana en Extremadura: Época Tardoantigua Altomedieval*, p. 237.



An artist's depiction of what the complex surrounding Santa Eulalia in Merida may have looked like in the Visigothic period, see M. Alba Calzado and P. Mateos Cruz, 'El paisaje urbano de Emerita en época visigoda,' in L. Olmo Enciso, ed., *Recópolis y la ciudad en la Época Visigoda*, Zona Arqueología, No. 9 (Alcalá de Henares, 2008) p. 264.

It has been proposed that many of the *villae* in Spain were transferred to the Visigothic elite upon their arrival into the region,¹⁶⁸ and while this is a logical assumption, there is little in the way of literary or archaeological material to support this

¹⁶⁸ A. Chavarría Arnau, 'Interpreting the Transformation of Late Roman Villas: The Case of Hispania,' *Landscapes of Change*, p. 89.

occurring at Merida.¹⁶⁹ A distinction between Late Roman ‘tile burials’ and Visigothic ‘cist burials’ at Merida has been made in the past,¹⁷⁰ and while this certainly shows a degree of Visigothic settlement in the region, it is difficult to put into a chronological context, not unlike El Carpio de Tajo. The archaeological finds in Merida also tend to be quite sporadic and at random locations, which has been viewed as a possible indication as to the locations of undiscovered Visigothic period churches.¹⁷¹ When attention turns to numismatic studies, recent debate about the function of certain bronze coins possibly used by the Visigoths,¹⁷² despite being in the early stages and with no clear indication or study having been produced as of yet, will have serious implications as to how we perceive the everyday life of Gothic or Hispano-Roman subjects residing in Merida; the position of this city as one of the major mints and production centres of coinage for the Visigothic kingdom,¹⁷³ suggests that the concept of a certain degree of fractional currency being used on a regular basis by the lower classes is not an unreasonable assumption.

Throughout the 1970s and 1980s there were numerous excavations taking place at Merida, and the majority of urban structures unearthed to the present time consist largely

¹⁶⁹ Although tracing the exact point at which a *villa* ceases to be occupied or to serve some purpose can be troublesome, there is evidence for the abandonment of a *villa* south of Merida as early as the third century, see P. Mateos Cruz, ‘La arqueología urbana en Mérida durante 1999,’ *Memoria*, Vol. 5 (Merida, 2001) p. 14.

¹⁷⁰ R. Collins, *Spain: An Oxford Archaeological Guide*, p. 193.

¹⁷¹ P. Mateos Cruz and J.L. Ramírez Sádaba, *Catálogo de las Inscripciones Cristianas de Mérida. Museo Nacional de Arte Romano*, No. 16 (Merida, 2000) p. 277.

¹⁷² K.E.Carr, *Vandals to Visigoths*, pp. 136-137.

¹⁷³ For the prominence of Merida as a mint, see P. Mateos Cruz et al., ‘Un tesoro de tremises visigodos hallado en el llamado (foro provincial) de Augusta Emerita,’ p. 261.

of ecclesiastical structures.¹⁷⁴ While the author has intended this thesis to be focused upon primarily secular and administrative buildings, in the case of Merida it is important to acknowledge the role which the local clergy played in its urban developments during the early medieval period. The main religious sites in Merida were referred to by contemporaries in the seventh century as *ecclesia senior* or *Sancta Iherusalem* and consisted of Santa Eulalia, Santa Lucrecia, Santa Quintisina, San Lorenzo and San Cipriano, and San Serván and San Germán; all of the sites listed were basilicas in the early medieval period.¹⁷⁵ There were also numerous smaller churches and religious structures such as crypts constructed in the suburban areas around Merida in the sixth and seventh centuries, particularly in the northwest region.¹⁷⁶ Unlike Toledo which saw a growth of both secular and ecclesiastic structures due to its position as *sedes regia* following the sixth century, Merida was much more entrenched in the religious sphere of construction, and continued building upon its status as the capital of the *diocesis Hispaniarum* which it had attained at the end of the third century.¹⁷⁷ Although Santa Eulalia served as the main focal point for such activities within the city, the impact of the local clergy and elite extended outside of the city walls into the *territorium* over which Merida administered.

¹⁷⁴ For more information regarding the excavations in those decades see P. Mateos Cruz, *La Basílica de Santa Eulalia de Mérida: Arqueología y Urbanismo*, p. 25.

¹⁷⁵ M. Alba Calzado and P. Mateos Cruz, 'El paisaje urbano de Emerita en época visigoda,' p. 269.

¹⁷⁶ Regarding the necropolis in the northwest area see P. Mateos Cruz, *La Basílica de Santa Eulalia de Mérida: Arqueología y Urbanismo*, p. 189.

¹⁷⁷ T. Cordero Ruiz and I. Sastre de Diego, 'El yacimiento de casa Herrera en el contexto del territorio emeritense (siglos IV-VIII),' *Espacios Urbanos en el Occidente Mediterráneo (S. VI-VIII)*, p. 215.

The majority of excavations since the 1930's have focused on ecclesiastical sites such as those discussed above, but at the turn of the last decade from 1999 to 2001 the *foro provincial* of Merida was examined.¹⁷⁸ Over the course of the sixth century, Merida was largely Christianized while Late Roman secular structures such as the temples, senate, tribunal and *palatium* fell into disuse.¹⁷⁹ However, there is archaeological evidence that material from the temple of Diana at Merida may have been reused in later structures.¹⁸⁰ While the quality of construction shifted over the course of the fifth to eighth centuries at Merida, the overall street plan remains largely intact, unless they come into direct conflict with newly constructed residential structures; the roads were repaired or raised at times, and in the sixth to seventh centuries sometimes consisted of packed dirt, but were nonetheless effective like the Roman roads before them for controlling traffic around and into Merida.¹⁸¹ The walls of the city covered a four kilometre perimeter, were eight to ten feet in height, and six feet wide; they served largely as the symbolic boundary between *emerita urbs potens* and the outlying areas.¹⁸² The aristocracy and residents of Merida in the sixth and seventh centuries may have been eager to build churches and structures in the suburban environs, but there still persisted a

¹⁷⁸ For an in depth summary of the excavations since the 1930's at Merida leading up to 2004, see R.M. Durán-Cabello and F. Germán Rodríguez Martín, 'Veinticinco años de arqueología urbana en Mérida,' *Cuadernos de prehistoria y arqueología*, No. 30 (Madrid, 2004) pp. 153-166.

¹⁷⁹ P. Mateos Cruz, *La Basílica de Santa Eulalia de Mérida: Arqueología y Urbanismo*, p. 189.

¹⁸⁰ A. Pizzo, 'El *opus testaceum* en la arquitectura pública de *Avgvsta Emerita*,' *Archivo Español de Arqueología*, LXXXIII (Madrid, 2010) p. 151.

¹⁸¹ M. Alba Calzado, 'Características del viario urbano de Emerita entre los siglos I y VIII,' *Memoria*, Vol. 5 (Merida, 1999) p. 406.

¹⁸² M. Alba Calzado and P. Mateos Cruz, 'El paisaje urbano de Emerita en época visigoda,' p. 268.

degree of urban identity within the marked boundaries of the *civitas* in relation to the territories surrounding it.

The number of such residents within the city walls, and the amount of deserted or free space in Visigothic Merida, both remain elusive,¹⁸³ but after having examined some of the literary and archaeological material concerning the level, function and character of urbanism in fifth to seventh century Merida, it is clear that the aristocracy consisted of both Gothic and Hispano-Roman families even if an exact proportion or estimate is difficult to construct. A certain level of wealth was maintained due to the prominence of Merida as an ecclesiastical, commercial and administrative centre, with a strong and prolific mint as well. The discovery of Hispano-Roman and Visigothic burials, along with the literary references to overseas merchants and ambassadors, reinforces the idea that the common people also experienced a degree of cultural exchange. It should be noted that the feud between the Bishop Masona and Leovigild as an indication of Visigothic or foreign influences upon Merida has deliberately been avoided;¹⁸⁴ simply due to the fact that even if the author of the *Vitae* demonizes Leovigild, the later glorification of Reccared clearly shows that it was not a question of anti-Gothic sentiment expressed, but rather a somewhat typical portrayal of a heretical ruler in such a dark manner. Merida in the early medieval period was an urban centre that was tied to the fortunes of the ruling elite, and suffered in the latter seventh century along with the other *civitates* of the kingdom, but its level of ecclesiastical support and local stability allowed for it to maintain a relatively high level of urbanism into the eighth century.

¹⁸³ J. Arce, *Bárbaros y Romanos en Hispania (400-507 A.D.)*, (Madrid, 2005) p. 218.

¹⁸⁴ For the attempts of Leovigild to convert Masona back to the Arian faith, see *VSPE*, V.IV.2-8.

The early medieval city of Reccopolis

The foundation of Reccopolis in the year 578 should not only be viewed in terms of its symbolic value as a representation of centralized Visigothic rule and ambition, with such a blatant attempt to emulate the Late Roman or Byzantine Empires, but also in terms of an ambitious building project and demonstration of wealth to the outside world. Javier Arce was perhaps the first to recognize this potential importance of Reccopolis as an example of Visigothic urban culture, and upon what plans or sources it was first laid out, when he wrote: “El caso de la fundación de Recópolis plantea, entre otros, el interrogante de saber quienes organizaron su trazado urbano y de cuál fue su modelo urbanístico.”¹⁸⁵ When John of Biclaro describes the foundation of Reccopolis in 578 by Leovigild in his *Chronica*, he emphasizes its bestowed walls, buildings, suburbs and royal privileges.¹⁸⁶ In this case the walls were bestowed as a symbol of royal patronage and prestige; the fact that Leovigild chose to emphasize the walls as being constructed with funds from the royal fisc reflects the importance of fortification of Visigothic urban sites to their rulers in the last quarter of the seventh century AD. The exact form and precise details of such privileges are lost, but the reference to such status clearly demonstrates that Reccopolis was intended to act as a major Visigothic *civitas* of socio-political, and economic importance. This case study relies mostly on archaeological and numismatic evidence, due to the fact that there are only a few fleeting references to

¹⁸⁵ J. Arce, ‘Gothorum laus est civilitas custodita: Los visigodos conservadores de la cultura clásica: el caso de Hispania,’ *Visigodos y Omeyas*, p. 17.

¹⁸⁶ John of Biclaro, ‘Chronicle,’ *Conquerors and Chroniclers of Early Medieval Spain*, p. 67.

Reccopolis found in the primary sources, and of little value in determining its level of Visigothic influence or settlement.

The overall layout of Reccopolis spans approximately 30 hectares, and consists of the following civil or military structures: 1 western gate with 2 metre high city walls with square towers leading from it, a *palatium* complex from which stone has been reused to construct the nearby Zorita Castle, and finally an aqueduct bringing in fresh water from the East.¹⁸⁷ The site was first identified in 1893 by Juan Catalina García López and later excavated for the first time in 1944-45 by Juan Cabré Aguiló, who focused on the basilica.¹⁸⁸ Since the discovery of 33 gold *tremisses* by Cabré Aguiló, there are now 130 coins that have been unearthed at Reccopolis, and only recently has Visigothic coinage entered into archaeological debates concerning urban administration and cultural identity formation.¹⁸⁹ In keeping with the local administrative structures attested for elsewhere in the *regnum visigothorum* Reccopolis was governed by a *comes civitatis* and had a bishop to care for ecclesiastical matters.¹⁹⁰ The layout of the urban area owed strongly to Byzantine influences, which is to be expected considering the tendencies of Leovigild.¹⁹¹ It consisted of palatine structures, a commercial area,

¹⁸⁷ For a description and history behind each of these structures, and their locations in relation to the modern town of Zorita de los Canes, see R. Collins, *Spain: An Oxford Archaeological Guide*, pp. 223-225.

¹⁸⁸ L. Olmo Enciso, 'Fuentes escritas y primeras investigaciones sobre Recópolis,' *Recópolis y la ciudad en la Época Visigoda*, p. 22.

¹⁸⁹ M. Castro Priego, 'Los hallazgos numismáticos de Recópolis: aspectos singulares de su integración en la secuencia histórica del yacimiento,' *Recópolis y la ciudad en la Época Visigoda*, p. 130.

¹⁹⁰ L. Olmo Enciso, 'Ciudad y procesos de transformación social entre los siglos VI y IX: de Recópolis a Racupel,' p. 387.

¹⁹¹ There is also evidence for imported Byzantine and North African ceramics in the late sixth to seventh centuries, see S.F. Ramallo Asensio and J. Vizcaíno Sánchez,

domestic zones, and a defensive wall.¹⁹² However, the urban network of Visigothic Spain, as we discussed earlier, consisted of a heterogeneous mixture of different types of cities and the situation at Reccopolis should not be applied to the realm as a whole.

The archaeological record shows four clear developments regarding urban life and infrastructure at Reccopolis. First, from 578 to the first half of the seventh century, the city consisted of a church, two large palatine buildings, a large commercial zone, a large residence, and open spaces for future expansion. Second, in the first half of the seventh century, new buildings were erected on the palatine, and a new gate was added. Third, coinciding at around the same time as the first phase, there is a marked increase in artisan work and glass production. Finally, in the second half of the seventh century to the first half of the eighth century, Reccopolis saw an expansion of commercial activity into residential zones, along with the partitioning of residences into smaller divisions.¹⁹³ The walls of Reccopolis were excavated during the 1980s, along with eleven towers and two main gates that were included in the fortified perimeter of the city.¹⁹⁴ The fortifications and establishment of Reccopolis itself were both clear assertions of royal presence and

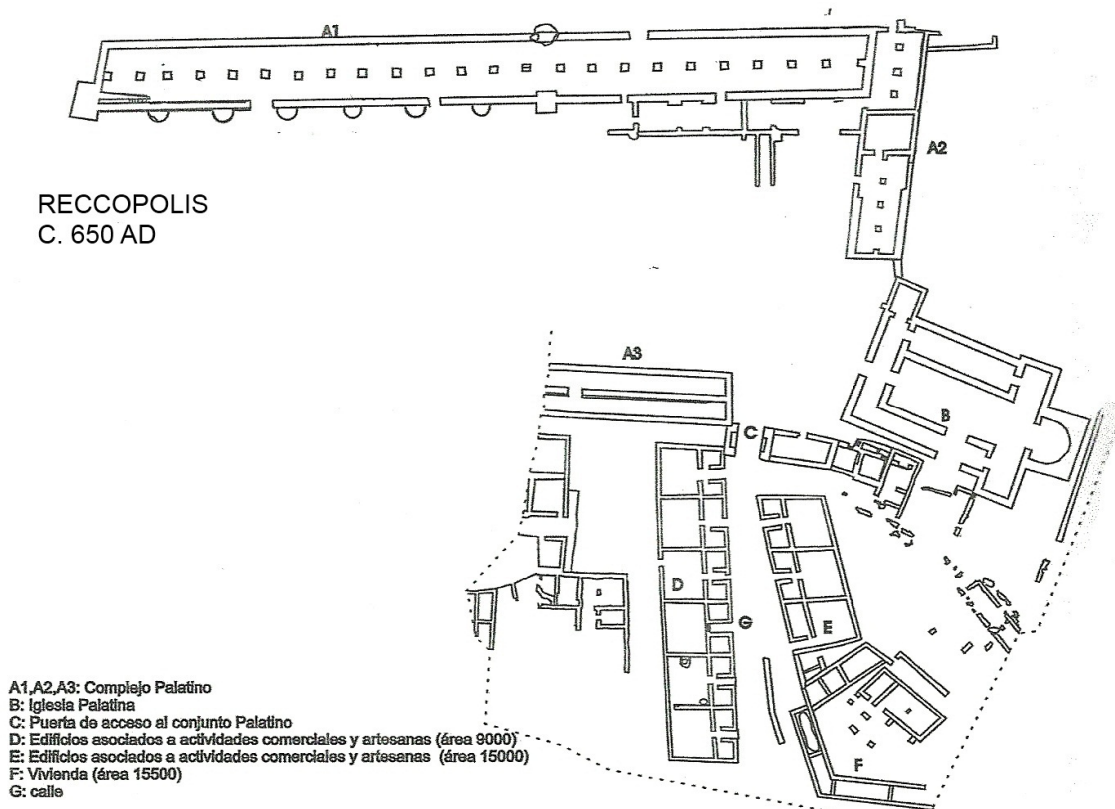
‘Bizantinos en Hispania. Un problema recurrente en la arqueología Española,’ *Archivo Español de Arqueología*, LXXV (Madrid, 2002) p. 318.

¹⁹² L. Olmo Enciso, ‘Recópolis: una ciudad en una época de transformaciones,’ *Recópolis y la ciudad en la Época Visigoda*, p. 40.

¹⁹³ These phases of development are presented and further examined in M. Castro Priego et al., ‘Recópolis y su justificación científica: la secuencia estratigráfica,’ *Recópolis y la ciudad en la Época Visigoda*, pp. 65-70, and an earlier study that consisted of two phases each with a subphase, see M. Castro Priego et al., ‘Transformaciones de un paisaje urbano: Las últimas aportaciones de Recópolis,’ *Actas del primer simposio de arqueología de Guadalajara; homenaje a Encarnación Cabré* (Madrid, 2002) pp. 545-555.

¹⁹⁴ A. Gómez de la Torre-Verdejo, ‘La muralla de Recópolis,’ *Recópolis y la ciudad en la Época Visigoda*, pp. 79-84.

authority in the region, and they sent a visible message to the local aristocracy.¹⁹⁵ The level of infrastructure constructed at Reccopolis also demonstrates that it was not an empty gesture or meant to be short term, but rather a genuine attempt by Leovigild to establish a *sedes regia* for his son Reccared.



The above map shows the structures from both of the main phases of urban development at Reccopolis. It can be found along with more information regarding the site in L., Olmo Enciso, 'Recópolis: una ciudad en una época de transformaciones,' in L. Olmo Enciso, ed., *Recópolis y la ciudad en la Época Visigoda*, Zona Arqueología, No. 9 (Alcalá de Henares, 2008) p. 48.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid, p. 84, and also L. Olmo Enciso, 'La ciudad de Recópolis y el habitat en la zona central de la península ibérica durante la época visigoda,' *Gallo-Romains, Wisigoths et Francs en Aquitaine, Septimanie et Espagne: actes des VIIe Journées internationales d'archéologie mérovingienne*, p. 71.

The possible reasons why Leovigild decided to name the new city after his younger son have recently been examined in depth in an article by Gisela Ripoll López and Isabel Velázquez Soriano published as part of a wide ranging study on urban administration in Reccopolis in 2009 edited by Lauro Olmo Enciso. The two main suggestions they put forth are either Leovigild decided that since Hermenegild, prior to rebelling against his father, was at the time based in Toledo and therefore his younger son Reccared required a royal residence of his own, or instead, that it was a declaration of his faith in the loyalty of the younger heir to the throne in contrast with his elder brother.¹⁹⁶ In either case, it is apparent that Leovigild intended to reinforce the royal authority in the region, and had sufficient knowledge of urban administration from governing at Toledo to construct an urban centre with all the required zones and organization.

K.E. Carr has attributed the fortifications of Reccopolis and also of Italica by Leovigild as simply a display of royal power to the aristocracy,¹⁹⁷ although it is also possible given the position of the new city to the north of Toledo that it was fortified in case of a successful Frankish or foreign invasion through the Pyrenees, as a major fortified urban centre which an invading army could not allow to leave in Visigothic hands while marching on Toledo. That speculation aside, the more simplistic perspective could be argued as well, that Reccopolis was a bastion of royal prestige and local authority, granted that the northern border region between *Francia* and *Hispania* was

¹⁹⁶ G. Ripoll López and I. Velázquez Soriano, 'Toletum vs Recópolis. ¿Dos sedes para dos reyes?' *Recópolis y la ciudad en la Época Visigoda*, pp. 204-213.

¹⁹⁷ K.E. Carr, *Vandals to Visigoths*, p. 180.

highly fortified with various *castra* and *castella*,¹⁹⁸ far from the strategic position of Reccopolis itself.

The major obstacle one encounters when trying to examine Visigothic influences upon the urban environment, or signs of ethnic self-awareness within Reccopolis itself, lies in the fact that following its foundation, which is a Visigothic impact in the sense that a city never existed there previously,¹⁹⁹ there are few clear signs of ‘Visigothic’ ethnic identity or culture in the new urban centre. However, recent studies have illustrated some of the ceramic and glasswork styles specific to Reccopolis in the sixth and seventh centuries.²⁰⁰ The problem is that it is hard to determine the context of the finds in the stratigraphic layers alongside Islamic goods, but they do represent localized styles of production.

Even the use of the term *polis* has obvious connotations in terms of *imitatio imperii* rather than any traditionally ‘Germanic’ custom, and Ricardo Izquierdo Benito makes this quite clear when he writes: “Con este acto, pretendaria tambien imitar a los antiguos emperadores romanos que tenían la prerrogativa de poder fundar ciudades.”²⁰¹ Although this chapter is aiming to highlight the continuity of Gothic identity within the aristocracy, it cannot be denied that Leovigild and subsequent rulers often adopted

¹⁹⁸ For a clear image and illustration of the various fortified centres to be found in the North of Spain during the Visigothic period, see Julian of Toledo, ‘The Book of the History of Gallia,’ in *The Story of Wamba*, XI-XII.

¹⁹⁹ M. Castro Priego et al., ‘Recópolis y su justificación científica: la secuencia estratigráfica,’ p. 65.

²⁰⁰ M. Castro Priego and L. Olmo Enciso, ‘La cerámica de época visigoda de Recópolis: apuntes tipológicos desde un análisis estratigráfico,’ *Recópolis y la ciudad en la Época Visigoda*, pp. 88-98, and for the results of the excavations in the city from 1996 to 2003 which yielded very substantial amount of glass and ovens in Reccopolis see A. Gómez de la Torre-Verdejo and M. Castro Priego, ‘La actividad artesana en Recópolis: le producción de vidrio,’ *Recópolis y la ciudad en la Época Visigoda*, pp. 116-130.

²⁰¹ R. Izquierdo Benito, ‘Toledo en época visigoda,’ pp. 55-56.

Byzantine forms of *ordinatio* or ceremony when it was in their interests to do so, in order to both elevate their status above the *subiecti* or even other *uiri inlustri*, and to disprove their status as barbarians in the eyes of other rulers.²⁰² Despite these imitations of Byzantine ceremony, the ability of Visigothic aristocrats to present themselves as *Gothi*, was equally important. Perhaps this is another reason why Reccared referred to himself as *rex Visigothorum*; on top of his conversion to Catholicism, having a city named after him by his father would have clear Late Roman symbolism to any Arian or anti-Roman members of the aristocracy, a point which Reccared was likely to try to undermine whenever it was necessary to maintain their favour and support.

In support of the notion that Reccopolis was to serve as a strategic defensive point en route to Toledo from the North, the dualistic concept of ‘altstadt and neustadt’ proves a useful tool.²⁰³ This theory essentially states that the ‘altstadt’, or old city, continued to serve as the religious and political centre, while the ‘neustadt’, or new city, assumed the responsibilities of strategic defence and administration of the *sedes regia*. While it is true that Reccopolis had a productive mint, indeed four of the *tremisses* found in the Merida hoard were cast at Reccopolis,²⁰⁴ this says nothing at all about the actual usage of such coins within the new city. However, in his discussion of the numismatic finds at

²⁰² R. Revuleta Carbajo, ‘Política y espectáculo en la Antigüedad Tardía,’ *Hispania en la antigüedad tardía*, pp. 232-233., and for the pro-Byzantine policies of Leovigild and Reccared, see D. Pérez Sánchez, ‘Algunas consideraciones sobre el ceremonial y el poder político en la Mérida visigoda,’ *Studia Historica: Historia Antigua*, No. 20 (Salamanca, 2002) p. 247

²⁰³ For the full theoretical workings of ‘aldstadt and neustadt’, see M.R. Martí Matias, *Visigodos, Hispano-romanos y bizantinos en la zona valenciana en el siglo VI (España)*, pp. 32-33.

²⁰⁴ P. Mateos Cruz et al., ‘Un tesoro de tremises visigodos hallado en el llamado (foro provincial) de Augusta Emerita,’ p. 261, and for a discussion on coins bearing the



Details of the perimeter wall of Reccopolis, the original source of the above image can be found in A. Gómez de la Torre-Verdejo, 'La muralla de Recópolis,' in Olmo Enciso, L., ed., *Recópolis y la ciudad en la Época Visigoda*, Zona Arqueología, No. 9 (Alcalá de Henares, 2008) p. 83.

inscription *Recopolis fecit* see L. Olmo Enciso, 'Recópolis: una ciudad en una época de transformaciones,' p. 43.

Reccopolis, Juan Cabré Aguiló does list Visigothic coinage among those found at the basilica, along with Merovingian and Suevic moneys;²⁰⁵ the one hundred or so coins found at Reccopolis since then reinforces that coins were used at the site, if even only by local *possessores* and the wealthy. It has been argued that the production of Visigothic coins was simply used as a propaganda machine against the aristocracy, since they would likely be the only ones to possess such coinage.²⁰⁶ Despite Byzantine and Late Roman bronze coins circulating in the sixth century, there is no evidence for their use from the seventh century onward.²⁰⁷ Whether this was the case or not, it is clear that Reccopolis was fully functional in the late sixth and seventh centuries as an urban centre with royal patronage and a degree of economic productivity. For a city so recently established by the Visigothic rulers it was a testament to their strong grasp of urban planning and administration.

It seems strangely ironic that the new city established by the Visigoths had so many parallels with Late Roman urban functions, for example, serving as a defensive centre near Toledo, or perhaps served as a alternative power base along the lines of Milan or Ravenna in the fifth century, whereas the signs of continued Visigothic identity, settlement, and maintenance of such culture by the elite are more readily visible in the previously Roman cities of Toledo and Merida. Perhaps the very idea of founding an urban centre required a Late Roman way of thinking, in terms of urban construction or

²⁰⁵ For a list of the original coins found in the 1944-1945 excavation at Reccopolis, see J. Cabré Aguiló, *El Tesorillo Visigodo de Trientes de las Excavaciones del Plan Nacional de 1944-45 en Zorita de los Canes (Guadalajara)*, (Madrid, 1946) pp. 11-17.

²⁰⁶ M. Crusafont i Sabater, 'Monete suebe e visigote,' *I Goti*, p. 350.

²⁰⁷ M. Castro Priego, 'Arqueología y numismática: los hallazgos de época visigoda de "La Vega" (Madrid) y Recópolis. (Guadalajara),' *Actas del XIII Congreso Internacional de Numismática* (Madrid, 2005) p. 1167.

administration, and anything built by the Visigoths without such *imitatio imperii* could never be considered a city? Let us examine some of the other urban centres of the Visigothic Kingdom of Toledo, in order to avoid using the previous three case studies as definitive examples for the entire realm. It will also provide us with a better overall picture of the urban network as it functioned in the Visigothic period as a whole, and will cover some aspects not yet discussed in the above cases.

From Barcino to the ‘Lost City’ of Ologicus: secondary centres

Let us start with the case of Barcino, or modern Barcelona, an important Late Roman *civitas* situated in the highly urbanized province of *Tarraconensis*,²⁰⁸ which had new fortifications constructed at some point in the middle of the third century AD.²⁰⁹ There is evidence for Barcino rising to prominence from the fifth century onwards under Visigothic control,²¹⁰ often at the expense of the previously more prosperous Tarraco. “La ciudad preserve arquitectónicamente sus edificios de representación del poder público como el foro, a diferencia de Tarraco, cuya edificia publica se oblitera precisamente en esta época, como ya hemos referido.”²¹¹ The sixth century saw a revitalization of Barcino, particularly in the northeast areas of the city with the establishment of new ecclesiastical structures and settlements, even following the royal court having moved to

²⁰⁸ G. Ripoll López, ‘The arrival of the Visigoths in Hispania: Population Problems and the process of acculturation,’ p. 157.

²⁰⁹ R. Collins, *Visigothic Spain, 409-711*, p. 218.

²¹⁰ For example, the residency of Athaulf and Galla Placidia in Barcino during the middle of the 5th century, see C. Godoy and J.M. Gurt, ‘Barcino, de sede imperial a urbs regia in época Visigoda,’ *Sedes Regiae (ann. 400-800)*, pp. 440-441.

²¹¹ *Ibid*, p. 442.

Hispalis and finally settling at Toledo.²¹² Even though no longer the *sedes regia* for the kingdom, Barcino retained its previous infrastructure and level of administration during the sixth century and was able to engage in a relatively high level of socio-economic activity in the period.

In terms of tangible displays of Visigothic identity within the city, the only extent artifacts are a couple of decorated impostos at the Romanesque church of Sant Paul del Camp,²¹³ along with some sixth to seventh century bronze *fibulae*, rings and bracelets featuring a number of *chi rho* designs.²¹⁴ There have been *insulae* and ecclesiastical residences excavated in the northeast of the city dating from the sixth century near the inside of the walls,²¹⁵ but despite showing evidence for the reuse of Late Roman materials structurally they do not provide much in the way of distinguishable Visigothic identity. This problem is exacerbated by the fact that there was quite a high degree of Byzantine influence in the architectural styles of early medieval Barcino, much like the cases previously discussed in Reccopolis and Merida. For example, archaeologists have advocated a strong level of sixth-century Byzantine and North African influence upon the episcopal palace in the city.²¹⁶ Determining specific Visigothic structural styles in Barcino remains difficult, and it is the area of ceramics that archaeologists have been

²¹² J. Beltrán de Heredia Bercero, 'Barcino durante la antigüedad tardía,' *Recópolis y la ciudad en la Época Visigoda*, p. 275.

²¹³ R. Collins, *Spain: An Oxford Archaeology Guide*, p. 80.

²¹⁴ G. Ripoll López, 'Objectes d'indumentària personal a Barcino (segles IV-VII),' in J. Beltrán de Heredia Bercero dir., *De Barcino a Barcinona (segles I-VII): Les restes arqueològiques de la placa del Rei de Barcelona* (Barcelona, 2001) pp. 215-216.

²¹⁵ J. Beltrán de Heredia Bercero, 'Continuïtat i canir en la topografia urbana. Els testimonis arqueològics del quadrant nord-est de la ciutat,' *De Barcino a Barcinona (segles I-VII): Les restes arqueològiques de la placa del Rei de Barcelona*, pp. 100-101.

²¹⁶ J. Beltrán de Heredia Bercero, 'Les élites locales et la formation du centre de pouvoir à Barcelone. Un exemple de continuité (IVe-XIIIe siècle),' *Les Cahiers de Saint-Michel de Cuxa*, Vol. 36 (Cuxa, 2005) p. 157.

focusing to identify local production in early medieval Barcino. In the sixth century there appears to have been a relatively late flourishing of *terra sigillata hispanica* style pottery in the Ebro region, with such items being found in the urban area of Barcino.²¹⁷ It remains to be seen to what extent such finds are a representation of Visigothic artisan work taking place within the region, or if it can be attributed to Hispano-Roman or other social groups, assuming such a distinction proves possible at all.

Barcino maintained a relatively high level of urbanism during the early medieval period, despite having lost its status as capital by the seventh century. The urban area consisted of a nucleus based upon the forum and cathedral, and from the fifth to seventh centuries covered an area of approximately ten squared hectares.²¹⁸ Granted that the levels of imports to Tarraco and its region had fallen since the second half of the fifth century, particularly in African red slip pottery, a problem further exacerbated by the decline of harbour imports following the collapse of Byzantine *Spania*,²¹⁹ it is unfortunate that more shards of pottery or objects at Tarraco or Barcino have not been found, with which to emphasize any Visigothic influences in terms of local production. This is not to say that expensive or high-quality goods completely disappear, as the archaeological finds at Valencia dating from the sixth and seventh centuries indicate,²²⁰

²¹⁷ M. Ángel González López, 'Vajillas de importación norte Africanas en el Noreste peninsular (S. V-VII). Distribución y tipocronología,' *Archivo Español de Arqueología*, LXXX (Madrid, 2007) p. 211.

²¹⁸ G. Ripoll López, 'La transformació de la ciutat de Barcino durant l'antiguetat tardana,' *De Barcino a Barcinona (segles I-VII): Les restes arqueològiques de la placa del Rei de Barcelona*, p. 34.

²¹⁹ S. Gutiérrez Lloret, 'Eastern Spain in the sixth century in the light of archaeology,' *The Sixth Century: Production, Distribution and Demand* (Leiden, 1998) pp. 165-183.

²²⁰ J. Pascual Pacheco et al., 'Ceramicas de la ciudad de Valencia entre la época Visigoda y Omeya,' *Ceramicas tardorromanas y altomedievales en la Peninsula Iberica: ruptura y continuidad: II Simposio de Arqueologia, Mérida 2001* (Madrid, 2003) p. 107, and for

but rather that such products become even more limited to coastal and Mediterranean regions than before.

The ways in which *civitates* or centres of production had to face decreasing foreign trade vary by region and depend on the period in question, although it has been suggested that the city of Gijón in the North of Spain represents a typical sixth to seventh century urban environment: a nuclear centre for administration, with surrounding *villae* in its *territorium* for production.²²¹ This has been put to some debate, as some scholars advocate that the urban, suburban, and *territorii* should be viewed as a unitary administrative and economic entity,²²² while others have viewed the sixth century onwards as a lessening of the economic connection between the urban centre from its respective *territorium*.²²³ The problem for any historian attempting to uncover suggestions of direct Gothic influences upon the system or cities lies in that no matter which opinion or school of thought you are inclined to follow, the evidence for any such impact generally remains relatively scarce at this moment.

There are a few other instances of potential signs of Visigothic settlement or ethnic identity in early medieval *Hispania* worth mentioning. For example, the strategic location of Calagurris en route to the Basque regions of *Hispania* made it a key urban centre from which the king and local aristocracy campaigned, and the personal obedience

indications of sixth century prosperity at Valencia see M. Roselló Mesquida and A. Vicent Ribera I Lacomba, 'Valentia en el siglo VII, de Suinthila a Teodomiro,' *El Siglo VII frente al Siglo VII: Arquitectura*, p. 185.

²²¹ L. Menéndez Bueyes, 'Civitas Christiana versus núcleos de poder: la ciudad postromana en el Reino Asturiano,' *Studia Historica: Historia Antigua*, No. 20, p. 280.

²²² G. Ripoll López, 'The Transformation and Process of Acculturation in Late Antique Hispania: Select Aspects from Urban and Rural Archaeological Documentation,' p. 266.

²²³ M. Kulikowski, 'The Interdependence of Town and Country in Late Antique Spain,' p. 303.

of the local population to the local ruler which has been advocated raises an interesting point.²²⁴ Were the local communities around Calagurris loyal simply because it offered protection from the various Suevic, Basque or Frankish threats in the region, or was it due to a high level of Visigothic settlement in the area whose residents were directly bound to the aristocracy? In either case it demonstrates that the importance of urban centres for defensive purposes was not lost upon the local populace. The construction of the city named ‘Ologicus’ by the Basques after being subdued by Suinthila also shows that peoples who did not have a long tradition of Roman urban settlement not only respected the prestige and socio-political importance of cities, but were also accustomed to a certain degree of taxation in the past.²²⁵ The precise location of Ologicus is not known for certain, although it has been asserted that it lies in the area of Olite-Eriberri.²²⁶ Despite this approximation, until some archaeological information comes to light concerning Ologicus, we will have to rely upon the single literary reference to its existence by Isidore of Seville.

The political and economic importance of Hispalis, or modern Seville, should not be overlooked, as it was not only the base of operations for Hermenegild in his rebellion against his father Leovigild,²²⁷ but also home to one of the most important royal mints of the kingdom. “Sabemos, además, que la ciudad contaba con una ceca en la que todos los

²²⁴ S. Castellanos, *Calagurris Tardoantigua: Poder e Ideología en las Ciudades Hispano-Visigodas* (Calahorra, 1999) p. 40.

²²⁵ Isidore of Seville, *Las Historias de los Godos, Vándalos y Suevos*, 51. p. 259.

²²⁶ A. Besga Marroquín, *Consideraciones sobre la situación política de los pueblos del Norte de España durante la época visigoda del reino de Toledo* (Bilbao, 1983) pp. 37-38.

²²⁷ R. Collins, *Visigothic Spain, 409-711*, pp. 57-58.

reyes visigodos, a excepción de Iudila, Rodrigo y Achila, emitieron moneda.”²²⁸ There is evidence for increased ruralization of the cities, at least in the Ebro and northeast, due to the fact that silos dated to the fifth century in *Iluro*, which had a high level of agrarian concentration, continued to be in use according to archaeologists until the seventh century.²²⁹ The examples above have demonstrated that varying degrees of Visigothic influences upon the urban administration could be seen across the kingdom from the sixth to eighth centuries, ranging from the rise of centres such as Barcino, at the expense of the previously more important Tarraco, to the success of the Visigothic military campaigns in pressuring conquered regions into constructing *civitates* as repayment for the cost of war, as was the case with Ologicus. Changes to the urban landscape and overall network were also prevalent in the period, along with a strong ecclesiastical expansion from the sixth to eighth centuries.

Conclusion: Patterns of interaction in the Visigothic kingdom

It is difficult to try and sum up the complexities and multi-faceted elements which relate to the cultural exchanges within early medieval Spain from the sixth to eighth centuries AD. On the one hand, there is a clear indication of continuity from the Late Roman era, visible in the maintenance of certain urban focal points such as the church, *palatium*, or mint, yet on the other there is a definite expression of Visigothic political dominance and sense of separation from the Roman past, as is visible in the establishment of Toledo as

²²⁸ C. Tarradellas Corominas, ‘Topografía urbana de Sevilla durante la Antigüedad tardía,’ *V Reunio d’Arqueologia Cristiana Hispanica* (Barcelona, 2000) p. 282.

²²⁹ V. Revilla and X. Cela, ‘La transformación material y ideológica de una ciudad de *Hispania: Iluro* (Mataró) entre los siglos I y VII D.C.,’ *Archivo Español de Arqueología*, LXXIX (Madrid, 2006) pp. 99-100.

the *sedes regia* and most politically important *civitas* of the kingdom. The literature rarely distinguishes between Gothic or Hispano-Roman, or indeed any other residents of *Hispania*, and when the sources do indicate signs of the *Gothi* maintaining a sense of ethnicity by means of traditionskern ethnogenesis theory, they seem to do so when it is politically or militarily useful to emphasize such identity, for example in the rallying speech of Wamba, or in the coins issued by Reccared with the titulature *Reccaredo Regis Visigothorum*, although the true motives of the latter for doing so are not entirely clear.

When one focuses on the *leges Visigothorum*, a clear distinction between Hispano-Roman and Visigoth seems to emerge, however, it must be kept in mind that these codes were updated and reviewed on several occasions, which means that certain elements or views may have become antiquated by the sixth or seventh centuries if they managed to evade the revisions, and also that the legal codes really tell us nothing at all about how socio-political interaction between Goth and Roman would have functioned on a practical level. That being said, the fact that the grave finds and distinction between Visigoth and Hispano-Roman following the repeal of the marriage ban in 580 become even more difficult to ascertain, seems to imply that prior to this ban some degree of ethnic and social distinction existed. Unfortunately, as we have seen with the examples of El Carpio de Tajo and El Bovalar, at this moment in time it is virtually impossible to distinguish burials based upon ethnicity, although the separation of burials into kinship and family based groups proves an interesting point for future research, unless we consider the tile and cist burials at Merida to be a clear division along ethnic lines.

One indication of Visigothic influence upon the urban environment of early medieval Spain can be detected in the treatment of the Hispano-Roman senatorial classes

as an important element of society in the literary sources of the time. The integration of this aristocracy into the administrative and socio-political fabric of the kingdom while maintaining a degree of Gothic self-awareness, at least in the upper stratus of society, is perhaps the key to the success of the Visigoths in their expansion across the peninsula from a very precarious position at the end of the sixth century. The legal confiscation of two thirds of land or its revenues granted to the Gothic people certainly suggests an initial sense of elitism vis-à-vis their Hispano-Roman subjects. However, the ability of the latter to serve both in high office of the court and to obtain military commands of importance, particularly following the late-sixth century, demonstrates that the initial sense of elitism became dulled over time. Cultural interaction was engaged in after 589 as well but harder to tell, although it is clear it never disappeared from the surface completely.

The general pattern that can be viewed in the literary sources and archaeological record for urban developments in Visigothic Spain is one of revitalization and royal patronage in the second half of the sixth century,²³⁰ followed by growth and relative prosperity in the first half of the seventh century, and beginning after this point due to the political crises and usurpations of the period. That being said, the end of the sixth century through to the eighth century did witness a degree of Visigothic artistic culture, particularly in the sculptures and Christian imagery in churches.²³¹ While the general Late Roman layout of cities were maintained in those centres with such a heritage, so

²³⁰ L. Olmo Enciso, 'Ciudad y estado en época visigoda: Toledo, la construcción de un nuevo paisaje urbano,' p. 106.

²³¹ S. Andrés Ordax, 'Funcionalidad y venustas en el renacimiento artístico hispanovisigodo,' *Gallo-Romains, Wisigoths et Francs en Aquitaine, Septimanie et Espagne: actes des VIIe Journées internationales d'archéologie mérovingienne*, p. 102.

long as the layout did not directly impede residential expansion or planning, the internal focal points and structures were modified to meet the new demands of the early medieval period. “En la ciudad tardoantigua se mantienen, en líneas generales, los ‘continentes’ romanos, pero ahora serán subdivididos y ocupados por viviendas plurifamiliares, centros de producción, vertederos, e incluso enterramientos.”²³² A Christianization of the countryside followed from the strong ecclesiastical activity taking place in the *civitates* and their respective *suburbia* and *territoria* while at the same time the economic vitality of the urban areas was directly tied to the stability of the court at Toledo.

In the case of Toledo over the sixth to eighth centuries, we see an urban centre of secondary Late Roman importance flourish as a *sedes regia* due in part to its strategic location in the Tajo valley, the permanent establishment of the royal court in the city following the late sixth century, and also because of its high levels of economic, commercial and ecclesiastical activity demonstrated in la Vega Baja and outlying suburbs. The presence of the *aula regia* in the city and its role as the central administrator for the kingdom was the main defining point of early medieval Toledo, and largely what distinguished it from the other cities of the peninsula. While specific interactions between Visigothic and Hispano-Roman individuals are hard to trace at Toledo, its socio-political import, along with the presence of political, military, and ecclesiastical elite, as well as foreigners acting as envoys to the king, would have rendered a relatively high degree of integration and cooperation inevitable in order for the capital to thrive over the course of the sixth to eighth centuries the way that it did.

²³² J.M. Gurt I Esparraguera and I. Sánchez Ramos, ‘Las ciudades hispanas durante la antigüedad tardía: una lectura arqueológica,’ *Recópolis y la ciudad en la Época Visigoda*, p. 200.

Merida from a literary and archaeological perspective mirrors some of the developments found at Toledo, particularly in its ecclesiastical growth during the period and Christianization of the suburban areas which were becoming more populated, but its lack of direct royal presence, if we except the *comes civitatum* and local officials attached to his service, made for a very different social dynamic during the sixth to eighth centuries. The Bishop of Toledo may have been officially acknowledged as the highest spiritual authority in the *regnum visigothorum*, but it was at Merida where the clergy held the greatest authority over the urban, suburban and rural environment; its lack of *sede regia* status and relatively strong local economy, bolstered by stability in Toledo and trade through the Tajo and Guadiana river networks, was precisely what allowed such a situation to develop. The Visigothic influences and impact upon the urban makeup of Merida are apparent granted the roles individuals such as Masona or Leudast played in the local political decision making, while the archaeological record reflects a range of different styles of construction and goods, which could be attributed primarily to Visigothic, Hispano-Roman, Byzantine or North African influences. Matters such as religious affiliation and social status were likely the main binding elements in early medieval Merida rather than issues of ethnicity. While this was also probable in Toledo and elsewhere in the kingdom, the nature of the administration and ecclesiastical strength in Merida would have made it more pronounced.

The newly constructed *sedes regia* of Reccopolis demonstrated not only the desire for the Visigothic ruling class to imitate Roman customs of founding cities, but also that the urban environment was identified and associated with the residency of the administration and government. Whether or not kings following Leovigild fully utilized

The region

was also receptive to outside influences from the East or North Africa, as is evident in the structural styles of certain buildings and the importation of ceramics from regions outside of the peninsula, at least into the late seventh century if not later.

Overall the *regnum visigothorum* paints a picture of relatively high levels of cultural interaction between its inhabitants, with such exchanges taking places largely in stable urban centres which maintained some degree of economic, political, social, and ecclesiastical vitality. The exact levels of each of the former points varied depending on the case in question, but were all present to some extent as well. This is not to say that ruralization of urban spaces did not occur, as we have seen it took place quite often, or that the Late Roman monuments emerged unscathed under Visigothic rule. It is clear that the abandonment or partitioning of the Late Roman *domus* and *villa* also continued in

some instances as we discussed in this chapter. However, functional changes and urban modifications aside, the situation in Visigothic Spain, particularly following the conquests of Leovigild and conversion of Reccared to Catholicism in the late sixth century, was one of political cohesion and urban growth. It is only with the political usurpations, civil wars and crises of the late seventh century that fortunes began to decline for obvious reasons. It will prove interesting to see how such case studies compare and contrast with those of Lombard Italy and Merovingian *Francia* in the following chapters of this dissertation, and to examine their different backgrounds and different circumstances under which they established their post-Roman kingdoms, and to determine how their developments differ from that of the *regnum visigothorum* in the early medieval Iberian peninsula.

The regnum langobardorum, c. 700 AD



Edited from the original in C. Wickham, The Inheritance of Rome: A History of Europe from 400 to 1000, (London, 2009) p. xxv.

Chapter 4. Italy at the Time of the Lombards, 568-774 AD

This second case study examines the cultural impact of the Lombards in Italy during the establishment of their authority over much of the Italian peninsula, beginning with the migration of Alboin in 568 AD and ending with the defeat of the last non-Frankish Lombard king Desiderius at the hands of Charlemagne in 774 AD. The use of the expression ‘Italy at the Time of the Lombards’ employed in the title, while sounding longwinded when contrasted with ‘Lombard Kingdom’, was selected for a deliberate purpose and to emphasize a specific point.¹ The Lombards entered Italy and established themselves as a major power in the sixth century, but as was the case with the Visigoths in Spain, they did not simply overthrow or uproot the previous Late Roman urban administrative networks. The situation in early medieval Italy was far more complex than a straightforward change from Byzantine to Lombard rule during the sixth to eighth centuries AD.

Unlike their Visigothic or Merovingian counterparts, the Lombards, as has often been emphasized by modern historians, were relative newcomers on the political stage that had previously consisted of the Western Roman Empire and its respective federate allies, and later its successor states following the end of imperial rule in 476 with the

¹ Paolo Delogu describes some of the trends and traditional approaches to studies of Lombard urban life, such as the belief that Roman structures continued to exist in northern Italy under the Lombards, and after reviewing the various articles that comprised the volume he was concluding, provides the basis for the above use of the phrase “Italy at the Time of the Lombards.” For greater detail concerning this point, see P. Delogu, ‘Conclusion: The Lombards – power and identity,’ in P. Erhart and W. Pohl, edd., *Die Langobarden: Herrschaft und Identität* (Vienna, 2005) pp. 549-555.

deposition of Romulus Augustulus.² The views on the impact of the Lombards upon pre-existing Late Roman, Gothic and Byzantine cities have ranged across the entire continuist-catastrophist spectrum. After discussing the methods of settlement of the Lombards in Italy, by which at least in theory one third of the resources or land were allocated to the new Lombard ruling class by the local inhabitants and aristocracy, Nicholas Everett writes that “Under such practical arrangements the establishment of Lombard rule caused no major upheaval in the social fabric of Italy.”³ Others such as J.M. Wallace-Hadrill have traditionally placed a much higher emphasis on the Lombard migration and settlement as an event which fragmented the unity of Italy following its fragile political and economic situation after the Gothic Wars (535-54 AD).⁴ The

² Although the significance and political import of the year 476 to contemporaries has been debated for some time, it has been used here simply to indicate the nominal transition from *foederati* to what has been dubbed the Successor States or Successor Kingdoms. For an example of 476 being viewed as important, Peter Heather advocates that following the end of imperial government, military service in the Roman elite increases at the expense of classical Latin or Greek education as their private funds had to be diverted to armament. See P. Heather, *The Fall of the Roman Empire: A New History of Rome and the Barbarians* (London, 2006) pp. 440-441. Also, an example of the Lombards having upset the previous political system of the late fifth to mid sixth centuries can be seen in the promise of the Merovingian king of Austrasia Childebert II (570-595) to the Emperor Maurice (582-602) to rid Italy once and for all of the Lombard kingdom, see Gregory of Tours, *Libri Historiarum X*, B. Krusch and W. Levison, edd., *MGH, SRM*, I, 1 (Hanover, 1951) Book IX. 25.

³ N. Everett, *Literacy in Lombard Italy, c. 568-774* (Cambridge, 2003) p. 74. Another example of urban continuity and development under the Lombards can be seen in P. Hudson, ‘Pavia: l’evoluzione urbanistica di una capitale altomedievale,’ in *Storia di Pavia*, Vol. 2 (Milan, 1987) p. 254.

⁴ Wallace-Hadrill emphasizes the Lombards’ entry into Italy as enemies rather than allies or *foederati*, see J.M. Wallace-Hadrill, *The Barbarian West 400-1000* (Oxford, 1996) p. 45. In the most recent edition of an earlier 1979 publication, an example of the fragmentation in Italy which occurred during the Gothic Wars and was further reinforced with the coming of the Lombards, see F. Marazzi, ‘The Destinies of the Late Antique Italies: Politico-Economic Developments of the Sixth Century,’ *The Sixth Century: Production, Distribution and Demand* (Leiden, 1998) pp. 133-155.

position of the Lombards as relative newcomers in the sixth century has obviously not prevented historians from taking either view concerning the overall effect this had on Italy.

This chapter will focus primarily upon the *Duces del Regnum* and the *Duces del Regnum: Friuli*,⁵ with the general exclusion of the duchies of Spoleto or Benevento from the study unless there is an example of their direct impact upon the urban life and administration of the kingdom in northern Italy. This is largely for two reasons: First, when it comes to the charter evidence there is an overrepresentation of the autonomous Spoletan and Beneventan duchies, as has been illustrated by Steven Fanning in his prosopography of the Lombards, a problem further exacerbated by the chronological gaps.⁶ According to Fanning, ninety-seven percent of the charters concern the eighth century exclusively,⁷ and so not only are we left with very little information about the earlier periods of Lombard integration into Italy, but the charter material for the final century of the *regnum Langobardorum* is also predominantly based around Spoleto and Benevento.

Such a study could take up a chapter in itself, if one were to look at eighth century charters concerning the two autonomous duchies, and therefore one reason they will be largely excluded is strictly pragmatic and a question of prioritizing. Instead this chapter

⁵ Stefano Gasparri provides a prosopography of the Lombard dukes, in which he categorizes them into four parts: the *Duces del Regnum*, *Duces del Regnum: Friuli*, *Duces di Spoleto*, and *Duces di Benevento*. Gasparri also emphasizes the independence of Spoleto and Benevento from the royal centre of power at Pavia, even after the return of kingship following the interregnum of 574-584. For the prosopography, see S. Gasparri, *I Duchi Longobardi* (Rome, 1978) pp. 45-100.

⁶ S. Fanning, 'A Review of Lombard Prosopography,' in *Medieval Prosopography*, 2: 1 (Kalamazoo, 1981) pp. 17-20.

⁷ *Ibid*, p. 17.

will aim to shed new light on the other duchies which have been underrepresented in the charter evidence, using non-charter sources such as chronicles, legal codes and archaeological material as well. Second, the systems of local government differ greatly between Spoleto, Benevento and the *regnum*, for example, in the absence of the royal *gastaldi* from the two autonomous duchies.⁸ In order to best understand the relationships and urban administration, attention will centre on the northern duchies in the Po Valley, as it is in this region that the Roman population, and also the Lombard aristocracy, is defined in their relationship to the king at Pavia and his agents. The duchies of Spoleto and Benevento acquire their own self-perceived identities, and exist in different geographical and political contexts from the majority of the Lombard settlements in the North, and for this reason they will benefit from their own study.

Chronological gaps in the primary sources

The main obstacle one must tackle when presented with the literary sources regarding the Lombards lies in the absence of contemporary Italian authors prior to the eighth century, and those outside sources which do discuss the Lombard kingdom of the sixth to seventh centuries are often suspect in their specific details. The *Chronica* of Fredegar which was written or compiled as a collection of various sources, the authorship of which remains somewhat difficult to prove,⁹ describes dates in Merovingian Gaul during the period

⁸ P. Delogu, 'Lombard and Carolingian Italy,' *The New Cambridge Medieval History*, Vol. 2 (Cambridge, 1995) p. 293.

⁹ For the various sources from which Fredegar compiled the chronicle, and for a discussion of the historiography of the work see J.M. Wallace-Hadrill, *The Fourth Book of the Chronicle of Fredegar* (London, 1960) pp. xvi-xxv, and for a recent authoritative work on Fredegar see R. Collins, 'Die Fredegar-Chroniken,' *MGH, Studien und Texte* 44 (Hanover, 2007)

stretching from 584 to around 640, and also makes references to the *regnum Langobardorum* at Pavia. For example, Fredegar on the Lombard tribute paid to the Franks writes: *et autharius rex tributa, quod langobardi ad parte francorum spondederant annis singulis reddedit. Post eius discessum eius ago in regno sublimatur; similiter implisse denuscetur.*¹⁰ Although this reference to the tribute paid to the Merovingians by the Lombard king Authari (584-90) demonstrates that following the ten year interregnum from 574 to 584 the Lombard monarchy was aiming to gain political leverage over the various duchies by means of foreign support as a tributary of the Franks, the work says little about the role of Lombard *duces* or local authorities within the cities themselves.

The *Liber Historiae Francorum* which is included in the same volume by Krusch describes the Lombards in a vague military context, without any reference to cities or specific Lombard commanders, simply providing the reader with more general information.¹¹ Another reference to the Lombards in the MGH edition by Krusch is of interest to us, when the *Gesta Dagoberti I Regis Francorum* describes the relations between the Merovingian king Dagobert I (623-39) and the Lombards during his conflict with the Alamannic forces.¹² The mention of the Lombard forces helping Dagobert gain victory over the numerous Alamanni shows that the foreign policies established earlier by Authari were being maintained near the middle of the seventh century, but it does not

¹⁰ Fredegar, *Fredegarii et aliorum chronica*, B. Krusch, ed., MGH, SRM, II (Hanover, 1888) Book IV. 45. 22-24.

¹¹ A good example of this can be found in the *Liber Historiae Francorum*, B. Krusch, ed., MGH, SRM, II (Hanover, 1888) 26. 34-38.

¹² *Gesta Dagoberti I Regis Francorum*, B. Krusch, ed., MGH, SRM, II (Hanover, 1888) 27. 34-35.

illustrate much about the ethnic composition of the Lombard forces or their settlement back on Italian soil.

Despite the relative shortcomings of the *Chronica* in terms of ascertaining specific evidence concerning the role of the new Lombard rulers within the urban sector in the sixth to seventh centuries, a problem which is also encountered in the *libri decem historiarum* by Gregory of Tours, there is nonetheless a useful passage to be found in the latter Frankish source. While describing the military offensive of the Merovingian *dux* Cedinus against the Lombard realm, as commanded by Childebert II (575-95) in the name of the Emperor Maurice as mentioned earlier, Gregory states:

*per tres fere menses italiam pervagantes, cum nihil proficerent neque se de inimicis ulcisci possint, eo quod se in locis communissint firmissimis.*¹³ This clearly demonstrates not only that the Lombard king and his *duces* were able to organize logistical support which allowed for their forces to live holed up in the various cities and *castra* for three months while Cedinus wandered the countryside, but also that even during the very earliest period of Lombard rule in Italy each of the respective commanders was able to rely on strong fortifications rather than engage Cedinus in pitched battle. Such policies indicate an awareness of the importance of northern Italian cities as administrative, economic and strategic bases, and that they were used appropriately when under threat. Unfortunately apart from the section of Book X previously mentioned, Gregory does not provide much further insight with regards to the cities of northern Italy, and focuses predominantly on the change of monarchs in the *regnum Langobardorum*.

¹³ Gregory of Tours, *Libri Historiarum X*, X. 3.

The writings of the main chronicler for early medieval Italy, Paul the Deacon, whose *Historia Langobardorum* provides the most in depth narrative for the Lombard people and their rulers covering the duration of the *regnum Langobardorum* from 568 through to 774, must undergo detailed examination before turning or attention to the legal texts.

*Igitur, ut diximus, dum Alboin animum intenderet, quem in his locis ducem constituere deberet, Gisulfum, ut fertur, suum nepotem, Virum per omnia idoneum, qui eidem strator erat, quem lingua propria "marpahis" appellant, foroiulianae civitati et totae illius regioni praeficere statuit.*¹⁴

This appointment of Gisulf as the *dux* of Friuli by Alboin (c. 565-73) following the conquest of the Po Valley from 568 through 569,¹⁵ reflects not only the placement of Lombard military figures with familial ties to the king in positions of urban administration, but also the fact that Paul in his writings of the eighth century was aware of the connection between city and landscape. The study of primary sources in the previous chapter on the Visigothic Kingdom of Toledo (507-711), while making some indirect or often vague connections between Iberian cities and their territories,¹⁶ did not reveal such a direct connection between urban space and *totae illius regioni praeficere*

¹⁴ Paul the Deacon, *Storia dei Longobardi*, L. Capo, ed., (Milan, 2006) II. 9.11-16.

¹⁵ For detailed analysis and illustration of the initial Lombard migration into Italy, the reasons behind such a relocation, and the military conflicts which ensued, see K. Fischer-Drew, *Law and Society in Early Medieval Europe* (London, 1988) pp. 88-90, G. Tabacco, *Struggle for Power in Medieval Italy: Structures of Political Rule*, R.B. Jensen, trans., (Cambridge, 1989) pp. 73-93., R. Collins, 'The Western Kingdoms,' *The Cambridge Ancient History*, Vol. XIV (Cambridge, 2000) pp. 130-132.

¹⁶ For example, the distinction between *civibus urbis et rusticus de ruralibus* which is acknowledged by Bishop Masona of Merida as being evident in that city, as was examined in the preceding chapter. Although such an observation shows that there continued a visible difference between inhabitants of cities and those of the country, it does not explicitly demonstrate the ability of the city to control the local resources of the territory. Another point of interest in the VSPE is that the figure of Claudius is referred to as *ducem emeritensis civitatis* without any mention of the territory which was connected to such a position. For more detail on Claudius and his position see *Vitae Sanctorum Patrum Emeritensium*, M. Sanchez, ed., (Turnhout, 1999) V.X.29-30.

statuit. The main problem here is one of chronology, due to the fact that Paul was writing from an eighth-century perspective when the *regnum Langobardorum* was at its strongest.¹⁷ Is this to say that the Lombard subjects of Alboin two centuries earlier were aware of such a fundamental economic and socio-political connection? If we go by the earlier example of the successful defence of the region against Cedinus by means of reliance upon fortifications, then such knowledge of urban administration did exist to some degree within the Lombard aristocracy of the later sixth century.

One of the problems lies in how one should approach the role of the Roman subjects in the earlier stage of Lombard rule. For example, it is difficult to know whether the Lombard *duces* and forces followed a policy of attrition and fortification against Cedinus out of their own knowledge of urban warfare and logistics, or if the long standing knowledge of such matters held by the surrounding Roman population was the main reason for such decisions being taken by their new ruling class.¹⁸ The use of the

¹⁷ The reign of Liutprand (712-44) has often been viewed as the most successful of any Lombard king, due to his considerably long and productive control over the kingdom, a point further demonstrated by his assertion of royal authority over the rogue duchies of Spoleto and Benevento in 729 AD, see P. Delogu, 'Lombard and Carolingian Italy,' pp. 296-97. Nicholas Everett also illustrates the achievements of Liutprand in the sphere of inheritance laws and relations with the church, see N. Everett, 'How territorial was Lombard Law?' *Die Langobarden: Herrschaft und Identität*, pp. 352-55.

¹⁸ The swift movement and initial conquest of the Lombards until reaching Pavia would also have given them some idea of the interdependence and economic exchange between cities and their countryside in the Po valley, and seeing as how most of the urban centres went over without resisting Lombard rule, the Roman subjects of these areas would likely have been ready to support the new elite in such matters as logistics, fortification or general knowledge of the city and its terrain. For the swift movement of the Lombards in Italy and the course they followed without local resistance, see F. Marazzi, 'The Destinies of the Late Antique Italies: Politico-Economic Developments of the Sixth Century,' p. 155. For information relevant to the 'scorched Earth' policy used by the Lombards, see G.P. Brogiolo, 'Ideas of the town in Italy during the transition from antiquity to the middle ages,' *The Idea and Ideal of the Town between Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages* (Leiden and Boston, 1999) p. 119.

term 'Roman' when discussing early medieval Italy is in itself a very difficult thing to understand, as is the label 'Lombard' in the same manner; this is due to many overlapping connotations. Despite such challenges of ethnicity, in the first phase of Lombard rule the general support of the local population provided them with greater knowledge of urban structures. This is not to say that there was anything resembling perfect harmony between the various groups now subject to the Lombard king, indeed the Lombard aristocracy themselves had enough conflict within their own ranks to prevent such an idealistic situation.¹⁹ However, a comparison of the methods of settlement of the Lombard aristocracy in northern Italy with those of the earlier Gothic settlers, that is to say the payment of one third of land or its monetary resources from the Roman to the new elite,²⁰ indicates a relative balance between the various groups of northern Italian society from the sixth to eighth centuries being gradually established.

A particular matter which Paul the Deacon writes about, and is of great value not only in the writings themselves but also in the way they reflect the mindset of the chronicler, lies in his description of the eighteen provinces of Italy.²¹ Paul goes into detail about the topography and surrounding terrain of each province, while presenting

¹⁹ The existence of such friction was perhaps enhanced by the fact that, according to Paul, there were 30 *duces* of the Lombard court who were without their own cities or bases of power during the interregnum. Whether or not such nobles later served Authari in other capacities remains unclear, but it is likely they would have coveted the more substantial power and authority their peers possessed as governors of cities and their respective regions. See Paul the Deacon, *Storia dei Longobardi*, II. 32. 3-5.

²⁰ For a view of the Gothic settlement and *hospitalitas* system see P. Llewellyn, *Rome in the Dark Ages* (London, 1993) pp. 25-26, and for an analysis of the Lombard settlement and its various complexities see W. Pohl, 'The Empire and the Lombards: treaties and negotiations in the sixth century,' in W. Pohl, ed., *Kingdoms of the Empire: The Integration of Barbarians in Late Antiquity* (Leiden, 1997) pp. 113-31.

²¹ Paul the Deacon, *Storia dei Longobardi*, II. 14-22.

the respective *civitates* or *castra* of importance.²² Although this description is based in the eighth-century state of affairs, it nonetheless provides details specific to the cities themselves rarely found in primary sources from the early medieval era. For example, Paul writes that: *Huius Venetiae Aquileia civitas extitit caput; pro qua nunc forum iulii, ita dictum, quod iulius Caesar negotiationis forum ibi statuerat, habetur.*²³ Despite there being no direct mention of the rise of Cividale del Friuli at the expense of Aquileia resulting from direct Lombard policy exercised by the king or aristocracy, it corresponds with the selection of the former as a regional power base due to its geographic location. “They chose Cividale as seat and Capital of their duchy mainly because its relatively marginal strategic position called for it and because Forum Iulii as we already anticipated, in fact (but not in myth) substituted the old Capital-town of Aquileia, *fracta* already from 452.”²⁴ Not only does this show an impact of the Lombard aristocracy upon the previous Late Roman landscape, but it also demonstrates that in the eighth century Paul himself viewed such issues as worth writing down in sufficient detail.

Even though Paul was not an eyewitness to the events of the sixth century early phases of Lombard expansion and consolidation in northern Italy, he does provide us with information which illustrates that his Lombard ancestors did appreciate the importance of urban fortifications and walls, when he describes how Authari razed the

²² For a description of the differences between *civitates*, *castra*, *villae* and varying settlements, see S. Gelichi, ‘La città in Italia tra VI e VIII secolo: riflessioni dopo un trentennio di dibattito archeologico,’ in D. Peris and L. Olmo Enciso ed., *Espacios Urbanos en el Occidente Mediterráneo (S. VI-VIII)*, (Toledo, 2010) p. 68.

²³ Ibid, II. 14. 13-16.

²⁴ S. Tavano, ‘Roman and Lombards between the Adriatic and the Alps,’ in S. Tavano, ed., *Romani e Longobardi fra l’Adriatico e le Alpi* (Udine, 1990) p. 143.

walls of Brescello in order to render the city impotent in defensive terms.²⁵ The *Historia Langobardorum* is not limited to information about geographical or structural information; it also provides the occasional glimpse into the various ethnic groups serving under the Lombard monarch or as local *duces*. A good example of this lies in the description of the *dux* Droctulf who rose to the position apparently by his own merit: *iste ex suavorum, hoc est alamannorum, gente oriundus, inter langobardus [sic] creverat, et quia erat forma idoneus, ducatus honorem meruerat.*²⁶ Whether this Suevic-Alamanni nobleman was a functional *dux* with a territory to govern remains unclear, but given that there is no mention where he was then sent as *dux* it is possible that this title was an honorific one.²⁷ Unfortunately very little is known about the Lombard royal entourage or ceremonial protocols, apart from the ‘giving of the Lance’ ceremony following coronation,²⁸ so it is difficult to know for certain what sort of role Droctulf played in the governance of the kingdom. The example of Droctulf reflects one reason why Paul the Deacon is such a useful source, largely due to the fact that he covers a wide range of subjects and does not only provide a vague narrative, focused predominantly on dynastic succession or royal decision making, as is so often the case with ancient or medieval chroniclers.

²⁵ Paul the Deacon, *Storia dei Longobardi*, III. 18. 11-12.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, III. 18. 5-7.

²⁷ The use of honours and titles was not uncommon, as the Lombard *duces* and also *gastaldi* were sometimes referred to as *vir magnificus*, see A. Castagnetti, ‘Le aristocrazie della ‘Langobardia’ nelle città e nei territori rurali,’ *Città e Campagna nei secoli altomedievali*, Vol. II.2 (Spoleto, 2009) pp. 543-544.

²⁸ D. Harrison, ‘Political rhetoric and political ideology in Lombard Italy,’ *Strategies of Distinction: The Construction of the Ethnic Communities, 300-800* (Leiden, 1998) p. 246, and P. Majocchi, ‘The politics of memory of the Lombard monarchy in Pavia, the kingdom’s capital,’ in I. Barbiera et al., edd., *Materializing Memory: Archaeological Material Culture and the Semantics of the Past* (Oxford, 2009) p. 89.

Scholars of early medieval history have for the last decade or so been engaged in a polemic regarding the authenticity of origin myths and the degree of fictionalization in the primary sources. More importantly, they have been trying to determine to what extent such origin stories or myths played in the active creation of identities during the early medieval period at the local level.²⁹ The origin stories of the Lombards can be found in the *Origo Gentis Langobardorum* which is essentially a list of Lombard kings with associated comments on their reigns.³⁰ On studying this document, it has been convincingly argued that the usage of such traditional origin stories constituted an attempt by the ruling elite to create a sense of common identity amongst a group of various peoples who did not necessarily share any biological or immediately recognizable customs or traits.³¹ It is also important to note that the individuals responsible for the promotion of origin myths and writings that reinforced this type of collective identity were tied directly to the ruling elite; the ‘making of a memory’ was produced largely with political motives in mind and often with immediate benefits such as identity formation brought the ruler in question.³² This chapter will not have the space required for an elaborate study of the role of origin stories and myths in the construction of early medieval identities in northern Italy, but it was important to allude to their potential to be used as reference points applied to the overall polity of the kingdom by the ruling class.

²⁹ W. Pohl, ‘Memory, identity and power in Lombard Italy,’ in Y. Hen and M. Innes, edd., *The Uses of the Past in the Early Middle Ages* (Cambridge, 2000) p. 10.

³⁰ *Origo Gentis Langobardorum*, G. Waitz, ed., *MGH, SRL* (Hanover, 1878) pp. 1-6.

³¹ For the full study of this topic refer to H. Wolfram, ‘Origo et religio. Ethnic traditions and literature in early medieval texts,’ in *Early Medieval Europe* 3, (London, 1994) pp. 19-38, and for a discussion its portrayal of the war between Rothari and the Byzantine exarchate, see W. Pohl, ‘L’armée romaine et les Lombards strategies militaires et politiques (1),’ in M. Kazanski and F. Vallet, edd., *L’Armée Romaine et les Barbares du III^e au VII^e siècle* (Paris, 1993) p. 291.

³² W. Pohl, ‘Memory, identity and power in Lombard Italy,’ p. 23.

At the beginning of this chapter it was explained why concentration would not be directed to the duchies of Spoleto or Benevento to the same extent as to the *regnum*, and the *Historia Langobardorum* itself reinforces such decisions when looked at from a historiographical perspective. The two duchies are consistently referred to by Paul in their own passages, rather than in relation to the court at Pavia. This may seem an obvious point when one considers the autonomy these regions maintained until the eighth century, but the fact that Paul himself deliberately provided each duchy with its own section in his *Historia Langobardorum* shows that to contemporary Lombards in northern Italy, Spoleto and Benevento were viewed just as separately from the *regnum* as they tend to be portrayed by modern historians. The limitations of the writers behind each source concerning the Lombards, particularly the lack of eyewitness authors for a large portion of the mid-seventh to early eighth centuries AD, is clearly evident when the material is studied as a whole.

*Si quis causam habuerit, et sculdhais aut iudex ei secundum edicti tinore et per legem iudicaverit, et ipse stare in eodem iudicio menime voluerit, conponat illi, qui iudicavit, solidos XX.*³³

One of the main challenges in approaching the legal texts with the goal of determining their value to studies of cultural interaction lies in the fact that *codices* only represent the theoretical implementation of the laws,³⁴ and not necessarily their

³³ This law established by Liutprand during his revision of the legal codes clearly shows that there was a coordinated system of communication between the cities of the Lombard kingdom, at least in theory and according to the royal prerogative. See *Le Leggi dei Longobardi: Storia, Memoria e Diritto di un Popolo Germanico*, C. Azzara and S. Gasparri, edd., (Rome, 2005) *Liutprandi Leges*. 27.

³⁴ For example, Katherine Fischer-Drew discusses an edict issued by Rothari which prohibits armed men from gathering in groups larger than three individuals, unless serving in the army. Although this reflects that there was a need to prohibit such actions, the ability to enforce such a law is much easier said than done, given that weapons can be concealed, hiding places can be arranged, and for a multitude of other seemingly obvious

enforcement by the local authorities on a day to day basis. While this is true, certain insights can be deduced by the existence of specific laws in themselves. Cristina La Rocca, for example, goes into detail about the laws surrounding inheritance of land and property, and raises an interesting point: during the zenith of the *regnum Langobardorum* in the eighth century, not only was land the key to having a successful public career, but the inverse was also true, that is to say, having a public career was crucial for the acquisition of more land from the court at Pavia.³⁵ When one considers that following the *interregnum* two centuries earlier the various Lombard *duces* were supposed to have donated half their holdings to Authari in 584,³⁶ this would certainly allow for the king to distribute such largesse to his supporters in return for their loyalty and services. Indeed, by the eighth century the resources available to the king when compared to his various *duces* was one of the key reasons for the strength of the monarchy at the time.³⁷ The gradual assertion of control by the monarchy over what had been relatively strong, autonomous local elites was one of the defining characteristics of Lombard rule in northern Italy. In the eighth century the Lombard king was in a much more secure political environment than his predecessors, at least in relation the Lombard duchies and excepting external powers such as the Franks.

reasons. See K. Fischer-Drew, *The Lombard Laws* (Philadelphia, 1973) p. 56., and also *Le Leggi dei Longobardi, Edictum Rothari*, 19.

³⁵ La Rocca goes into detail about how the Lombard laws constituted the first written evidence for systemic land transfer in Early Medieval Italy, and her work on inheritance mentioned above can be found in C. La Rocca, 'La legge e la practica Potere e rapporti sociali nell Italia dell VIII secolo,' in C. Bertelli and G.P. Brogiolo, edd., *Il Futuro dei Longobardi: L'Italia e la costruzione dell'Europa di Carlo Magno* (Milan, 2000) pp. 48-50.

³⁶ Paul the Deacon, *Storia dei Longobardi*, III. 16.

³⁷ P. Delogu, 'Lombard and Carolingian Italy,' p. 292.

The first setback when using the laws as a source is that they say nothing about the earliest phase of Lombard settlement, due to the fact that the first formalization of the legal system was issued by Rothari (636-52) in the year 643, and was not universally applied to all residents within the kingdom,³⁸ almost a century after Alboin led the initial movement of peoples into Italy. “Nel novembre 643, subito dopo la conclusione vittoriosa della spedizione in Liguria, il re riunì in Pavia l’*exercitus*, che in teoria coinciderà ancora, in quell’epoca, con tutto il popolo dei liberi longobardi.”³⁹ Although what exactly constituted ‘*liberi Longobardi*’ is unclear for the seventh century, the diet which was held in 643 for the *Edictum Rothari* to be promulgated relied on the *exercitus* as the backbone for its support, and it was also aimed towards the military classes as its primary targets. The later additions to the *Edictum Langobardorum* were decreed by Grimoald (668), Liutprand (713-35), Ratchis (746), and finally Aistulf (755); when contrasting these later *leges* with those of Rothari, historians have emphasized that they are more rational, and based upon reparations, inquests and judicial hearings rather than duels or oath taking.⁴⁰ An example of the earlier style of law can be seen when the Rothari declared:

*Si quis foris in exercitum seditionem levaverit contra ducem suum aut contra eum, qui ordinatus est a rege ad exercitum gubernandi, aut aliquam partem exercetum, seduxerit, sanguinis sui incurrat periculum.*⁴¹

³⁸ Brigitte Pohl-Resl shows convincing evidence for Rothari allowing any mercenaries or foreign warriors living within the *regnum Langobardum* to live according to their own laws and customs, which demonstrates the ability of the king to apply the laws when he saw them to be appropriate. See B. Pohl-Resl, ‘Legal practice and ethnic identity in Lombard Italy,’ *Strategies of Distinction: The Construction of the Ethnic Communities, 300-800*, p. 209.

³⁹ S. Gasparri, ‘Pavia longobarda,’ in *Storia di Pavia*, Vol. 2 (Milan, 1987) p. 43.

⁴⁰ C. Wickham, *Land and Power: Studies in Italian and European Social History. 400-1200* (Oxford, 2005) p. 238.

⁴¹ *Le Leggi dei Longobardi, Edictum Rothari*. 6.

The above law not only shows the severe punishment such betrayal to the *dux* or royal governor carried, but also represents the overall militaristic context of the *Edictum Rothari* as a whole. The use of the term ‘Lombard’ in the realm of the legal system is rather difficult, yet in 643 it likely represented those individuals of sufficient freedom to serve in the *exercitus*. “The entire free male population of the Lombard kingdom was expected to render military service to the nation – in fact, the Lombard freeman was commonly referred to as an *arimannus* (army-man) or *exercitalis*.”⁴² Although this view of the Lombard *aramanni* is somewhat outdated, as will be shown upon examination of the way the various ethnic labels applied within the *regnum Langobardorum* changed from the sixth to eighth centuries later in this chapter, it nevertheless corresponds with the terminology and language used in the first of the Lombard written codes in the middle of the seventh century AD.

The original militaristic emphasis behind the Lombard identity, which was a central theme in the *Edictum Rothari*, is further reinforced when one looks at an outside primary source from the Byzantine perspective. The well known *Strategikon* of the Emperor Maurice (582-602), a military handbook and outline of military strategy, provides an valuable insight into the contemporary views of the Lombards when it states that: “Whether on foot or on horseback, they draw up for battle, not in any fixed measure and formation, or in regiments or divisions, but according to tribes, their kinship with one another, and common interest.”⁴³ Although at first glance one might assume this is a traditional Roman interpretation of unorganized ‘barbarian’ forces, it does represent the

⁴² K. Fischer-Drew, *Law and Society in Early Medieval Europe*, p. 439.

⁴³ Maurice, *Maurice’s Strategikon Handbook of Byzantine Military Strategy*, G. Dennis, trans., (Philadelphia, 1984) p. 119. The original Greek edition of this can be found in *Das Strategikon des Maurikios*, G.T. Dennis, ed., (Vienna, 1981) XI. 3.

sort of *fara* unit of *aramanni*, which served in some capacity as a kinship group of free warriors,⁴⁴ that the wording of the *Edictum Rothari* seems to suggest as forming the basis for the army at the time.

Evidence for non-Roman customs demonstrated by the Lombards is not limited to the ‘giving of the lance’ ceremony discussed earlier, as the legal codes do provide an interesting example as well. The *gairethinx* was essentially the formal confirmation of a Lombard edict following its proclamation by the king.⁴⁵ This was originally thought by modern historians to involve raucous behaviour such as shield-banging, but recently it has been viewed as less archaic since it was apparently used for smaller confirmations of legal cases and not only large scale gatherings.⁴⁶ Unfortunately we are unsure as to the exact ways in which this confirmation or acclamation took place, but it nonetheless represents that in the mid-seventh century in the legal sphere the Lombard rulers such as Rothari, and the aristocracy as a whole, were still utilizing familiar legal forms when they were still functional. When we take into account the relatively high level of dependency the Roman population had upon the court at Pavia or the local *duces* for protection when compared to their counterparts in Spain or *Francia*, such continued legal customs would inevitably have made a gradual impact on how they interacted in their daily lives. That is to say, by engaging in legal matters the Roman population of the seventh-century *regnum*

⁴⁴ The debate over the meaning of the term *arimanni* is summarized and discussed in S. Fanning, ‘A Review of Lombard Prosopography,’ p. 20. Also, for the debate surrounding the settlement of such groups vis-à-vis the local population and their role, see D. Harrison, *The Early State and the Towns: Forms of Integration in Lombard Italy AD 568-774*, pp. 69-71, and G. Tabacco, *Struggle for Power in Medieval Italy: Structures of Political Rule*, p. 96.

⁴⁵ W. Pohl, ‘Memory, identity and power in Lombard Italy,’ pp. 12-13.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 13.

Langobardorum were adopting certain Lombard values without even being aware of it, simply by being exposed to these types of customs on a regular basis.

Historians have raised an interesting point regarding the *Edictum Rothari* and its lack of references to *civitates* or urban centres, which possibly indicates a rural vision of culture being maintained by the Lombard aristocracy in the mid-seventh century.⁴⁷ If these above points are used alongside the ‘Germanic’ nature of the edict itself,⁴⁸ it would seem to indicate that during the period ranging from the first movement into Italy in 568 under Alboin, until the mid-seventh century and the reign of Rothari, the way the Lombard aristocracy and settlers perceived themselves in relation to the urban environment continued to function along the lines of a tribal kingship. When one examines the later additions to the *leges Langobardorum*, particularly those of the eighth century, it becomes evident that the primary focal point of the law is not so much the settlement or organization of the military, but rather the settlement of economic disputes between creditors and debtors, or the rights of inheritance. For example, the *Liutprandi leges* in discussing the former type of case state:

*Et si intra decem annos pulsates fuerit et non reddiderit, et dilataverit usque ad XX annos, et fuerit pulsates aut per principem aut per iudicem civitatis, et provatum fuerit, ipsa cautione devitor et heredis eius persolvant.*⁴⁹

It has been suggested that as the Lombard aristocracy became ‘Italianized’ this progressive evolution of the Lombard legal system can be attributed to three possible circumstances: First, in the initial period of settlement the Lombard aristocracy lived

⁴⁷ G.P. Brogiolo, ‘Ideas of the town in Italy during the transition from antiquity to the middle ages,’ p. 120.

⁴⁸ The term “Germanic” is not used here to imply a primitive or barbaric form of law, but rather one that functions along different lines than those of written *codices* and more Roman forms, as is illustrated in C. Wickham, *Land and Power: Studies in Italian and European Social History, 400-1200*, p. 238.

⁴⁹ *Le Leggi dei Longobardi, Liutprandi leges*. 16.

under traditional archaic legal customs while the Roman population adhered to the Late Roman system.⁵⁰ Second, as the territory of the *regnum Langobardorum* increased in Italy, there was a concession in favour of Roman legal practices. Finally, the church served as an enclave of Roman law and facilitated such progressive fusions of the two cultures.⁵¹ The gradual emergence of the *leges Langobardorum* as being applicable to all free subjects within the kingdom is made explicit in the opening to the *Ratchis leges*, which clearly emphasizes that a judge must offer equal justice to all.⁵² For now it will suffice to have illustrated that with the gradual settlement of the Lombard elite in northern Italy from the sixth to eighth centuries, their self-perception and the way they interpreted the law largely shifted from a ‘Germanic’ to a more urbanized form.

The literary and material evidence that can be obtained concerning the use of titles applied by the Lombards essentially consists of the *leges Langobardorum*, charter documents, numismatic and epigraphical sources. It is interesting that the Lombard lawgivers such as Rothari referred to themselves as *rex gentis Langobardorum* in the *leges*, clearly symbolizing their affiliation with the Lombard people,⁵³ whereas in the charter evidence and coinage there is a much stronger pro-Roman implication in the use

⁵⁰ The sixth-century Lombard population has often been portrayed as primarily agrarian and militaristic prior to their settling in northern Italy, see S. Gasparri, ‘Il popolo-esercito degli arimanni. Gli studi longobardi di Giovanni Tabacco,’ in G. Sergi ed., *Giovanni Tabacco e l’esegesi del passato* (Turin, 2006) p. 23.

⁵¹ For these three points discussed by Everett, and also for his emphasis as the Edictum Rothari being largely focused upon territorial considerations, see N. Everett, ‘How territorial was Lombard Law?’ pp. 346-48.

⁵² *Le Leggi dei Longobardi, Ratchis leges*. 1.

⁵³ The first supposed *rex langobardorum* was Agilmund, who died around the year 436 against the Huns, see J. Jarnut, ‘Gens, rex and regnum of the Lombards,’ in H.W. Goetz, J. Jarnut and W. Pohl, edd., *Regna and Gentes: The Relationship between Late Antique and Early Medieval Peoples and Kingdoms in the Transformation of the Roman World* (Leiden and Boston, 2003) pp. 413-414.

of the titles, an example of the former being *Flavius Liutprandus Rex* and for the latter that of *dominus noster Aistulf Rex*.⁵⁴ The charter evidence is overwhelming in its eighth century focus, as is the numismatic evidence which consists of *dominus noster* (*Cunincper, Aripe, Liutpran, Ratchis, Aistulf, Desiderius*) *Rex*.⁵⁵ Aistulf (749-56) seems to have taken this one step further, by referring to himself as *traditum nobis a domino populum romanorum*, although whether this occurs primarily before or after his supposed relocation of the capital to Ravenna remains difficult to judge, and this shift of political power from Pavia is itself rather dubious.⁵⁶ In terms of how the aristocracy was referred to in the *regnum Langobardorum*, the standard format was that of *dominus noster dux gentis Langobardorum*,⁵⁷ although it should be emphasized that with the exception of Benevento and Friuli, the majority of the Lombard *duces* were not hereditary and were directly connected with the court at Pavia.⁵⁸ It is unfortunate there is not more reference to the earlier Lombard kings of the sixth and early seventh centuries, but it seems from the literary material available that as the territory of the Lombards elite expanded and became gradually more settled, the importance of the urban environment became more apparent, and at the same time the aristocracy began to adopt more formalized structures of political rule and the titles which corresponded to such developments.

⁵⁴ Andrew Gillett gives a concise listing of the various Lombard titulature, and organizes them into a coherent and useful analytical tool. See A. Gillett, 'Was Ethnicity Politicized in the Early Medieval Kingdoms?' *On Barbarian Identity: Critical Approaches to Ethnicity in the Early Middle Ages* (Turnhout, 2002) pp. 103-05.

⁵⁵ *Ibid*, p. 104.

⁵⁶ D. Harrison, 'Political rhetoric and political ideology in Lombard Italy,' p. 245.

⁵⁷ A. Gillett, 'Was Ethnicity Politicized in the Early Medieval Kingdoms?' p. 103.

⁵⁸ C. Wickham, *Early Medieval Italy: Central Power and Local Society 400-1000* (London, 1981) p. 42.

The above summary of the literary evidence, ranging in format from the various *historiae* to the *leges Langobardorum* and the titles associated with such government documents, while useful in its illustration of the general transition of the Lombard kingdom from a newcomer of the sixth century to an established, and to some extent Romanized socio-political structure by the eighth century, does raise a myriad of difficult questions concerning identity. One of the most perplexing of these lies in the question of what exactly constituted a Lombard or Roman subject in the mindset and self-perception of the aristocracy. Even more difficult to determine is how the everyday inhabitants of the *regnum Langobardorum*, those individuals who did not belong to the royal, aristocratic or ecclesiastical sectors of society, viewed themselves and their neighbours, due to the fact that information directly pertaining to such matters is rare in the current material record. The chronological gap in the literary sources, apart from the *Historia Langobardorum* which covers the initial phase of Lombard rule following 568 despite being written in the eighth century in hindsight, further exacerbates our ability to approach such issues without a degree of extrapolation.

Archaeology for the *civitates* and *castra* in northern Italy

One of the major problems concerning archaeology for the early medieval period in northern Italy lies in the fact that unlike sites such as Reccopolis or El Carpio de Tajo in Spain, the majority of the Lombard urban areas such as Pavia and Cividale del Friuli have continued to be inhabited with a relatively dense demographic, making excavation of the sixth to eighth centuries difficult. Although it has been advocated that the Lombards

were initially very cautious of residing within Late Roman cities,⁵⁹ and that the number of Lombard settlers could have been accommodated in a few urban centres in the late sixth century,⁶⁰ the fact that Alboin was buried under the *palatium* at Verona, and also that Lombard church burials were not recorded until the reign of Rothari,⁶¹ both indicate an early level of understanding of the social importance and prestige attached to the *civitates* of the Po Valley. Historians of early medieval Italy have advocated the need for greater and more detailed excavation;⁶² there are some significant archaeological sites worth mentioning, bearing in mind the case studies of Pavia, Brescia and Friuli will be examined in detail. “Thus, from the fifth century on, naturally defensible sites, such as hilltops, spurs and promontories, came to form the links in the ‘Italian body armour’, contrasting strongly with the large, inviting walled cities of the plains.”⁶³ Despite being difficult to tell for certain whether the structures of such *castra* date from the Late Roman or Lombard periods, it has nevertheless been attested that the Lombard elite did inherit

⁵⁹ Cristina La Rocca emphasizes the caution of settlement within the city, in favour of locations surrounding the gates or public buildings, and sees the introduction of burials within the urban area as a fundamental example of Lombard impact upon the *civitas*. See C. La Rocca, ‘Public Buildings and Urban Change in Northern Italy in the Early Medieval Period,’ in J. Rich, ed., *The City in Late Antiquity* (London, 1996) p. 168-69.

⁶⁰ Neil Christie estimates the number of settlers at approximately 100,000 individuals, and emphasizes that if this consisted of around 50,000 Lombard warriors, it would not take many urban sites to provide sufficient space for settlement following 568. See N. Christie, *From Constantine to Charlemagne: an Archaeology of Italy, AD 300-800* (Aldershot, 2006) p. 59.

⁶¹ C. La Rocca, ‘Public Buildings and Urban Change in Northern Italy in the Early Medieval Period,’ p. 169.

⁶² R. Balzaretto, ‘Cities and Markets in the Early Middle Ages,’ in G. Ausenda, ed., *After Empire: Towards an Ethnology of Europe’s Barbarians* (Woodbridge, 1995) pp. 120-21.

⁶³ N. Christie, *The Lombards: The Ancient Longobards* (Oxford, 1995) pp. 179-80.

and occupy the sites following the sixth century.⁶⁴ One such example is that of Castelseprio, a *castrum* which guarded the Lombard territories to the northwest of Milan.

During the time of the Lombards (569-774) and then under the Carolingian kings and other medieval sovereigns until about the eleventh century, and perhaps even since the time of the Goths (493-553), the stronghold, flanked by a settlement twice as large, was not only the military, but also the judiciary and administrative capital of a territory which extended southward from Mount Ceneri (Switzerland) as far as Parabiago, including the lake of Lugano, and westward to the gates of Como (Ponte Chiasso), including the entire valle d'Intelir, with the Ticino river as its west boundary, down stream of Lake Maggiore.⁶⁵

Although Bognetti gave this description of Castelseprio over forty years ago in his guide to the site, it remains perhaps the best and most detailed depiction of its socio-political, economic and military role as a *castrum* in the Lombard territories. The continuity of Castelseprio as a defensive site under the Lombards raises a few interesting considerations. First, the importance of the site with regards to its respective territories in the realm of administration is quite clear; it served as a military and administrative centre with a largely agrarian localized economy.⁶⁶ Second, the close proximity of a larger settlement would seem to indicate that residence was not restricted to within the fortified space of the *castrum*, although it is not possible without further excavation to determine the ethnic composition of the nearby settlement. Finally, the location of Castelseprio near the Ticino River and Lake Maggiore suggests that river trade continued to be of importance in the Po Valley under the Lombard authorities. “The archaeological picture suggests that the most significant Lombard urban sites were those away from the delta

⁶⁴ D. Harrison, ‘Political rhetoric and political ideology in Lombard Italy,’ p. 247., and on the network of *castra* transferring from Byzantine to Lombard occupation, see G.P. Brogiolo, ‘Towns, Forts and the Countryside: Archaeological Models for Northern Italy in the Early Lombard Period (AD 568-650),’ *Towns and their Territories Between Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages* (Leiden, 2000) pp. 303-04.

⁶⁵ G.P. Bognetti, *Castelseprio: artistic and historical guide* (Venice, 1960) p. 12.

⁶⁶ G.P. Brogiolo and S. Gelichi, *La città nell'alto Medioevo italiano: Archeologia e storia* (Rome and Bari, 1998) p. 28.

area (with the exception of Cividale), mostly either on or to the North of the river.”⁶⁷

This brings us to a point that requires discussion, the challenge of distinguishing *civitas* from *castrum* in both the literary and archaeological evidence.



Photo taken from Pavia overlooking the ‘covered bridge’ and the Ticino River, taken by the author in October, 2008.

⁶⁷R. Balzaretti, ‘Cities, Emporia and Monasteries: Local Economies in the Po Valley, c. AD 700-875,’ in N. Christie and S.T. Loseby, ed., *Towns in Transition: Urban Evolution in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages* (Aldershot, 1996) p. 216.

The problem of terminology between the Late Roman and later early medieval terms of *civitas* and *castrum* is largely due to the fact that from the sixth to eighth centuries the differences between such centres becomes increasingly blurred. For example, after having described the increasing importance of the *castra* for defensive strategy during the *regnum Langobardorum*, G.P. Brogiolo goes on to state that: “As a consequence, these fortresses were honoured by the contemporary sources with the title of *civitates*.”⁶⁸ Such an inability to distinguish between the terms and the meaning they intended to convey is further exacerbated by the fact that the changing nature of Late Roman *civitates*. The fortifications which were constructed alongside such changes in status within the urban environment, which had arguably been occurring since as far back as the third century AD,⁶⁹ made such distinction between civil and military sites difficult. When one adds to this equation the matter of economic decline in the urban environment that could to some extent be attributed to the devastation caused by the long and costly Gothic Wars (535-54), particularly in areas such as market trade and fiscal taxation,⁷⁰ the separation of traditional Late Roman *civitates* from *castra* during the time of the *regnum Langobardorum* becomes even harder.

The general consensus at his point in time concerning the fortifying of urban sites in Late Roman and early medieval Italy leans in favour of such structures representing

⁶⁸ G.P. Brogiolo, ‘Ideas of the town in Italy during the transition from antiquity to the middle ages,’ p. 119.

⁶⁹ For a description of the ‘classical’ Roman *civitas* as having close relationships between the aristocracy and civic politics or urban culture, with its associated focus on public works and monuments, see B. Ward-Perkins, ‘Continuists, Catastrophists and the Towns of Post-Roman Northern Italy,’ in *Papers of the British School at Rome*, 65 (London, 1997) p. 162, and for the shift from such urban functions to those of churches, monasteries, circuit walls with towers, and ruralised open spaces, see G.P. Brogiolo, ‘Ideas of the town in Italy during the transition from antiquity to the middle ages,’ p. 100.

⁷⁰ R. Balzaretti, ‘Cities and Markets in the Early Middle Ages,’ pp. 119-20.

localized responses to potential threats, rather than an imperial, Ostrogothic or later Lombard directive from the capital.⁷¹ In order to avoid mixed interpretations or signals, this chapter uses the term *civitas* in reference to an urban area that was a centre of socio-political administration, economic function, and which shows to some degree an urban heritage, even if such structures are not particularly well maintained from the Late Roman era.⁷² The term *castrum* will therefore signify a point of predominantly military importance and defensive fortifications unless explicitly referred to as a *civitas* in the primary sources, although it must be remembered that the network of defences was intertwined with such sites.⁷³ “Roman and early medieval peoples defined towns almost exclusively in administrative terms: whether a settlement was or was not a civitas (in the Latin West) or a polis (in the Greek East) was determined not by its size, but by whether it was the seat of a bishopric and/or a centre of secular administration.”⁷⁴ The main purpose for having explored this question of terminology has not been to try and determine a definite distinction of what Lombard *civitates* or *castra* consisted of in terms of structures, but rather an illustration to the reader of the complex network of urban and

⁷¹ For the discussion surrounding whether such fortifications were planned or sporadic, see N. Christie, ‘War and Order: urban remodeling and defensive strategies in Late Roman Italy,’ in L. Lavan, ed., *Recent Research in Late Antique Urbanism* (Portsmouth, 2001) p. 114. Earlier in his work, however, Christie does imply that until the end of imperial government in the West, such constructions may have been due to a change in ‘imperial emphasis’, see N. Christie, ‘War and Order’ p. 109.

⁷² The example of Brescia as such a *civitas* is discussed, especially the modification of the Via A. Mario *domus* using wood and clay materials, in G.P. Brogiolo, ‘Brescia: Building Transformations in a Lombard City,’ in K. Randsborg, ed., *The Birth of Europe: Archaeology and Social Development in the 1st Millennium AD* (Rome, 1989) p. 158.

⁷³ The example of Friuli being established early on as a ‘frontier duchy’ reflects this connection between the cities and fortresses of northern Italy in the Early Medieval period, see K. Fischer-Drew, *Law and Society in Early Medieval Europe*, p. 438.

⁷⁴ B. Ward-Perkins, ‘Urban Continuity?’ in *Towns in Transition: Urban Evolution in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages*, p. 6.

semi-urban sites which were already in place in the sixth century AD,⁷⁵ and which were then modified with the coming of Lombard administration in the region.

One of the most exasperating challenges a researcher of early medieval archaeology faces is the simple problem of identification of structures as either Late Roman or belonging to the peoples which later assumed control over the territories of the former Western Roman Empire. Historians have highlighted this difficulty in the city of Brescia, and emphasize that although there were new clay and wooden structures erected following the fifth century, such materials were by no means exclusive to the ‘barbarians’, and were used by the Late Roman population at sites such as Idro.⁷⁶ The issue of ruralization within the early medieval city, which coincides with the use of such building materials, has been a point of debate between the ‘continuist’ and ‘catastrophist’ schools of thought,⁷⁷ with historians generally being inclined towards continuity and their archaeologist counterparts favouring a more drastic decline of urbanism.⁷⁸ In the case of the *regnum Langobardorum*, the tendency is to view the urban environment more in terms of continuity, at least vis-à-vis its early medieval neighbouring kingdoms. “It comes as no surprise that all these bands of the high nobility seized the duchies with and without Alboin’s consent and, as largely independent ‘duces’, demonstrated impressively

⁷⁵ A very thorough study on the urban network of the *regnum Langobardorum* can be found in the form of a travelling itinerary in E.A. Arslan, *Lombardia* (Rome, 1982)

⁷⁶ G.P. Brogiolo, ‘Brescia: Building Transformations in a Lombard City,’ pp. 159-61.

⁷⁷ The debate was discussed in greater detail earlier in the first chapter of this work, but for some background reading see B. Ward-Perkins, ‘Urban Continuity?’ pp. 4-18, P. Heather, *The Fall of the Roman Empire* (London, 2006), J. Arce, ‘Otium et negotium: the great estates,’ in M. Brown and L. Webster, edd., *The Transformation of the Roman World, AD 400-900* (London, 1997) pp. 19-33, M. McCormick, *Origins of the European Economy: Communications and Commerce, AD 300-900* (New York, 2002), A. Southall, *The City in Time and Space* (Cambridge, 2000).

⁷⁸ B. Ward-Perkins, ‘Continuists, Catastrophists and the Towns of Post-Roman Northern Italy,’ p. 167.

that they were qualified to be kings.”⁷⁹ Although this independence of the Lombard aristocracy was largely curtailed by the eighth century under Liutprand, as was made evident by his assertion of royal control over Spoleto and Benevento,⁸⁰ the *duces* of the interregnum from 574 to 584 were largely successful in their ambitions and governance of their regions;⁸¹ they continued to provide the basis for royal succession as was the case of Rothari having served as the *dux* of Brescia prior to ascending to the throne.⁸² The reliance of each *dux* upon the resources of his territory during the interregnum was an integral factor that contributed to a degree of urban continuity from the Late Roman era, which continued once the kingdom was re-established under Authari in 584.

This brings us to another point surrounding the archaeological material and the interpretative viewpoints based upon it, that of the perception of a ‘city’ itself, both in terms of how modern historians and Lombard contemporaries alike have viewed the urban landscape. The problem of interpreting the *civitas* with regards to archaeological sites and primary sources, is that depending on who is conducting the excavation, or in the case of the historian writing about the city, points of interest in favour of his or her desired image are projected while others are often marginalized. Neil Christie has demonstrated this was the case in the documentation surrounding Verona, a city with a long tradition of urbanism, when he notes that apart from the circus or theatre structures, the sources have tended to focus upon the continuity of the walls and water supply rather

⁷⁹ H. Wolfram, *The Roman Empire and Its Germanic Peoples* (London, 1997) p. 291.

⁸⁰ The reign of Liutprand has often been put forth as the zenith of the *regnum Langobardorum*, for example see C. Brühl, ‘Storia dei Longobardi,’ in G.P. Carratelli, dir., *Magistra Barbaritas: I Barbari in Italia* (Rome, 1984) p. 105

⁸¹ The subjugation of the Po Valley during the interregnum is attested to in Paul the Deacon, *Storia dei Longobardi*, II. 32.

⁸² N. Christie, *The Lombards: The Ancient Longobards*, p. 95.

than the abandonment of other urban buildings.⁸³ It is not always the case of a deliberate omission of such information, as the evidence for modifications to residential buildings can be difficult to associate with any one chronological period of settlement.

The archaeology of early medieval Verona over the course of the 1980's sparked a passionate debate and academic discourse concerning the nature of catastrophe or continuity in the urban centres of northern Italy from the sixth to eighth centuries, and helped to change the ways in which archaeologists and historians approach such themes. The first excavations which dealt with a post-classical focus on the city were conducted from 1980 through 1982, and focused primarily on the Cortile del Tribunale and Via Dante sites.⁸⁴ Based on the results which were made available in 1984, Cristina La Rocca advocated that the 'dark earth' which had been uncovered at Verona was not necessarily a clear example of destruction or abandonment, but rather a realignment of the urban space by the Lombards as part of deliberate city planning.⁸⁵ The general premise was that although the Roman street plans and urban area remained intact, there was a deliberate alteration to the open spaces and removal of certain structures,⁸⁶ or their components which could then be reused, in order to construct new ones over the course of the early medieval period. Perhaps the greatest contribution this paper made to the

⁸³ N. Christie, *From Constantine to Charlemagne: an Archaeology of Italy, AD 300-800*, pp. 183-85.

⁸⁴ For an in depth recounting of the excavations and their results, see G.P. Brogiolo and S. Gelichi, *La città nell'alto Medioevo italiano: Archeologia e storia*, pp. 29-30.

⁸⁵ In what would come to be known as 'Il Modello Veronese', La Rocca claimed that 'dark earth' was not a general phenomenon in the stratigraphy, but rather circumstantial to different parts of the city, see *Ibid.*, pp. 33-34, and C. La Rocca Hudson, 'Dark Ages a Verona: edilizia privata, aree aperte e strutture pubbliche in una città dell'Italia settentrionale,' *Archeologia Medievale*, XIII (Florence, 1986) pp. 76-78.

⁸⁶ For example, in order to make space for rural activities within the city, see P. Hudson, 'La dinamica dell'insediamento urbano nell'area del cortile del Tribunale di Verona. L'eta medievale,' *Archeologia Medievale*, XII (Florence, 1985) p. 282.

study of urbanism in the Early Middle Ages was the notion that ‘dark earth’ and a changing architectural dynamic within the city did not automatically imply catastrophe or urban decline. It could in fact be an example of the newly settled peoples preferring the new structures and their functionality to the previous ones.⁸⁷ This attempt at reconciliation between those scholars who viewed the early medieval period as one of decline and those who viewed it as a vibrant period of transition led to some vigorous discourse regarding the matter.

The most immediate rebuttal of the above views came from G.P. Brogiolo the following year, and tackled some of the issues with the approach. One of the problems Brogiolo raised was extrapolating the situation at Verona to the rest of the *regnum Langobardorum*, and urged that even if the residents at Verona felt the need for new structures to be built, this was not necessarily true elsewhere.⁸⁸ He also argued that using roads as an example of continuity was flawed due to the questionable condition of their materials and level of maintenance, advocating that only at Classe was there a clear example of streets being well maintained into the eighth century.⁸⁹ Other issues addressed were those of needing to apply a case by case approach to urban continuity, as well as giving more importance to the quality of materials used in maintaining such structures.⁹⁰ The discussion surrounding Verona has led to scholars rethinking their methodology and approaches to such issues over the last thirty years, and since then the academic community has paid greater attention to the specific conditions of early

⁸⁷ C. La Rocca Hudson, ‘Dark Ages a Verona: edilizia privata, aree aperte e strutture pubbliche in una città dell’Italia settentrionale,’ p. 78.

⁸⁸ G.P. Brogiolo, ‘A proposito dell’organizzazione urbana nell’altomedioevo,’ *Archeologia Medievale*, XIV (Florence, 1987) p. 30.

⁸⁹ *Ibid*, pp. 34-35.

⁹⁰ On the problems surrounding the quality of technology in particular, see *Ibid*, p. 28.

medieval cities, rather than applying the more broadly encompassing views prior to this debate.

There are nevertheless instances where archaeological evidence does provide sufficient indication for the abandonment of structures; Bryan Ward-Perkins in his discussion of the decline of the forum at Luni circa 50 AD, with its marble buildings being replaced by wooden ones, attributes the decline to the presence of ‘black earth’ above the Late Roman structures.⁹¹ It essentially boils down to whether one views the city primarily in its socio-economic function, despite having been drastically modified from its Late Roman form, as continuists are inclined to believe, or whether the urban environment has become so ruralized and altered that it has lost its ‘essence’ of *civilitas*, the latter view favouring the catastrophist school of thought. A combination of literary and archaeological evidence can be used to support either of these views, not only at Luna but also, for example, at Brescia where the ‘monastero regio di San Salvatore’ was built by Desiderius (756-74) the then *dux* of Istria and Tuscany in 753 over the former Late Roman *insulae*.⁹² Depending on whether one views the establishment of this structure as a symbol of continued urban importance, or a sign of breaking away from the traditional Roman *civitas*, remains open to interpretation by modern scholars.

Dans le Frioul du VI^e siècle, comme le dit Paul Diacre, les Lombards investirent les couches les plus élevées de la société. La nouvelle aristocratie était donc plutôt protéiforme, composée de vieux et de nouveaux membres des élites, d’origine romaine et barbare.⁹³

⁹¹ B. Ward-Perkins, ‘Continuists, Catastrophists and the Towns of Post-Roman Northern Italy,’ p. 160.

⁹² G.P. Brogiolo, ‘Transformazioni urbanistiche nella Brescia longobarda. Dalle capanne in legno al monastero regio di San Salvatore,’ in G.C. Menis, ed., *Italia Longobarda* (Venice, 1991) p. 101.

⁹³ I. Barbiera, ‘Aristocracies et pouvoirs locaux a Cividale del Friuli (Italie),’ in *Rome et les Barbares: La Naissance d’un Nouveau Monde*, (Venice, 2008) p. 457.

For anyone engaged in the study of early medieval archaeology, they will likely have heard of the recent exhibition entitled 'Roma e i Barbari' which was held at the Palazzo Grassi in Venice, Italy, from January through July of 2008. The exhibition which was directed by Jean-Jacques Aillagon and supported by a wide team of scholars,⁹⁴ displayed finds ranging from the second to tenth centuries AD, and illustrated the various fusions and cultural exchanges which occurred following the end of imperial government in the West. In reference to the *regnum Langobardorum* artifacts included a seventh century gold cross, a collection of seventh century shield bosses with adornments, and the burial goods of *dux* Gisulf of Friuli.⁹⁵ There is also a numismatic contribution by the National Museum of Archaeology of Cividale, which shows six late seventh century *solidi* that clearly attempt an *imitatio imperii* of Byzantine coinage.⁹⁶ The archaeological material in this respect reinforces the notion that as the Lombards settled and began to engage in cultural exchanges with the local inhabitants, there was a shift in the way the Lombard elite perceived themselves away from tribal modes towards

⁹⁴ The above catalogue for the exhibit lists in its beginning the contributors, including Gian Pietro Brogiolo, Peter Heather, Paolo Delogu and Walter Pohl, each of whom has made fundamental contributions to the advancement of our knowledge regarding Lombard society and its impact in early medieval Italy.

⁹⁵ For a description and image of the gold cross, see S. Gasparri, 'Le royaume Lombard,' pp. 388-391, and for the interesting shield designs which show a synthesis of Germanic and Late Roman artistic modes, see C. Giostra, 'Les boucliers <<de parade>> et les decorations de Lucques et Stabio (Italie),' pp. 394-397, and finally for the presentation of the burial treasure of Gisulf, see I. Ahumada Silva, 'Le trésor de Gisulf,' pp. 458-60, the three of which can be found in *Rome et les Barbares: La Naissance d'un Nouveau Monde*.

⁹⁶ E.A. Arslan, 'Monnaies lombardes de la collection du Musée archéologique national de Cividale,' in *Rome et les Barbares: La Naissance d'un Nouveau Monde*, p. 534, and for a discussion of the monetary reforms under Liutprand see E.A. Arslan, 'La monetazione di Ariperto II, Re dei Longobardi (700-712),' *Folia Numismatica*, 8.9 (Brno, 1993/94) p. 14.

those that had been established in northern Italy prior to their arrival in the sixth century, and which were based largely within an urban environment.

Processes of cultural exchange in the *regnum Langobardorum*

The first point that should be made when studying the ethnic composition of early medieval Italy, is that it was by no means as simple as separating ‘Lombards’ and ‘Romans’ into two distinct groups of peoples. The latter could even be misconstrued as referring to a Roman residing within the Lombard territories, an inhabitant of the city of Rome itself, or a resident of the Ravenna exarchate and Byzantine lands.⁹⁷ On top of this, there existed other ethnic groups within the kingdom, and an example of this can be found when Stefano Gasparri writes that: “L’unica notizia certa sulla presenza di Bulgari in Italia si colloca durante il regno di Grimoaldo (662-672), quando sappiamo che i nuovi venuti furono inviati quindi dall’Italia padana, dove tra l’altro la rete insediativa doveva essersi già riassetata, a quella data, dagli sconvolgimenti del secolo precedente.”⁹⁸ The residence of military troops from other kingdoms was a common feature of the early medieval period, both in East and West, and the earlier discussion surrounding the Suevi-Alamanni *dux* Droctulf, along with the allowance of foreign warriors to live according to their own customs support this view. The Lombards themselves were hired out as mercenaries, a point which indicates that they did maintain an ethnic distinction from the other inhabitants of the *regnum Langobardorum*, although it is equally plausible that the

⁹⁷ For a discussion of these different meanings of the term Romani and their implications, see B. Pohl-Resl, ‘Legal practice and ethnic identity in Lombard Italy,’ pp. 206-08.

⁹⁸ S. Gasparri, ‘Pavia longobarda,’ p. 29.

mercenaries consisted of men who were not limited to the Lombard ethnic group.⁹⁹ The military strength of the Lombards can be attested for in the value placed on them by the Byzantine court of the sixth century, when the Emperor Tiberius II (574-82) declined the three thousand gold *solidi* offered to him by the Roman authorities at his accession in favour of using the money to recruit Lombard soldiers for his upcoming Persian expedition.¹⁰⁰ Clearly then, at least in the earliest phase of the Lombard settlement in Italy, their contemporaries and neighbours were able to distinguish them from Roman or Gothic forces.

In order to better understand which sector of Italian society the term ‘Lombard’ referred to, it is important not to apply the name broadly over the entire period of the *regnum Langobardorum*, but instead to look at its development chronologically from the time of the initial settlement following 568 to the end of independent Lombard rule in 774. The initial migration led by Alboin has often been portrayed by modern historians as a time of large scale disorder, without a coherent or unified agenda; the Lombards and any tribes attached to their migration crossed the Alps and proceeded to pillage or wander the countryside of northern Italy.¹⁰¹ The fact that unlike the initial successor state in Italy of the Ostrogothic kingdom (493-553), the Lombards did not enter the former imperial territories with any formalized status as *foederati*, has also been emphasized.¹⁰² It has

⁹⁹ This would be even more likely following the reign of Aistulf and his policy of recruiting all ethnicities into the army, see S. Gasparri, ‘Le royaume Lombard,’ p. 390.

¹⁰⁰ S. Mitchell, *A History of the Later Roman Empire, 284-641* (Oxford, 2007) p. 407.

¹⁰¹ For two such traditional accounts of the earliest Lombard years and the barbaric nature of the migration, see K. Fischer-Drew, *Law and Society in Early Medieval Europe*, p. 90, and also G. Tabacco, *Struggle for Power in Medieval Italy: Structures of Political Rule*, p. 93.

¹⁰² J.M. Wallace-Hadrill, *The Barbarian West 400-1000*, p. 45.



Seventh-century Lombard gold *solidi* showing clear indications of *imitatio imperii*, for the original image and more information see E. Arslan, 'Monnaies lombardes de la collection du Musée archéologique national de Cividale,' in J.J. Aillagon, dir., *Rome et les Barbares: La Naissance d'un Nouveau Monde*, (Venice, 2008) pp. 534-535.

been promoted as a fundamental difference between the Ostrogothic and Lombard settlement, and the assimilation of the Roman senatorial elite into the Lombard polity has also been attributed to this lack of federate status. “The senators, or the large Roman landowners, who managed to survive the first decades of the invasion did so in only one way: by becoming Lombards.”¹⁰³ In the same volume, Walter Pohl takes a more critical approach to the question of Lombard unity and self-perception following 568; Pohl emphasizes the short term agendas of the Lombard *duces* and their ability to cooperate with the Frankish or Byzantine neighbours in order to obtain their goals.¹⁰⁴ One further point of interest, which may or may not explain the differences between Lombard and Ostrogothic treatment of the Italian urban environment and its Roman inhabitants, could perhaps be attributed to this ‘federate question’.

In general from the sixth century onwards, Lombard emphasis was on the construction of new urban structures rather than following the restoration policy of Theodoric (471-526). An example of this was the construction in Brescia of new facilities at the Santa Giulia monastery during the seventh and eighth centuries.¹⁰⁵ Perhaps due to their lacking a tradition as *foederati*, apart possibly from a brief period under King Wacho (510-40),¹⁰⁶ the Lombards perceived their relationships to the *civitates* in a different manner. Historians have advocated that upon arriving and then settling in the Po Valley, the Lombard king, and for that matter the various *duces* and aristocracy which made up the elite sector of society as well, viewed the cities as personal

¹⁰³ S. Gasparri, ‘The aristocracy,’ in *Italy in the Early Middle Ages: 476-1000*, ed. C. La Rocca, (Oxford, 2002) p. 62.

¹⁰⁴W. Pohl, ‘Invasions and ethnic identity,’ in *Italy in the Early Middle Ages: 476-1000*, p. 21.

¹⁰⁵ R. Balzaretto, ‘Cities and Markets in the Early Middle Ages,’ pp. 123.

¹⁰⁶ H. Wolfram, *The Roman Empire and Its Germanic Peoples*, p. 282.

possessions rather than as units of collective property.¹⁰⁷ This partially explains why rather than establishing a tax system and eventually paying the army as was the case in the Byzantine territories, the Lombard rulers instead saw the land as their personal domain on which to settle their retainers.¹⁰⁸ Although by the fifth century AD the use of *foederati* as a system of defence and integration had become flawed and a constant point of contention between the two halves of the Roman Empire over the non-Roman peoples,¹⁰⁹ the experience of having lived alongside the Roman population granted the federate troops a degree of awareness regarding the collective possession of the urban landscape. For a newly established government with no long standing exposure to the mechanisms of urban administration, or experience in establishing its own military colonies,¹¹⁰ there would naturally occur an initial phase of ethnic favouritism in relation to land holdings and urban administration.

The notion that the Lombard social order upon entering Italy in 568 consisted predominantly of *farae* groups and *aramanni* who swore allegiance to the *duces* and king, rather than a group of peoples inclined towards urban settlement, a point which scholars have emphasized as crucial to the development of the Lombard military caste in the sixth

¹⁰⁷C. La Rocca, 'Public Buildings and Urban Change in Northern Italy in the Early Medieval Period,' pp. 169-70.

¹⁰⁸C. Wickham, *Early Medieval Italy: Central Power and Local Society 400-1000*, p. 40.

¹⁰⁹The limitations of the *foederati* system are discussed in W. Pohl, 'The Empire and the Lombards: treaties and negotiations in the sixth century,' p. 77, and for a description of the localized recruitment of such forces once stationed in a province, a point which would contradict the notion that federate forces maintained a strong ethnic identity, see A.D. Lee, *War in Late Antiquity: A Social History* (Oxford, 2007) p. 84.

¹¹⁰D. Harrison, *The Early State and the Towns: Forms of Integration in Lombard Italy AD 568-774*, p. 72.

century,¹¹¹ is further reinforced when one considers the context in which the Lombard peoples lived prior to entering Italy. Procopius in describing the conflict between the Lombards, Heruls and Gepids in Pannonia during the mid-sixth century, despite the somewhat unlikely description he gives of the Lombards begging the Herul king Rodolph several times for peace, nevertheless demonstrates that the primary concerns of the Lombards in Pannonia were those of sustenance in a largely rural area rather than a densely urbanized one.¹¹² It made sense for these peoples to have separated themselves from the highly urbanized Late Roman or Gothic inhabitants of northern Italy in the last decades of the sixth century upon entering the Italian peninsula.

The initial separation of the Lombards from Romans in northern Italy during the sixth century is also reflected in the geographic distinction between the Ravenna Exarchate and the *regnum Langobardorum*. The contrast between the duchies of Spoleto and Benevento with the Byzantine southern territories further demonstrates this initial geographic application of ethnic terms.¹¹³ This makes sense, given that the Italian peninsula at the time, and during the next two centuries, was a land with several competing political authorities seeking to dominate or at least control the complex balance of power.¹¹⁴ The geographic and ethnic separation of the Lombards from Romans became less deliberate over time, and in turn the meaning of the term changed

¹¹¹ For the five phases of Lombard ethnogenesis prior to entering Italy in 568, see J. Jarnut, 'Die langobardische Ethnogenese,' in W. Pohl and H. Wolfram, edd., *Typen der Ethnogenese unter besonderer Berücksichtigung der Bayern* (Vienna, 1990) pp. 97-102.

¹¹² For the appeal of the Lombards to the clemency of Rudolph, and the subsequent battle which ensued, see Procopius, *Procopii Caesariensis opera omnia*, Vol. 2, J. Haury and G. Wirth, edd., Bel. VI. XIV. 10-22, and also R. Collins, 'The Western Kingdoms,' pp. 130-32.

¹¹³ B. Pohl-Resl, 'Legal practice and ethnic identity in Lombard Italy,' p. 206.

¹¹⁴ W. Pohl, 'The Empire and the Lombards: treaties and negotiations in the sixth century,' p. 76.

accordingly. “Ma la vita trascorsa gli uni accanto agli altri in località medie o piccolo (si pensi a castelli come Castelseprio), in mancanza di specifiche norme separatiste, come il divieto di matrimoni misti, avrà favorita la fusione etnica.”¹¹⁵ Granted the Late Roman tendency towards localized defences rather than long frontier walls,¹¹⁶ such cultural fusions at the urban level were inevitable as the centuries passed.

The question of cultural interaction between the Lombard and Roman elements of northern Italy during the late-sixth to seventh centuries, particularly the gradually decreasing political roles of the latter following the reign of King Agilulf (590-616), has recently been promoted by historians as a matter of royal protection. While the Lombard rulers tried to establish a ‘Romano-barbarian’ kingdom with the cooperation of local Roman elites, along the same lines as the Visigoths and Franks had a century earlier, the social conditions and prior Gothic Wars in Italy had rendered the Roman populace insecure and dependent upon the Lombard king for protection.¹¹⁷ Basically this dependency, which had been reinforced by the policies of Agilulf and his attempts at binding the Roman Catholic members of society to the crown, meant that the Roman aristocracy was unable to maintain a degree of local autonomy; this contrasts with the situation Gallo-Roman and Hispano-Roman inhabitants encountered with the transition to Frankish or Visigothic rule in the fifth and sixth centuries.¹¹⁸ This is an interesting reversal of the traditional views of rampaging Lombards as relative latecomers on the

¹¹⁵ S. Gasparri, ‘Pavia longobarda,’ p. 31.

¹¹⁶ W. Pohl, ‘Frontiers and Ethnic Identities: Some Final Considerations,’ *Borders, Barriers and Ethnogenesis: Frontiers in Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages* (Turnhout, 2005) p. 260.

¹¹⁷ P. Delogu, ‘Kingship and the shaping of the Lombard body politic,’ in G. Ausenda, P. Delogu and C. Wickham, ed., *The Langobards before the Frankish Conquest: An Ethnographic Perspective* (Woodbridge, 2009) pp. 256-257.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid*, p. 257.

early medieval political stage. Whereas historians had for generations considered this group to have caused massive upheaval in the social fabric of northern Italy following their arrival in 568, and in turn having coerced the Roman populace to adopt the cultural values of the new ruling class, it was perhaps their very reliance upon the Lombard rulers which was the main factor behind such shifts in identities. This demonstrates an interesting contrast between the three case studies as well, and shows the contexts in which they each had to try and interact with the previous inhabitants greatly differed.

The impact of the Lombard aristocracy and subsequent settlement of the kingdom from the sixth to eighth centuries was not confined to the relationships between members of society within their own territories. It has recently been advocated that the Byzantine exarchate at Ravenna was beginning to resemble a ‘Romano-Germanic’ society by the seventh century, due to its increased militarization of society and decreased systems of taxation.¹¹⁹ This restructuring of Byzantine society was largely due to continual conflicts with the neighbouring Lombard kingdom, although the association of this particular development with ‘Germanic’ cultural values assumes that the two points mentioned above were fundamental to such groups and their identities. It could be argued that the militarization of the Lombards, Visigoths or Franks stemmed equally from reasons of necessity to defend themselves in the initial stages of migration, but even as late as the eighth century the extent to which these types of considerations impacted the everyday self-perceptions of the inhabitants is unclear. There is no explicit evidence that the Roman or Lombard subjects within the *regnum Langobardorum* viewed the military sector of society as being exclusive to those individuals with Lombard ethnic heritage,

¹¹⁹ C. Wickham, *The Inheritance of Rome: A History of Europe from 400 to 1000* (London, 2009) p. 141.

nor is it likely that the Byzantine residents of the exarchate at the time viewed such matters as being the preserve of ‘Germanic’ peoples. This is of course largely speculative due to the lack of direct mention of such things in the primary sources, but it demonstrates that there still exists a tendency amongst modern historians to occasionally group peoples together as ‘Germanic’ even when the author has taken every precaution and scholastic attempt to avoid doing so. It is inevitable that we must sometimes employ these types of organizational methods, to make sense and structure out of a wide range of variables. However, we must be careful only to do so when it is apt and genuinely reflects a common tie between the various groups represented.

The composition of the audience during the proclamation of the *Edictum Rothari* as *liberi Langobardi* at Pavia in 643 raises an interesting question. If we are to assume that the military role of the ethnic Lombards and the social separation which it entailed continued into the mid-seventh century, a point supported by the more militaristic and tribal orientation of the first Lombard laws, did the expression ‘free Lombards’ refer to any individual of independent legal status, whether Roman or Lombard, or did it strictly refer to the free warrior caste comprised of those individuals with the self sufficiency to serve in the *exercitus*? Ross Balzaretto has stated that the term *masculus* referred strictly to the free warrior sector of Lombard society in the eighth century, and furthermore, that half-free individuals or slaves were not even considered to be ‘men’ by the contemporaries of the period.¹²⁰ From the seventh to eighth centuries, at least following the year 643 if not earlier, it is probable that the term began to take on a new meaning; instead of being used as a reference to the Lombard ethnic group within the

¹²⁰ R. Balzaretto, ‘Masculine authority and state identity in Liutprandic Italy,’ *Die Langobarden: Herrschaft und Identität*, p. 368.

regnum Langobardorum, it began to signify the free status of an individual and his ability to serve in the army.

While it has not been the primary focus of this thesis to examine gender roles or the function of women within early medieval political decision-making, due to a lack of space and the nature of the study itself, there is one topic concerning this in the *regnum Langobardorum* that should be presented. It has recently been asserted that the Frankish wife of Agilulf, Queen Theudelinda (570-628), was crucial in gaining support of the local Roman clergy and populace for her husband due to her staunch Catholic stance and connections to Pope Gregory I (590-604) who was very much interested in the conversion of 'barbarian' peoples to the Nicene creed.¹²¹ However, scholars have also emphasized that Theudalinda was not representative of the typical Lombard queen, in that she was a Frank prior to marriage, and happened to be reigning at a time when Frankish pressure on the Lombard kingdom was increasing, which ultimately granted her a degree of authority and influence greater than most.¹²² Even if this was indeed the case, it is apparent that under the right circumstances women in the *regnum Langobardorum* could exert considerable influence and effect large scale changes in the social dynamic of the realm. This represents one area which the Merovingians and Lombards shared a common pattern, with both realms producing powerful female political figures such as Fredegund, Brunhild and Theudalinda. The Visigothic women are in a sense connected to this as well, due to the tendency of the Merovingian kings to marry Visigothic princesses. This brings us to our next subject, one that is directly

¹²¹ P. Delogu, 'Kingship and the shaping of the Lombard body politic,' p. 253.

¹²² C. Wickham, *The Inheritance of Rome: A History of Europe from 400 to 1000*, pp. 141-142.

related to the question of gender roles and female authority in the Lombard kingdom, that of intermarriage and the laws of inheritance or property surrounding such an issue.

In studying the marriage of the *Romana mulier* Gunderada to the man Domninus, and his endorsement of her decision to sell off property to Heldepert in 758,¹²³ scholars have raised the question of whether or not Domninus was a man of Lombard descent applying the Lombard custom of consent to the actions of his Roman wife, or rather a Roman himself adapting to the Lombard legal system in order to ingratiate himself with the Lombard aristocracy to gain benefits from such an identity.¹²⁴ The terminology had become altered from its tribal or specifically ethnic origins to one that denoted a specific social status by the eighth century. However, there were still instances, for example in the realm of marriage or inheritance laws, where it directly benefited the individual to define himself as a Lombard rather than as Roman subject of the kingdom.

Pavia as capital of the Lombard kingdom, c. 620-774 AD

When the Lombard peoples first began the migration into the northern regions of Italy in 568, it was largely a swift, successful operation with the majority of urban centres surrendering without stiff opposition. It was not until reaching Pavia, the ancient *Ticinum*,¹²⁵ that major resistance was encountered from Byzantine forces resulting in a prolonged siege that lasted until 572. “Il re Alboino premeva sulla città con grandissima forza incalzando giorno e notte con una parte dell’ esercito, affinché poi Longino o

¹²³ *Codice diplomatico longobardo*, Vol. II. 130.

¹²⁴ B. Pohl-Reisl, ‘Legal practice and ethnic identity in Lombard Italy,’ p. 210.

¹²⁵ For a description of the Ligurian region including Milan, Roman *Ticinum* and Lombard Pavia see Paul the Deacon, *Storia dei Longobardi*, II. 15, and for a recent detailed study of the Lombard capital see P. Majocchi, *Pavia città regia. Storia e memoria di una capitale altomedievale* (Rome, 2008)

l'Imperatore non meditassero un intervento per liberare la città, ordino che il resto dell'esercito, attraversato il Po, portasse la Guerra contro Emiliani e Toscani.”¹²⁶ This not only reflects the importance of the siege to Alboin and his followers, but also the inability of the imperial forces to react in strong force following the fall of the city in 572. The initial rise of *Ticinum* to an urban centre of significance has been attributed to the Late Roman period,¹²⁷ and the *Notitia Dignitatum*, despite its somewhat notorious reputation for chronological problems, does mention the establishment of a *fabrica* for the production of bows in around the year 400 AD.¹²⁸ The walls at Pavia have been attributed by archaeologists to the sixth century in their construction as a means of defending against the Ostrogoths, although the precise date of their foundation is unclear and they may have been the restored walls of *Ticinum* as well.¹²⁹ The initial settlement of the Lombards took place around the North and Northeast walls and boundaries of the city, with a certain level of interaction between the previous inhabitants and the new settlers within the urban environment being established by the time of Authari.¹³⁰ At this time the city was still known as *Ticinum*, and it is an interesting display of Lombard impact upon the urban environment that not only was it gradually renamed *Papia* at some

¹²⁶ B. Sacco, *Storia di Pavia: Tradizione di Domenico Magnino* (Como, 1993), Book VIII. Cap. XI. pp. 233-34.

¹²⁷ D.A. Bullough, 'Urban Change in Early Medieval Italy: The Example of Pavia,' in *Papers of the British School at Rome*, Vol. 34 (London, 1966) p. 83.

¹²⁸ *Notitia dignitatum: accedunt Notitia urbis Constantinopolitanae et Laterculi provinciarum*, O. Seeck, ed., (Berolini, 1876) IX. 28.

¹²⁹ G. P. Brogiolo and S. Gelichi, *La città nell'alto Medioevo italiano: Archeologia e storia*, p. 60-68.

¹³⁰ For the information regarding the Northern/Northeastern focus of settlement, see S. Gasparri, 'Pavia longobarda,' p. 28, and also P. Hudson, 'Pavia: l'evoluzione urbanistica di una capitale altomedievale,' p. 245. Concerning the level of interaction between Lombard and locals in *Ticinum*, see G. Tabacco, *Struggle for Power in Medieval Italy: Structures of Political Rule*, p. 94.

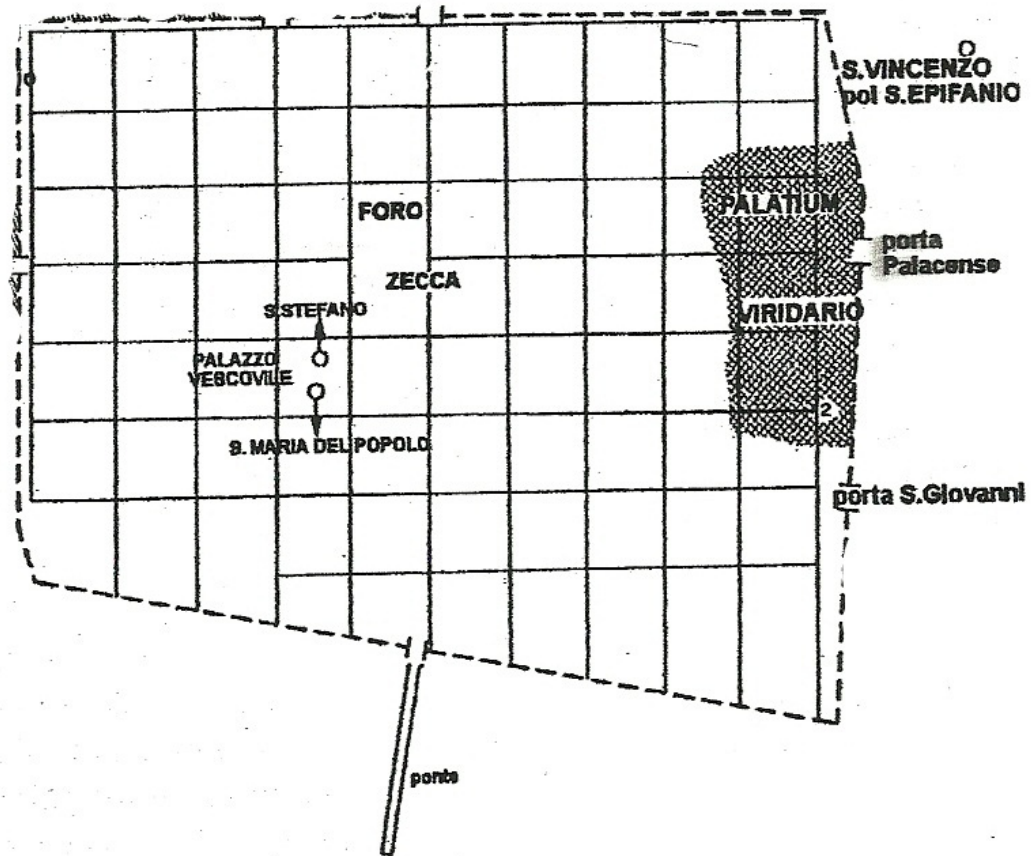
point in the seventh century, but also that the Lombard kings had chosen a *municipium* to become their main urban base of operations.¹³¹ Perhaps this was due to the strategic position of *Ticinum* in the new structuring of northern Italy following 568, in similar fashion with the choice of Toledo as the Visigothic capital, or it could be that factors such as strong fortifications, river trade, and the economics of the Po region were of primary importance to the emergence of Pavia as capital of the *regnum Langobardorum* by the mid-seventh century.¹³² Such motives are difficult to concretely determine, but by the seventh century with the gradual cultural exchanges between Roman and Lombard, there emerged a *civitas* of administrative and political prominence crucial to the stability of the kingdom.

As the structures of government began to take form in seventh century Lombard Pavia, particularly following the reign of Rothari as one would expect given his proclamation of the first set of *leges Langobardorum* in the city, a level of *imitatio imperii* accompanied such structural changes. A clear example of such influences of the Roman populace upon the Lombard court, and perhaps more importantly those of the Byzantine territories bordering the *regnum Langobardorum*, is in the earlier proclamation of Adaloald (615-25) prior to the move to Pavia. “Adaloaldo fu proclamato re nel circo,

¹³¹ On the subject of *Ticinum* at the time of Authari in the late sixth century, Stefano Gasparri sees it as a city without any primary importance in relation to the other holdings of the king, and emphasizes the *palatium* of Theoderic as its only political building of any significance. See S. Gasparri, ‘Pavia longobarda,’ p. 35.

¹³² G.P. Brogiolo examines the “Search for a Capital (568-620)” in G.P. Brogiolo, ‘Towns, Forts and the Countryside: Archaeological Models for Northern Italy in the Early Lombard Period (AD 568-650),’ pp. 310-11, and for the Gothic Wars reinforcing the notion of Pavia as a strongly defensible centre, see S. Gasparri, ‘Il regno longobardo in Italia. Struttura e funzionamento di uno stato altomedievale,’ in S. Gasparri ed., *Il Regno dei Longobardi in Italia: Archeologia, società e istituzioni* (Spoleto, 2004) p. 55.

forse ad imitazione delle proclamazioni imperiali che avvenivano nell'ippodromo di
Constantinopoli, ma purtroppo le speranze in lui riposte vennero frustrate, perché



PAVIA c. 650 AD

 estensione complesso palaziale

This map shows the *palatium* and main ecclesiastical sites in Lombard Pavia, modified from the one found in G.P. Brogiolo and S. Gelichi, *La città nell'alto Medioevo italiano: Archeologia e storia* (Rome and Bari, 1998) p. 61.

il giovane diede ben presto segni di squilibrio, sicché nel 626 saliva al trono il genero di Teodolinda, l'ariano Arioaldo, con l'appoggio dei vescovi transpadani in scissione con Roma.”¹³³ This explicit imitation of Byzantine political imagery was not limited to the persona of the king, but was also reflected in the numismatic evidence, and prior to 680 Pavia served as the main royal mint for the Lombard kings.¹³⁴ Clearly, by the last quarter of the seventh century Pavia was becoming established as the nerve centre for the royal administration of the *regnum Langobardorum* and its immediate territories as well.

The structures of power at Pavia, despite the indications suggesting a level of incorporation of Roman political customs and institutions, nevertheless reflected the attempt of the court to assert authority over the local aristocracy under conditions which were specific to Italy at the time of the Lombards. For example, apart from the role of the *gastaldi* or informal *gasindii* as representatives of the crown in the Lombard duchies as we saw earlier,¹³⁵ the city governors of the *decani* and *saltarii*, or even more so their support staff of *sculdhais*, represent Lombard innovations in the urban environment of northern Italy.¹³⁶ There was a need, given the relative autonomy of the Lombard *duces*

¹³³M. Navoni, 'Dai Longobardi ai Carolingi,' in A. Capriolo, A. Rimoldi and L. Vaccaro, edd., *Diocesi di Milano* (Brescia, 1990) p. 87.

¹³⁴R. Balzaretti, 'Cities and Markets in the Early Middle Ages,' p. 125. Also, for information surrounding the Lombard emulation of Byzantine epigraphy see B.G. Trigger, *A History of Archaeological Thought* (Cambridge, 2006) pp. 48-49, and N. Gray, 'The palaeography of Latin inscriptions in the eighth, ninth and tenth centuries in Italy,' *Papers of the British School at Rome*, Vol. 16 (London, 1948) pp. 59-78.

¹³⁵Although in the case of the *gasindii*, it is possible these were descendents of *comitatus* soldiers rather than strictly Lombard *aramanni*, see S. Fanning, 'A Review of Lombard Prosopography,' p. 20.

¹³⁶For the role of the *sculdhais* as a probable support staff for the city governors, as the lowest level of judiciary to the inhabitants of the territory, see P. Delogu, 'Lombard and Carolingian Italy,' p. 291.

when contrasted with the other post-Roman kingdoms, for the royal court at Pavia to find ways of binding the often unruly elite to the central government. The power of the eighth century *regnum Langobardorum* is a direct representation of the ability of the Lombard kings to both institute and maintain Late Roman or Byzantine socio-political systems, while at the same time showing tenacity and the will to establish a new capital with unique administrative structures. Although Aistulf possibly moved the capital to Ravenna until 754 following his successful campaign against the Exarchate in 751,¹³⁷ this coincides with his desire to be viewed as a Romanized ruler, rather than for any fundamental flaws in the administration at Pavia.

Unfortunately over the next two decades the fortifications of Pavia were neglected due to this alteration in the structure of the kingdom, and in 774 Charlemagne was able to successfully besiege the city, forcing the last independent Lombard king Desiderius to abdicate the throne.¹³⁸ This brought an end to the *regnum Langobardorum* as a player in the sphere of Italian politics, and from then on such relationships would be determined between the Carolingian monarchs, and as of 800 AD the Holy Roman Emperors,¹³⁹ and the Papacy in Rome. Nevertheless, the years from the mid-seventh to late eighth centuries showed that the Roman *Ticinum*, a *municipium* of secondary strategic and political importance in the Late Roman period, could be molded and transformed into a capital *civitas* and major administrative hub of the Lombard kingdom. This was

¹³⁷ D. Harrison, 'Political rhetoric and political ideology in Lombard Italy,' p. 248.

¹³⁸ P. Delogu, 'Lombard and Carolingian Italy,' p. 301.

¹³⁹ A recent discussion of the coronation of Charlemagne and its repercussions can be seen in P. Delogu, 'Vers une plus grande Europe,' in *Rome et les Barbares: La Naissance d'un Nouveau Monde*, pp. 560-65.

facilitated by the creation of a new ‘Lombard’ identity that became applicable to free individuals, as was perhaps the case with *Domnus*.

Although Pavia is not as well documented in the archaeological evidence as the next case Brescia, particularly over the last few decades, there are some insights to be gained from work conducted on excavations throughout the Lombard capital. Late Roman extramural cemeteries seem to have been used into the early medieval period, although burials inside the walls did take place, for example, in the tomb excavated on the Via Defendente Sacchi which yielded the body of a woman alongside a gold cross.¹⁴⁰ There is evidence for continued aristocratic residence and economic activity within the city in the archaeological record at the time, which possibly accounts for the high quality cross found in the burial.¹⁴¹ The need to display power and wealth was not only understood by the royalty, but also by the local aristocracy who resided in the capital as well.¹⁴² The maintained use of extramural cemeteries did not necessarily mean that wealthy individuals were not buried within the urban area of Pavia during the Lombard period.

Unlike we have seen in the Visigothic cases in the preceding chapter, there did exist *civitates* in northern Italy which maintained their public structures to a greater extent, and were not compartmentalized for commercial or residential functions. “Non tutti questi edifici vengono ridotti in case di abitazione; alcuni mantengono una

¹⁴⁰ P. Hudson, *Archeologia Urbana e Programmazione della Ricerca: l'esempio di Pavia* (Florence, 1981) pp. 23-25.

¹⁴¹ P. Majocchi, ‘The politics of memory of the Lombard monarchy in Pavia, the kingdom’s capital,’ p. 88.

¹⁴² For the use of the royal palace complex as a means to display power to the populace, see B. Ward Perkins, *From Classical Antiquity to the Middle Ages: Urban Public Building in Northern and Central Italy AD 300-850* (Oxford, 1984) p. 169.

destinazione pubblica, ad esempio come carceri sotterranee o come sede della zecca (a Verona, Pavia, Milano).”¹⁴³ However, the amphitheatre of Pavia ceased to be used at some point around 529 in any capacity whatsoever, which is different when compared to sites such as Tours or Merida that incorporated or reutilized such structures for new purposes.¹⁴⁴ It is not until the third quarter of the eighth century that Pavia significantly begins to deviate from its traditional urban layout, due largely to the changing social and political environment of the period.¹⁴⁵ Much like the cities we examined in Visigothic Spain, the urban vitality of Pavia was intrinsically tied to the fate of ruling elite themselves.¹⁴⁶ Local urban administration and influences from the new aristocracy can only go so far to bolster and reinforce urbanism in early medieval Visigothic Spain and Lombard Italy. A stable and unified realm was a defining factor in the revitalization of both kingdoms, in the case of the former the late-sixth to seventh centuries following the conquests of Leovigild and conversion of Reccared, and in the case of the latter in the eighth century following the stability brought about by the reign of Liutprand.¹⁴⁷ As *sedes regiae* it is logical that Toledo and Pavia would feel the implications of this the

¹⁴³ G.P. Brogiolo and S. Gelichi, *La città nell'alto Medioevo italiano: Archeologia e storia*, p. 128.

¹⁴⁴ The situation concerning the amphitheatre at Tours will be discussed in the respective case study in the next chapter, and for information on the amphitheatre ceasing to be used at Pavia see P. Hudson, *Archeologia Urbana e Programmazione della Ricerca: l'esempio di Pavia*, p. 26.

¹⁴⁵ The overall Roman street plan continued despite these developments, and still largely defines Pavia today when seen in aerial photographs, see P. Hudson, 'Pavia,' in G.P. Brogiolo, ed., *Archeologia Urbana in Lombardia: Valutazione dei depositi archeologici e inventario dei vincoli* (Modena, 1984) p. 140.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid*, pp. 164-165.

¹⁴⁷ The role of the royal court as the centre for literary and cultural developments was also a contributing factor to the level of urban vitality throughout the realm, as it served as a template for the aristocracy in their own forms of social interaction. For information on Pavia providing the backbone to such stability, see F. Lo Monaco and C. Villa, 'Cultura e scrittura nell'Italia Longobarda,' *Die Langobarden: Herrschaft und Identität*, p. 505.

strongest, due to their direct affiliation with the monarchy and its administration within the urban and suburban areas.

From Roman *Brixia* to Lombard Brescia

The Lombard Duchy of Brescia was a city much like that of Merida in Visigothic Spain, in that it was not the capital or seat of the royal court but nevertheless exercised significant economic, political and ecclesiastical importance to the *regnum Langobardorum*. Brescia had a long tradition of inhabitation much like the case at Merida, and was one of five cities in Lombardia which had been occupied since the protohistoric period along with Milan, Como, Bergamo and Mantova.¹⁴⁸ The *municipium* of Brixia that had developed by the sixth century AD was one that displayed relatively high levels of urban activity, and was likely occupied by the Ostrogoths over the course of the Gothic Wars during the period.¹⁴⁹ In the winter of 569 the Late Roman city of *Brixia*, the later Lombard Brescia, went over to the Lombards and was put under the control of a *dux* who in turn was connected by oath to Alboin and the crown.¹⁵⁰ Paul the Deacon states that the first *dux* of Brescia was one Alichis,¹⁵¹ who continued to govern the city and its respective territory during the interregnum of 574-84. From this point until the end of the independent Lombard kingdom in 774, the Duchy of Brescia

¹⁴⁸ G. P. Brogiolo, *Brescia Altomedievale: Urbanistica ed Edilizia dal IV al IX secolo* (Brescia, 1993) p. 10.

¹⁴⁹ D. Dlugosz, 'Perché Brescia non è Divenuta la Capitale del Regno Longobardo?' *Studies in Ancient Art and Civilization*, Vol. 10 (Krakow, 2007) pp. 4-5.

¹⁵⁰ G.P. Bognetti, 'Brescia dei Goti e dei Longobardi,' in G. Treccani Degli Alfieri, ed., *Dalle origini alla caduta della signoria viscontea (1426)*, (Brescia, 1963-64) p. 403.

¹⁵¹ Cited from the Latin as 'Alichis' but often referred to as 'Alachis', for this identification and a list of other interregnum *duces*, see Paul the Deacon, *Storia dei Longobardi*, II. 32. 3-5.

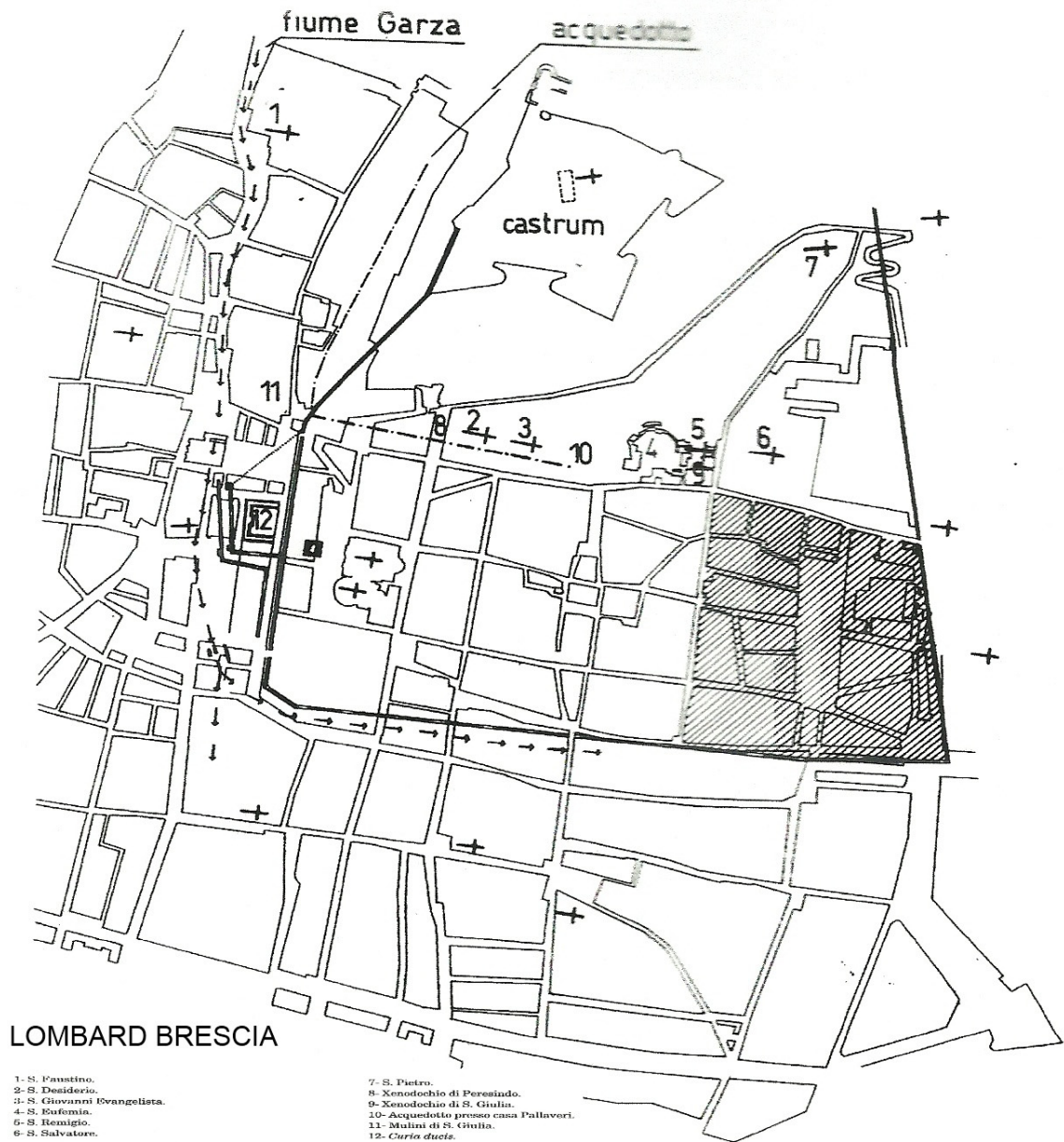
continued to provide the monarchy with its support, and was relatively loyal to the royalty when contrasted with Cividale del Friuli.

While it has been argued that the urban landscape at Pavia did not see a high level of urban decline or ruralization when compared with many other centres following the fall of the Western Empire,¹⁵² the situation at Brescia in the literary and archaeological material has received more scrutiny and conflicting views regarding this question. On the issue of continuity or catastrophe in post-Roman Brescia, some of the main contributors for the former view include Richard Hodges, David Whitehouse and Andrea Carandini; the defenders of continuity in Brescia and northern Italy include Chris Wickham, Cristina La Rocca and Peter Hudson.¹⁵³ It would be easy to become bogged down in the debate itself, rather than how it applies to Lombard Brescia, so instead let us look at what G.P. Brogiolo refers to as a ‘mixture of models’ between the two schools of thought. Essentially, Brogiolo advocates four tenets for this mixture: First, there occurs a ruralization of a vast area within the urban environment. Second, despite the rural activity, the former monumental heart of the *civitas* becomes the administrative centre of the Lombard duchy.¹⁵⁴ Third, ecclesiastical structures such as the basilica are maintained and often expanded. Finally, a modest level of crafts and production happens near

¹⁵² See G.P. Brogiolo, ‘Towns, Forts and the Countryside: Archaeological Models for Northern Italy in the Early Lombard Period (AD 568-650),’ p. 312. For a view that while Pavia did not necessarily become ruralized, it nevertheless lost its ability to exploit the surrounding territory to the same extent as during the Late Roman period, see B. Sacco, *Storia di Pavia: Tradizione di Domenico Magnino*, Book IX. Capit. VI.

¹⁵³ For more details and the respective works by these historians that have contributed to the debate, see B. Ward-Perkins, ‘Continuists, Catastrophists and the Towns of Post-Roman Northern Italy,’ p. 160.

¹⁵⁴ Brescia represents the only known Lombard city to have a palace structure outside of Pavia. For information on the *curia ducis* at Brescia, see B. Ward-Perkins, *From*



The original unmodified version of this city map of Brescia can be found in G.P. Brogiolo, *Brescia Altomedievale: Urbanistica ed Edilizia dal IV al IX Secolo*, Documenti di Archeologia, No. 2 (Brescia, 1993) p. 87.

Classical Antiquity to the Middle Ages: Urban Public Building in Northern and Central Italy AD 300-850 (Oxford, 1984) p. 174.

residences.¹⁵⁵ Although catastrophists could certainly argue this arrangement reflects a clear break from the classical Roman *civitas*, the political and archaeological evidence below clearly shows that Brescia nevertheless maintained a level of vitality from the sixth to eighth centuries within the *regnum Langobardorum* and its local territories.

First of all, let us look at the third component of this ‘mixture of models’, the ecclesiastical architecture of the city and its importance to the impact of the Lombard aristocracy. The archaeological evidence concerning extramural burial continuing into the eighth century implies a degree of residence, perhaps in the form of *villae* or relatively large aristocratic residences,¹⁵⁶ in the suburban areas surrounding the vicinity of Brescia.¹⁵⁷ These suburban elite would have performed their duties as *dux*, *gastaldus*, *decanus*, *saltirius* or *sculdhais* in the administrative centre of Brescia,¹⁵⁸ although there is no literary or archaeological evidence that these offices were always simultaneously occupied. The Late Roman residences had gone through radical changes since the fifth century, as was the case with the evidence for a market being set up in the *domus*

¹⁵⁵ G.P. Brogiolo, ‘Towns, Forts and the Countryside: Archaeological Models for Northern Italy in the Early Lombard Period (AD 568-650),’ p. 316.

¹⁵⁶ Although there is evidence for some *villae* ceasing to be used in the seventh century, with the increased prosperity and stability of the Lombard kingdom in the first half of the eighth century, such large estates may have been established or reused. For the abandonment of these structures in the seventh century, see P. Delogu, ‘Spazi economici delle città nell’Italia dell’ VIII secolo,’ *Espacios Urbanos en el Occidente Mediterráneo (S. VI-VIII)*, p. 31.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid, p. 320, and G.P. Bognetti, ‘Brescia dei Goti e dei Longobardi,’ pp. 404-05.

¹⁵⁸ The summit of the Cidneo, with the ducal court being located there and controlling the eastern and western gates to the city, was where such individuals would have governed from, see G.P. Brogiolo, *Brescia Altomedievale: Urbanistica ed Edilizia dal IV al IX secolo*, pp. 88-89.

underneath Santa Giulia,¹⁵⁹ and trying to determine the levels of residency versus economic function of a structure can prove difficult.

Archaeologists have provided further evidence for the maintenance and expansion of ecclesiastical structures in Lombard Brescia, in an examination of the Santa Giulia/San Salvatore monastery.¹⁶⁰ From the fifth to seventh centuries there was a general sense of decline, with the erection of wooden huts taking place, but by the seventh to eighth centuries a royal program of construction on aqueducts, masonry, baths and hypocausts was established.¹⁶¹ Earlier in this chapter G.P. Brogiolo also referred to the grand edifices at Santa Giulia/San Salvatore of the years 753-62, which supports this view of enhanced eighth-century urban development. G.P. Bognetti adds an interesting example of eighth-century *imitatio imperii* in Brescia, when he discusses the various cameos and columns set in Byzantine style that are part of the material record for the Lombard duchy.¹⁶² The archaeological evidence for Lombard Brescia suggests an urban centre of primarily economic importance to the kingdom, which would account for its ruralization as a means of supplementing agricultural production, yet there was also a socio-political element to the success of Brescia as a *civitas* of the Lombard aristocracy. While the archaeological record suggests fragmentation into more isolated settlement areas from the fifth to seventh centuries, resulting in a relatively modest labour force compared to the

¹⁵⁹ Ibid, p. 74.

¹⁶⁰ Archaeologists have emphasized the reinnovation of traditional technologies, and the level of Late Roman and Byzantine influences in buildings such as San Salvatore, see G. P. Brogiolo and S. Gelichi, *La città nell'alto Medioevo italiano: Archeologia e storia*, p. 41.

¹⁶¹ R. Balzaretti, 'Cities and Markets in the Early Middle Ages,' pp. 122-23.

¹⁶² G.P. Bognetti, 'Brescia dei Goti e dei Longobardi,' pp. 440-45.



The old rotunda cathedral in Brescia. The structure contains a circular dome supported by eight large pillars in the interior dated to approximately the seventh century, and was supposedly built upon a previous Roman *domus* due to the mosaics uncovered beneath it. This photo was taken by the author in October, 2008.

Roman era,¹⁶³ there still continued a degree of foreign imports and economic vitality, represented by the presence of *sigillata africana* ceramics found at Brescia from the period covering 568 to around 650 AD.¹⁶⁴ Despite reduced overall social density and

¹⁶³ G.P Brogiolo and S. Gelichi, *La città nell'alto Medioevo italiano: Archeologia e storia*, pp. 31-32.

¹⁶⁴ G.P. Brogiolo et al., 'Associazioni ceramiche nei contesti della prima fase longobarda di Brescia,' in G.P. Brogiolo and S. Gelichi, edd., *Le Ceramiche Altomedievali (Fine VI-X secolo) in Italia Settentrionale: Produzione e Commerci* (Mantova, 1996) p. 15.

population, Brescia was able to still maintain a substantial degree of commercial activity in the seventh century. It should also be noted that up until around the middle of the seventh century, the style of pottery labeled as ‘ceramica longobarda’ had circulated as a high quality item, and utilized stylistic designs the Lombards have brought with them from Pannonia in the sixth century.¹⁶⁵ This not only represents a solid artistic expression and impact of the Lombards upon the cities of seventh-century Italy, where commercial exchanges of such goods largely took place, but also an example of past cultural identities being retained in the form of pottery.

Beginning with the ascension of Rothari to the throne in 636, the Duchy of Brescia maintained a major role in the politics of the royal court at Pavia.¹⁶⁶ The *dux* of Brescia also had the power at times to depose or interfere directly in the monarchy, as was the case with *dux* Alahis temporarily expelling Cunincpert (688-700) from power, although the latter was restored in 690 when Alahis lost his own base of support.¹⁶⁷ It is probable that in the eighth century, prior to the Carolingian conquest of 774, Brescia maintained its economic position of power, but with the court at Pavia becoming more assertive it defined itself in relation to the neighbouring duchies of the *regnum Langobardorum*. The written and archaeological evidence has demonstrated that there was a significant influence upon the urban environment of Brescia, and that it was of continued import to the Lombard monarch and his retainers.

¹⁶⁵ C. Wickham, ‘Early medieval archaeology in Italy: the last twenty years,’ *Archeologia Medievale*, XXVI (Florence, 1999) p. 10, and for Lombard pottery found at Milan, see E.A. Arslan and D. Caporusso, ‘I rinvenimenti archeologici degli scavi MM3 nel contesto storico di Milano,’ in D. Caporusso ed., *Scavi MM3 anni 1982-1990* (Milan, 1992) p. 357.

¹⁶⁶ N. Christie, *The Lombards: The Ancient Longobards*, p. 95.

¹⁶⁷ Paolo Diacono, *Storia dei Longobardi*, V. 38-41.

The site of the monastery of San Salvatore, where Santa Giulia and the museum are now located, has been one of the most important archaeological structures and areas of activity in Brescia since excavations concerning the early medieval period began in 1980.¹⁶⁸ Five different phases of the site have been identified thus far and are as follows: First, over the course of the fifth century to first half of the sixth century the previous Late Roman *domus* was either abandoned or declined in its use. Second, a fire swept this section of the city in the mid-sixth century, which also damaged the *domus* and its structural integrity. Third, from around the end of the sixth century through the first half of the seventh-century houses and settlements increased in the area, which could possibly be due to the availability of open space following the earlier fire.¹⁶⁹ Fourth, in the latter half of the seventh century a church was built at the site and the area was reorganized. Finally, in 753 Desiderius founded San Salvatore as a female monastery with his daughter Anselperga serving as the first abbess.¹⁷⁰ The monastery then went on to continued royal privilege and prosperity under the Carolingians following the eighth century, and it was not until the eighteenth century that its capacity as a monastery was brought to a halt by the French invasion of Lombardy.

¹⁶⁸ For the earliest phase of early medieval archaeology at Brescia, see G.P. Brogiolo, *Brescia Altomedievale: Urbanistica ed Edilizia dal IV al IX secolo*, pp. 17-20.

¹⁶⁹ The locally driven agricultural economy of Brescia under the Lombards has been argued by archaeologists, and could explain the repopulation of the environment to meet local demand, see G.P. Brogiolo and S. Gelichi, *La città nell'alto Medioevo italiano: Archeologia e storia*, p. 160.

¹⁷⁰ The five phases are listed and discussed in more detail in G.P. Brogiolo, 'Trasformazioni urbanistiche nella Brescia longobarda: dalle capanne in legno al monastero regio di San Salvatore,' in C. Stella and G. Brentegani edd., *Santa Giulia di Brescia: Archeologia, arte, storia di un monastero regio dai Longobardi al Barbarossa* (Brescia, 1992) p. 180.

The above points regarding the area of San Salvatore strongly reflect the level of urban revitalization which took place in Brescia during the seventh century and onward. The local administration and clergy demonstrated the ability to reorganize and plan sections of the city, in the case of San Salvatore covering approximately the space of two Roman *insulae* or blocks,¹⁷¹ and the desire of the aristocracy to play a role in not only establishing urban or suburban structures as patrons, but also to place their own family members in positions of authority to enhance their level of socio-political control. In the ninth century under Carolingian rule, the construction of new ecclesiastical and urban buildings continued at Brescia, for example, the founding of a *xenodochium* for poor travelers in 877 by the monk Gisla.¹⁷² It is interesting that the establishment of such a structure occurred much earlier in Merida, but when one looks at the chronology for the ecclesiastical building programmes in each city it makes sense. Merida experienced strong urban vitality from the late sixth to seventh centuries, and Brescia followed suit in the late seventh century to eighth century, and the construction of these types of buildings coincided with the overall social and economic conditions of the period.

The local administration in early medieval Brescia did not limit itself to the construction of new ecclesiastical buildings or the reuse of previous Late Roman structures, as it was also capable of maintaining some of the basic infrastructure of the city. An example of this can be seen in the continued use of both the Late Roman fortifications, and the maintenance of the local aqueduct well into the eighth century. “Non vi è dubbio invece che dell’acquedotto romano rimaneva in funzione il condotto di

¹⁷¹ Ibid, p. 179.

¹⁷² C. Zani, ‘Lo xenodochio di Santa Giulia,’ *Santa Giulia di Brescia: Archeologia, arte, storia di un monastero regio dai Longobardi al Barbarossa*, p. 245.

adduzione almeno sino alla piazzetta S. Giuseppe, dove nel 767, come si è visto, alimentava due molini.”¹⁷³ Even though the size of the Lombard walls contracted to about one-third those of the Late Roman period,¹⁷⁴ they nonetheless utilized and retained the pre-existing ramparts and overall layout of the urban area. Brescia based on the archaeological evidence over the last thirty years, was a Lombard centre that endured a degree of hardship in the sixth century due to the conditions within the Italian peninsula at the time, but it still managed to maintain its integral urban character and reemerge with a relatively high level of vitality from the mid-seventh century onward.

The relative strength of Brescia in relation to the other Lombard cities of northern Italy has recently raised the question as to why it was not used as a *sedes regia* for the Lombard kings for any substantial duration of time. Dominika Dlugosz illustrated seven main points that supported Brescia as a potential capital of the kingdom, which focused on the existence of a castrum for defence, continued infrastructure such as roads and aqueducts, residential areas in the city and suburbs, a mint capable of producing coinage, artistic output visible at San Salvatore, and an appealing natural environment for royalty and the elite.¹⁷⁵ Based on the above points it is difficult to tell why Brescia was not utilized in this capacity, but it is the opinion of the author that Pavia was selected largely due to its positioning on the Ticino waterway, its less explicitly ‘Roman’ heritage when compared with that of *Brixia*, and the possibility that the Lombards were following the lead of the previous Ostrogothic rulers who had attempted to govern from Pavia in the

¹⁷³ G.P. Brogiolo, *Brescia Altomedievale: Urbanistica ed Edilizia dal IV al IX secolo*, p. 86.

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 86.

¹⁷⁵ D. Dlugosz, ‘Perché Brescia non è Divenuta la Capitale del Regno Longobardo?’ pp. 11-14.

540's.¹⁷⁶ Whatever the case may have been, it is clear that Brescia was one of the predominant urban centres within the *regnum langobardorum* for socio-political, economic, ecclesiastical and commercial activity, and that the local aristocracy had a great level of influence in its urban development,¹⁷⁷ while they continued to maintain an overall layout and structure reminiscent of the Late Roman era.

Cividale del Friuli, a frontier city of the Lombards

In this third case study the methodology will be slightly different, in that there are no direct equivalents for Visigothic Reccopolis, that is to say, the creation of an entirely new city by an early medieval kingdom, with which to compare in the *regnum Langobardorum*. Therefore the case of Cividale del Friuli will be used for the reason that, although it was not created by the Lombards, it was their initial capital upon arriving in Italy; it served as a constant alternative power base to the court at Pavia, at least until the eighth century AD, much like Reccopolis was originally intended to in the Visigothic kingdom. The rise of *Forum Iulii* to a place of prominence largely coincided with the demise of the previous urban centre in the region, when Aquileia was first ravaged by the Huns in 452 and then again by the Lombard forces in 590.¹⁷⁸ “Friuli had been

¹⁷⁶ For the Ostrogoths using Pavia as capital following the loss of Rome and Ravenna to the Byzantine forces, as well as the Lombards choosing it for this reasons, see P. Majocchi, ‘The politics of memory of the Lombard monarchy in Pavia, the kingdom’s capital,’ pp. 87-88.

¹⁷⁷ As G.P. Brogiolo has rightly asserted, we may be unable to determine the overall ethnic composition of Lombard Brescia, but we can prove their presence and impact due to the transformation of the damaged city from the sixth century into a revitalized urban centre in the seventh and eighth centuries, albeit using poorer technology at times and ruralizing sections of the space, see G.P. Brogiolo, *Brescia Altomedievale: Urbanistica ed Edilizia dal IV al IX secolo*, pp. 95-96.

¹⁷⁸ Paolo Diacono, *Storia dei Longobardi*, II. 14.

established as a frontier duchy very early during the Lombard conquest of northern Italy and served as a buffer against further invasions of Italy by other Germanic peoples or invasions by Slavs or Avars; it also tended to neutralize the northward thrust of Byzantine power exerted from the exarchate of Ravenna.”¹⁷⁹ The strategic importance of Cividale, as it would gradually become known, is made quite apparent by modern historians who emphasize the natural defences of the site, although the exact date of the fortifications erected against the Avars is hard to tell with any precision.¹⁸⁰ The role of Cividale as the Lombard line of defence was to be of continued significance both to the defensive capabilities of the kingdom and also to its political developments.

As we saw earlier in this chapter Paul the Deacon claimed Alboin had appointed his grandson Gisulf (568-90) as the first *dux* of Friuli in 568, although it is also possible that the brother of Alboin, one Grasulf (568-84), was first appointed upon their arrival in Italy; scholars have viewed this Grasulf as having a high level of *romanitas* due to his level of correspondence with the exarchate at Ravenna.¹⁸¹ If this were the case, such pro-Roman tendencies were not restricted to Grasulf alone, and the *duces* of Friuli, based at the new capital of Cividale, would regularly assert a level of autonomy from the court at Pavia, not always in favour of their Papal or Byzantine contemporaries. “The dukes of Friuli repeatedly changed sides, as did those of Spoleto; Ariulf, one of Pope Gregory’s staunchest adversaries, had fought for the Romans in Persia before.”¹⁸² An example of Friuli trying without success to assert itself independently of the *regnum Langobardorum*

¹⁷⁹ K. Fischer-Drew, *Law and Society in Early Medieval Europe*, p. 438.

¹⁸⁰ M. Brozzi, *Il Ducato Longobardo del Friuli* (Cividale, 1981) p. 19.

¹⁸¹ N. Everett, *Literacy in Lombard Italy, c. 568-774*, p. 69.

¹⁸² W. Pohl, ‘The Empire and the Lombards: treaties and negotiations in the sixth century,’ p. 99.

can be seen in the conflict between King Agilulf and the *dux* Gisulf II (590-610) which ended in the reconciliation of Friuli to the crown in around 603. Paul the Deacon writes that: *Hoc anno Gaidoaldus dux de Tridento et Gisulfus de Foroiuli, cum antea a Regis Agilulfi societate discordarent, ab eo in pace recepti sunt.*¹⁸³ This *dux* Gisulf II (591-611) was later killed in battle against the Avars, apparently while putting up a valiant defence; unfortunately Cividale was devastated following the successful Avar raid.¹⁸⁴ This pattern of rebellion followed by invasion of Friuli was repeated half a century later, although this time the raiding would be led by the Slavs rather than Avars.¹⁸⁵ The constant challenges to the frontier in the seventh century meant that the Lombard *duces* of Friuli constantly had to call upon their own local resources, and this must have reinforced notions of autonomous and localized rule.

Although the Slavs were finally defeated by the *dux* Wectari (666-78) at the beginning of his command in Friuli,¹⁸⁶ following the suppression of the revolt led by the previous *duces* Lupus (663-66) and his son Arnefrit (666) by Grimoald (662-77),¹⁸⁷ the notion of independence continued in that Friuli was the only duchy to continue a form of

¹⁸³ Paul the Deacon, *Storia dei Longobardi*, IV. 27. 1-3.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid, IV. 37., also see N. Christie, *The Lombards: The Ancient Longobards*, pp. 93-94, and G.P. Brogiolo, 'Urbanistica di Cividale Longobarda,' *Paolo Diacono e il Friuli Altomedievale (secc. VI-X)*, (Spoleto, 2001) p. 363.

¹⁸⁵ A discussion of the rebellion of *dux* Lupus (663-66) against Grimoald (662-77), along with the political circumstances surrounding the revolt, see N. Christie, *The Lombards: The Ancient Longobards*, pp. 97-98.

¹⁸⁶ There is also evidence for Wectari, along with *dux* Ago, having issued their own regional coinage, which reflects the level of authority invested in the *dux* of Friuli, see E.A. Arslan and S. Uggé, 'Ritrovamenti dalla Pieve di San Giovanni di Mediliano (AL),' in S. Gelichi ed., *L'Italia Alto-Medievale tra Archeologia e Storia; Studi in ricordo di Ottone D'Assia* (Padua, 2005) p. 40.

¹⁸⁷ For the victory of Wectari over the Slavs, see Paul the Deacon, *Storia dei Longobardi*, V. 23.

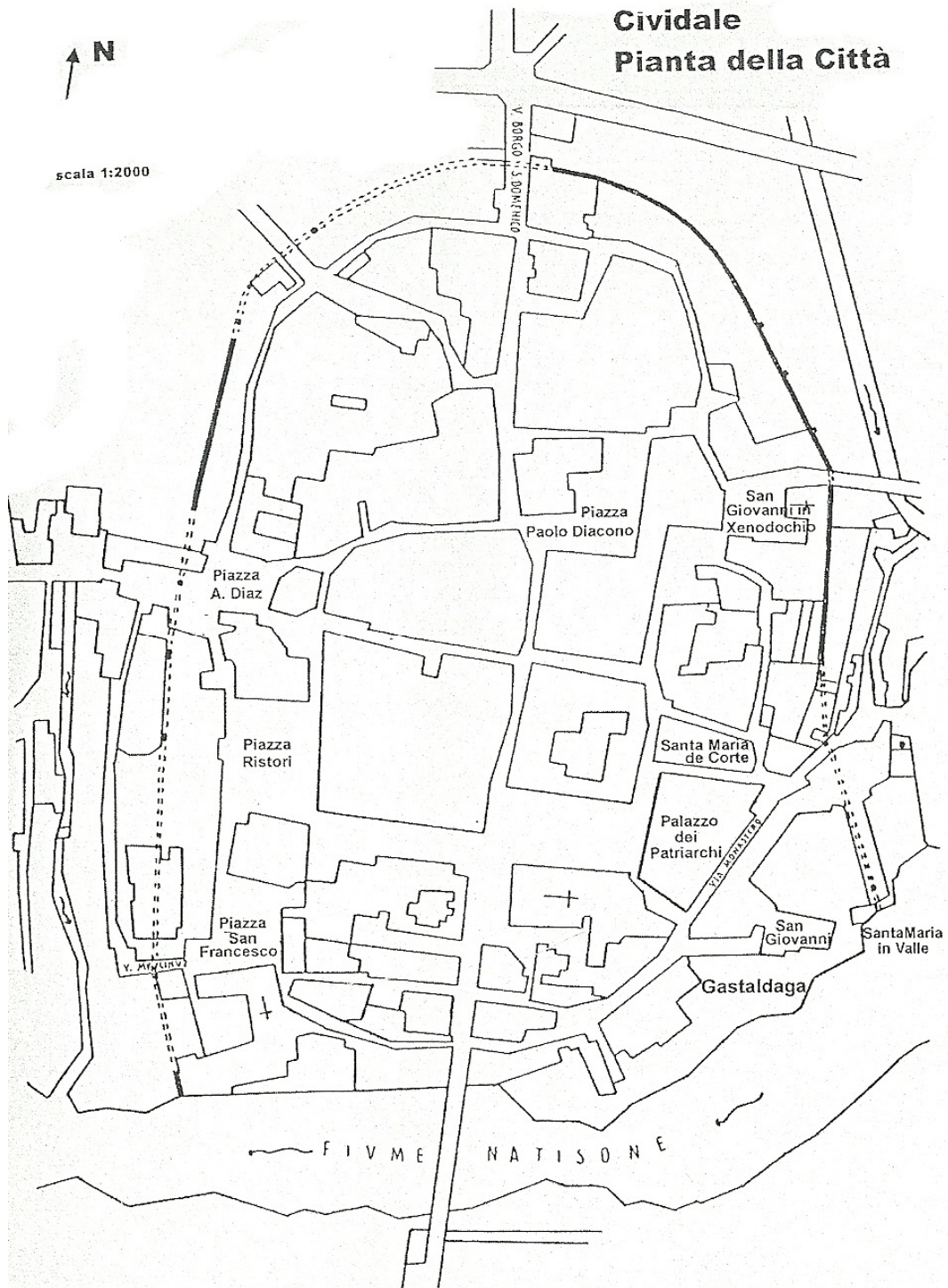
hereditary succession apart from that of Benevento to the South.¹⁸⁸ Indeed, Stefano Gasparri in *I Duchi Longobardi* also gives a separate subsection specifically for the *duces* of Friuli, as part of the *regnum Langobardorum* but at the same time uniquely autonomous.¹⁸⁹ When the literary and archaeological materials are examined as they have been above, it paints a picture of Cividale del Friuli as a major point of contention between the local aristocracy, the royal court at Pavia, as well as outside raiding parties, or perhaps settlers such as the Avars or Slavs, and at times playing a key political role at times on the side of the Byzantine exarchate. It is logical that the local authorities would seek a level of autonomy, being a peripheral and strategic duchy of the kingdom, while not displaying quite the same extent of conflict with Pavia as to be found in its Spoletan or Beneventan counterparts. This is not to say that there was not a royal presence in Cividale, as the *gastaldaga* has been advocated as one of the three main seats of power in the city alongside the ducal court and episcopal palace,¹⁹⁰ but its local environment required a more active command and administration from the *dux* when compared to the locations of Brescia or Pavia.

In the eighth century Cividale served as a *civitas* from which the kings were elected, namely Ratchis (744-49) and Aistulf (749-56), much as Brescia had in the seventh century. The impact of the Lombard aristocracy upon Friuli lies in the enhancement of the site as a major defensive point on the frontier, with a custom of hereditary inheritance of the ducal command, while maintaining close ties with the

¹⁸⁸ C. Wickham, *Early Medieval Italy: Central Power and Local Society 400-1000*, p. 42.

¹⁸⁹ The prosopography of the Lombard *duces* is divided into four sections, of which Friuli is the second. See S. Gasparri, *I Duchi Longobardi*, pp. 45-100.

¹⁹⁰ For information of the *gastaldaga* complex see G.P. Brogiolo, 'Urbanistica di Cividale Longobarda,' p. 384.



For the expanded version of this map, see G.P. Brogiolo, 'Urbanistica di Cividale Longobarda,' in *Paolo Diacono e il Friuli altomedievale (secc. VI-X)*, *Atti del XIV congresso internazionale di studi sull'alto Medioevo* (Spoleto, 2001) p. 386.

monarchy.¹⁹¹ The eighth-century ritual burials and the types of goods uncovered, along with the works of individuals such as Paul the Deacon, helped to foster a sense of local ‘Cividalesi’ identity during the Lombard period.¹⁹² Like the cases of Pavia and Brescia, buildings such as Santa Maria in Valle showed signs of reapplication of traditional technology using poorer quality materials, with a high level of Byzantine influence and fusion with local styles.¹⁹³ At the same time the traditional signs of architecture in Cividale started to fade away in the third quarter of the eighth century in a similar fashion to what was taking place at Pavia.¹⁹⁴ Although the internal structures of Cividale were undergoing modification and reorganization, the overall layout of the city with regards to its walls and streets remained largely unaltered, again along the same lines as the previous two Lombard cases, as well as the Visigothic cases of Toledo and Merida.

G.P. Brogiolo in the last decade has stated that with careful analysis it is possible to see the street plans of Cividale stretching from its foundation as *Forum Iulii* in the Late Republic right through to the eleventh century, albeit with varying degrees of modification.¹⁹⁵ The local administration and elite, like those in the capital and at Brescia, understood enough about urban organization to restructure the focal points and sections of their city while operating within the overall framework established during the

¹⁹¹ The suburban population of early medieval Cividale was relatively low compared with other centres, and the aristocracy was distributed across Friuli under ducal authority, see *Ibid*, p. 376.

¹⁹² C. La Rocca, ‘L’archeologia e i Longobardi in Italia Orientamenti, Metodi, linee di ricerca,’ *Il Regno dei Longobardi in Italia: Archeologia, società e istituzioni*, p. 184, and for more information on eighth-century ritual burials see C. La Rocca, ‘Tesori terrestri, tesori celesti,’ in S. Gelichi and C. La Rocca edd., *Tesori: Forme di accumulazione della ricchezza nell’alto medioevo (secoli V-XI)*, (Rome, 2004) p. 123.

¹⁹³ G. P. Brogiolo and S. Gelichi, *La città nell’alto Medioevo italiano: Archeologia e storia*, p. 41.

¹⁹⁴ *Ibid*, p. 137.

¹⁹⁵ G.P. Brogiolo, ‘Urbanistica di Cividale Longobarda,’ p. 359.

preceding Roman periods. The building of a *xenodochium* in the southeast area of the city near Sant Giovanni also serves as an indication of the urban development taking place within the *regnum Langobardorum* during the late-seventh to eighth centuries.¹⁹⁶ Cividale followed the general pattern of sixth to seventh century urban stagnation due to the conflicts and instability of the kingdom during that particular period, with a higher degree of vitality resuming in the eighth century. It also developed a more active connection to the court at Pavia, with the election of several of its *duces* to the kingship.

Conclusion: Formation of new socio-political structures

At the beginning of this chapter an introduction to some of the challenges one faces when examining the literary evidence for early medieval Italy was provided, and this served to highlight some of the key chronological and methodological problems that must be acknowledged in any study of Lombard ethnicity and their impact upon the Italian peninsula from the sixth to eighth centuries AD. It incorporated an array of different sources, including chronicles, charters, numismatics, and legal codes, while it also looked at some of the modern debates or schools of thought which historians have recently been promoting regarding Italy at the time of the Lombards. Following this, a summary of the archaeological materials available was put forth, and it discussed issues of chronology, terminology and interpretation of finds.

¹⁹⁶ Ibid, p. 367, and for some gold coins uncovered from the necropolis at Sant Giovanni which show some possible 'Germanic' influences in their design, see E.A. Arslan, 'La Monetazione,' *Magistra Barbaritas: I Barbari in Italia*, p. 426. Also, for some examples of Ostrogothic, Byzantine and Lombard coinage found at Brescia, see E.A. Arslan, 'La moneta in Rame nell'Italia Longobarda,' in J.M. Carrié and R. Lizzi Testa ed., *Humana Sapit: Études d'Antiquité tardive Offertes à Lellia Cracco Ruggini* (Turnhout, 2002) p. 293.

The problem of ethnicity in the broader context was examined, in order to try and emphasize the need to avoid simple labeling of peoples as either ‘Roman’ or ‘Lombard’, and to demonstrate the complexity of the situation that existed in northern Italy throughout the early medieval era. The final three sections of the chapter were based on the case studies: First, that of Pavia, the capital city and political heart of the *regnum Langobardorum* which continued to display simultaneously the continuity of Late Roman systems and also the innovation of new methods of administration. Second, that of Brescia, a major economic, political and administrative *civitas*, which provided the kingdom with consistent support. Finally the case of Cividale del Friuli, a frontier city of primarily strategic importance, which nonetheless developed a strong sense of autonomy while remaining generally connected to, and occasionally coming into direct competition with, the capital at Pavia.

What does all of this tell us about the impact of the Lombard elite upon northern Italy following their flight from the Avar threat and migration into Italy in the centuries following 568? It is clear that despite the fragmentary political context of Italy at the time, with several ‘Roman’ pressures influencing the Lombards during their struggle for power, a factor which might explain those areas of Lombard society and government which reflected ‘Roman’ influences, the Lombard aristocracy nonetheless managed to maintain a sense of identity in relation to the other inhabitants of the *regnum Langobardorum*. Ironically it was largely this fragmentary context within the kingdom itself that facilitated and reinforced such concepts of Lombard identity at the local levels under the various *duces*, and, during the eighth century at least, under the kings who had asserted themselves as the dominant Lombard authority in Italy.

A striking parallel, and a point that may indicate a continued sense of ‘Germanic’ background even as far as the eighth century, is in the fact that both the term *Gothi* and *liberi langobardi* come to refer to those individuals of social freedom and economic self sufficiency who were able to serve in the *exercitus* of the respective kingdom. Given the different contexts which the Visigothic and Lombard realms established themselves from the sixth century onwards, it is interesting that both traditionally ethnic labels should evolve into one which represents the military class as a whole rather than the original ethnicity of a given soldier. However, this is most likely just a direct reflection of these groups establishing themselves as the new landed aristocracy of the region, which was in turn responsible for military affairs and localized defences. With such control over the martial sphere, it is logical along the lines of *traditionskern* theory that they would want to maintain their own identities, and also promote them when it was useful to do so.

There is one final point regarding the case of the Lombard kingdom that should be emphasized as an example of their distinct approach to settlement in the post-Roman West and the cultural exchanges which followed, the role of the Lombard king as a crucial factor in the above processes. It is interesting that a confederation of peoples that had gone through a decade-long interregnum in the latter sixth century then demonstrates over the course of the seventh to eighth centuries the establishment of a kingdom in which the reestablished monarch played a vital role to both the central and local administration, as well as to the construction of new identities through various means of cultural interactions. Following the restoration of the monarchy in 584, the Lombard king gained tangible power over the local aristocracy due to the terms of the agreement discussed earlier. By the eighth century royal resources had grown much larger than

those of the local elite, and royal agents such as the *gastaldi* represented Pavia within the local urban administrations of its territories.

Unlike the Visigothic or Merovingian rulers who had a history serving the Late Roman Empire as *foederati* and were to an extent familiar with the political dynamics of the West, the sixth century Lombard kings realized they needed to focus first and foremost on consolidating their own leadership over a fragmentary group of peoples, and were even willing to serve as tributaries to the Franks in order to free up resources to pursue this agenda. This is not to say that the Visigothic and Merovingian rulers were absolute in their government or completely secure in the sixth century either, but they had not come as close to being divided and conquered as the Lombards during their interregnum of 574 to 584 and therefore lacked the sense of urgency or fragility which Authari and his successors must have experienced.

With respect to the cultural exchanges taking place between Lombard and Roman subjects of the crown, the impetus for the latter to adopt the ethnic identity and values of the king was stronger in early medieval Italy than in its Visigothic or Frankish counterparts. This was largely due to the repercussions of the Gothic Wars that had devastated the socio-political fabric of the peninsula in the sixth century. Members of the Roman aristocracy, and presumably the lower levels of society as well, were more reliant upon the Lombard king for their security than the Hispano-Roman or Gallo-Roman equivalents outside of Italy, and did not maintain the same degree of local autonomy. A loss of Roman values must have accompanied this development to some extent, although as we have seen such deeply rooted identities did not disappear entirely and exceptions did exist. The question is perhaps not so much how the new ruling elite impacted the

former Late Roman society in Visigothic Spain or Lombard Italy, but rather to what extent were the Roman inhabitants under pressure to adopt new cultural identities with the establishment of these new regional polities.

The capital of Pavia followed a similar sequence of developments to its Visigothic counterpart in Toledo. Whereas the latter *sede regia* asserted its authority in the sixth and seventh centuries, particularly following the reigns of Leovigild and Reccared, the former city emerged from a period of relative decline during the late-seventh century through to the first half of the eighth century. Pavia in the early medieval period acted as the main urban hub in the larger Lombard network, largely due to the royal administrative structure that had become firmly established there, and also due to its strong commercial and geographic location on the Ticino river and adjacent waterways connecting the region. The level of Lombard influence on the urban environment is quite evident in this case, due to its direct affiliation with the ruling elite during the seventh and eighth centuries. The construction of new structures, while often borrowing heavily from Byzantine or Late Roman stylistic traditions and being contained within the preexisting Late Roman urban organization, reflected the ambition of the Lombard kings to modify the urban environment when necessary to suit their own immediate needs. As the location for the annual assemblies and for the mustering of the *exercitus* and respective members of society, the capital of Pavia was a consistent cultural point of reference for the Lombards; the *duces* and other members of the elite took their views of Pavia home with them following such meetings and tried to recreate the urban development of the capital in order to boost their own sense of local prestige and authority. It was not until the element of the Carolingian conquest of 774 was introduced into the equation that the

situation and urban dynamic in the region of Lombardia began to shift in significant ways, reflecting the greatly altered socio-political structure in what had previously been an independent *regnum* of the early medieval period.

The analysis of cultural exchange, aristocratic influence, and urban development for the sixth to eighth centuries in Lombard Brescia revealed some of the same trends witnessed in the case of Pavia. The city experienced the same relative decline of the sixth century as the capital, and began to stabilize over the course of the seventh century, with several kings being elected who had previously served as the *dux* of Brescia. The fact that the Lombard aristocracy and population viewed these individuals as worthy of the throne would have been connected to the prosperity and level of urban development at Brescia itself, since it was a reflection and outward display of the local wealth, prestige and competence in governing not only an urban area, but the *territorium* which relied upon it as well. Structures such as San Salvatore erected in the eighth century showed high levels of Byzantine and Late Roman influences along the same lines as those discussed in Pavia, but at the same time lower grade technologies were applied in the construction of some buildings, with archaeological evidence for the recycling of Late Roman materials taking place as well. The case of Lombard Brescia is a clear representation of an early medieval city which the local aristocracy restructured internally when required, while at the same time displaying the desire to keep the larger Late Roman framework left in place when possible. As was mentioned in the earlier section, Brescia met several of the crucial criteria for operating as the capital of the Lombard kingdom in the seventh to eighth centuries, and had the royal court chosen to reside there

permanently it may have been able to operate with a moderate if not high degree of political and economic success.

In the examination of early medieval Cividale del Friuli it was made apparent that as a peripheral bastion of Lombard urbanism, particularly during the sixth and seventh centuries, it was even more reliant upon the overall stability of the realm than Brescia or other centres less exposed to the constant threat of invasion or warfare. With the increased solidarity and regional stability brought about during the reign of Liutprand for the kingdom as a whole, the local aristocracy of eighth-century Cividale and Friuli as a whole was able to dedicate more wealth and time to the boosting of urban development and construction. This is reflected in the number of local *duces* elected to the kingship in this period. Cividale displayed the same trend as Pavia and Brescia in applying Byzantine and Late Roman architectural styles to its eighth century ecclesiastical construction, such as at Santa Maria in Valle, while at the same time using lower quality technology and materials from previous structures. Despite such commonalities, there developed over the period a sense of local ‘Cividalesi’ identity due to its geographic position and unique circumstances, but this did not undermine or necessarily contradict an overall identification with the *regnum* or being part of a greater ‘Lombard’ whole. It serves as an example of the fluid and dynamic nature of early medieval identity formation, and illustrates precisely why trying to attribute ethnic labels using concrete terms is often flawed and inaccurate.

The study of the literature and archaeology surrounding the *regnum Langobardorum*, followed by the examination of three particular case studies of Pavia, Brescia and Cividale del Friuli, has revealed certain aspects of the early medieval

kingdom and its inhabitants, particularly the local aristocracies who administered over the cities. Once the political dynamic of northern Italy began to finally stabilize in the seventh century, albeit remaining a delicate balance between Rome, the exarchate of Ravenna, and the Lombard kingdom, the newly established elite started to play a more active role in shaping the urban environment. This was largely to increase their own local standing and prestige, and how the kingdom perceived their abilities in administration, but also for commercial and ecclesiastical purposes as well. In the decades of the eighth century prior to Carolingian conquest the situation continued to develop in favour of the Lombard state, and as the kingdom experienced a period of growth and enhanced stability, the cities and their environs reflected this through increased construction and patronage from the local aristocracy. When the independence of the *regnum Langobardorum* finally came to an end in 774, the Carolingians took control of a well developed, highly urbanized, and centrally administered kingdom, at least by early medieval standards in the West when compared with its Visigothic and Lombard counterparts.

The Merovingian Kingdoms, c. 700 AD



Based on the map in I. Wood, *The Merovingian Kingdoms, 450-751*, (London, 1994) pp. 370-371.

Chapter 5. The Frankish Kingdoms of the Merovingians, 507-751 AD

Any study which aims to compare and contrast Merovingian rule with that of its contemporaries must acknowledge one major difference in its system of governance. The Merovingian dynasty was unique in its ability to divide up the financial and territorial resources of the realm into independent kingdoms, while at the same time maintaining a degree of Frankish solidarity and overall cohesion.¹ Following the death of Clovis I (481-511) the territories which had been conquered under his rule were divided amongst his four sons: Theuderic I (511-33), Chlodomer (511-24), Childebert I (511-58), and Chlothar I (511-61), who established themselves at Rheims, Orléans, Paris and Soissons respectively.² This distribution of territory also occurred with the death of Chlothar I in 561,³ and further reinforced the concept of the *Teilreiche*, that is, the Merovingian kingdoms of Neustria, Austrasia and Burgundy which were constituent parts of the overall Frankish realm.

The division did not always go smoothly or without conflict, as the role of the *civitates* in the financial interests of the Merovingian kings was of central importance, nor

¹ Indeed the competition of the Merovingian kingdoms over Romanized southern Gaul has been advocated as the key reason for the cohesion of the Frankish realm, see M. Innes, *Introduction to Early Medieval Western Europe, 300-900: The Sword, the Plough and the Book* (London and NY, 2007) p. 278.

² I. Wood, *The Merovingian Kingdoms, 450-751* (London and NY, 1994) p. 50., and for the 'equal distribution of land' see Gregory, *Libri Historiarum X*, III. 1.

³ I. Wood, *The Merovingian Kingdoms, 450-751*, p. 56, R. Collins, 'The western kingdoms' in *The Cambridge Ancient History, Vol. XIV: Late Antiquity: Empire and Successors, A.D. 425-600* (Cambridge, 2000) p. 120, and Gregory of Tours, *Libri Historiarum X*, IV. 22.

was the division of the Frankish territory necessarily expected upon the death of the king. In fact, it was often the case that the successors would aim to prevent such an outcome upon the death of the previous ruler. Despite the volatile nature of succession, the competition between the *Teilreiche* was an important factor that contributed to both the relative success of the Merovingian dynasty in asserting itself for more than two centuries as the ruling elite, and also to the subsequent rise of the Pippinid or Carolingian dynasty in the late seventh through eighth centuries.⁴ While use of the Roman regional term ‘Gaul’ has continued to be applied to the Merovingian territories by both contemporaries and modern historians alike,⁵ there nevertheless emerged from the late sixth or early seventh centuries onward a strong identification between the Frankish aristocracy and the

⁴ The creation of the *maior domus* was largely a reaction to the need for localized government in the Frankish kingdoms, and the Pippinid dynasty with their power base in the mid-Meuse region would use this office, along with their patronage of monasteries and displays of wealth, to eventually overthrow the last Merovingian king Childeric III (743-51). For the supposed creation of the office by Chlothar II in an assembly at Paris in 614 see M. Innes, *Introduction to Early Medieval Western Europe, 300-900: The Sword, the Plough and the Book*, p. 286, and for examples of Pippinid patronage of monasteries see H.J. Hummer, *Politics and Power in Early Medieval Europe: Alsace and the Frankish Realm, 600-1000* (Cambridge, 2005) pp. 28-32, *Vita Sanctae Gertrudis et Quae Facta Sunt post Discessum Beate Getrudis Abbatisse*, B. Krusch, ed., *MGH, SRM*, II (Hanover, 1888) pp. 447-74, and also P. Riché, ‘Le cadre politique et culturel,’ in *L’Île-de-France de Clovis à Hugues Capet : du Ve siècle au Xe siècle* (exposition), (Île-de-France, 1993) p. 35.

⁵ Gregory of Tours demonstrates his preferred usage of Roman terminology when discussing the appearance of a prodigy near the fortress of Tauredunum he writes: *Igitur in Galliis magnum prodigium de Tauredune castro apparuit*, see Gregory of Tours, *Libri Historiarum X*, B. Krusch and W. Levison, ed., *MGH, SRM*, I, 1 (Hanover, 1951) IV. 31. 1-2. p. 166. For examples of a modern authors, see P. Périn., ‘Settlements and Cemeteries in Merovingian Gaul,’ *The World of Gregory of Tours*, pp. 67-99, and also E. James, *The Merovingian archaeology of south-west Gaul* (Oxford, 1977), and for a thorough bibliography on modern material, see M. Kazanski, *Bibliographie Mérovingienne*, II, 1980-1996 (Paris, 1996)

land or *civitates* which they governed.⁶ It is for this reason that the name *Francia* will be used with preference to that of ‘Gaul’ when discussing the developments within the Merovingian kingdoms during this particular period.

Portrayals of cultural interaction in the sources for *Francia*

We have already established the inherent ecclesiastical agenda and biases that were largely products of the contexts in which the authors were producing their works, and will not be focusing upon evidence for the Franks as a tribe or confederation of peoples prior to the reign of Clovis I, although there are sources which do provide some illumination on the matter of cultural exchange and will be incorporated accordingly.⁷

“The Franks were welded together as a people by Childeric and his son Clovis; their name and their sense of ethnic identity may, in part, have been imposed upon them by

⁶ A good example of this notion of Frankish territorial identity is presented by Fredegar in his discussion of the accession of Chlothar II (584-629) to the kingship of the ‘entire Frankish kingdom’. Although the regional identities of the Neustrians and Austrasians are clearly demonstrated throughout his chronicle, there is a clear notion of *Francia* beginning to emerge. See Fredegar, *The Fourth Book of the Chronicle of Fredegar with Its Continuations*, J. M. Wallace-Hadrill, trans., (London and NY, 1960) p. 35, and the Latin edition in Fredegar, *Fredegarii et aliorum chronica*, B. Krusch, ed., *MGH, SRM*, II, (Hanover, 1888) IV. 42. 8-11. p. 142.

⁷ Further information regarding the pre-sixth century Franks, and their level of cultural exchange with the Eastern and Western Roman Empires, see G. Halsall, ‘Childeric’s Grave, Clovis’ Succession and the Origins of the Merovingian Kingdom,’ in R.W. Mathisen and D. Shanzer, ed., *Society and Culture in Late Antique Gaul: Revisiting the Sources* (Aldershot, 2001) pp. 116-134., E. James, *The Franks* (Oxford, 1988) pp. 51-79, Mamertinus, *XII panegyrici latini*, R.A.B. Mynors, ed., (Oxford, 1964), *Pan. Maximiano*. VII. 2., S. Muhlberger, *Prosper, Hydatius and the Gallic Chronicler of 452* (Leeds, 1990), L. Musset, *The Germanic Invasions: The Making of Europe AD 400-600*, C. James, and E. James, trans., (London, 1975) pp. 74-75, and finally J.M. Wallace-Hadrill, *The Long Haired Kings and Other Studies in Frankish History* (London, 1962) p. 153.

those Romans among whom they lived.”⁸ In building upon the earlier twentieth-century work of Godefroid Kurth entitled ‘*Francia et Francus*’,⁹ Edward James goes on to clearly illustrate three main stages of Frankish self perception and identity,¹⁰ and it is the latter two, particularly the third stage, which we will be focusing upon.

Following the reign of Clovis I, the cultural exchange between Gallo-Roman and Frankish sectors of society becomes more apparent and traceable. It is for this reason that the sixth century has been selected as the starting point of study in terms of chronology. This is not to say that there was no significant social interaction between Gallo-Roman inhabitants and Frankish settlers prior to the sixth century.¹¹ Indeed, the Franks had served in the Late Roman armies as *foederati* and had held high Roman offices since the fourth century,¹² and there is also evidence for Frankish mercantile activity in that period, as they had been established in Cologne as traders during the same period.¹³ This is one area where the Merovingians have a degree of exposure to Roman cultural practices

⁸ E. James, ‘Gregory of Tours and the Franks,’ in A.C. Murray, ed., *After Rome’s Fall: Narrators and Sources of Early Medieval History. Essays Presented to Walter Goffart* (Toronto, 1998) pp. 58-59.

⁹ G. Kurth, ‘*Francia et Francus*’ in *Études franques*, Vol. 1 (Paris, 1919) pp. 68–137.

¹⁰ The three stages are that of the Franks as a ‘barbarian’ people in the fifth century, the Franks as free citizens of Clovis’ kingdom despite ethnicity, and finally, following Vouillé in 507, a free citizen of Gaul. See E. James, ‘Gregory of Tours and the Franks,’ p. 59.

¹¹ For a detailed presentation on probable ‘Frankish’ values and customs in the fifth to sixth centuries, see C. Farnoux, ‘Une ethnographie des Francs d’après leur droit,’ *Actes des XVIe Journées internationales d’archéologie mérovingienne* (Saint-Germain-en-Laye, 1994) pp. 50-61.

¹² For details regarding the Franks as Roman officials of the Late Empire, and of their contribution to the Late Roman war efforts of the fourth century, see Ammianus Marcellinus, *Ammiani Marcellini Rerum gestarum libri qui supersunt*, W. Seyfarth, ed., (Leipzig, 1978) XV. 5. 11, and for information concerning their rise into Roman office and service under Arbogast, see Gregory of Tours, *Libri Historiarum X*, II. 9.

¹³ S. Schütte, ‘Continuity Problems and Authority Structures in Cologne,’ in G. Ausenda, ed., *After Empire: Towards and Ethnology of Europe’s Barbarians* (Woodbridge, 1995) p. 163.

similar to their Visigothic counterparts,¹⁴ who were demonstrated in the third chapter of this dissertation to have made valuable contributions to the military campaigns of the Western Roman Empire, and in contrast to the Lombard settlers of the latter sixth century.

However, despite the above point there did continue some degree of alienation from Roman traditions as well, as can be seen in the tendency towards extramural burials in the sixth and seventh centuries. “As Merovingian churches and especially monastic houses for women came to be more frequently located within cities, the lasting stigma of burial intra-muros resulted in continued interment outside of the walls even for some of the most prestigious individuals.”¹⁵ It is clear that even with a history of service to Rome and exposure to their customs and cultural values, the Frankish aristocracy and people as a whole had their own perceptions of the urban environment and what types of social and religious functions it should provide for. This is not to say that all members of the aristocracy chose this type of burial, as we shall see in the case studies there are some who opted for urban burials, but the rise of suburban cemeteries does represent a general trend from the sixth to eighth centuries in the Merovingian kingdoms.

No study of early medieval socio-political activity, particularly when the focal point is that of sixth-century Gaul or *Francia* would be plausible without the historical narrative provided by Gregory of Tours. Born into a Gallo-Roman aristocratic family

¹⁴ By the seventh century there was a significant increase in the level of sea and river trade, particularly in the northern regions of the Merovingians, see S. Lebecq, ‘L’économie de la voie d’eau dans le nord de la Gaule à l’époque mérovingienne : Réflexions historiographiques et problématiques,’ *Actes de XXe Journées internationales d’archéologie mérovingienne* (Namur, 1999) pp. 59-61.

¹⁵ B. Effros, *Merovingian Mortuary Archaeology and the Making of the Early Middle Ages* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 2003) p. 215.

based at Clermont-Ferrand as Georgius Florentius in 539,¹⁶ he would go on to become the nineteenth Bishop of Tours and began writing at some point following his consecration in August 573 until the year 591.¹⁷ One point that should be emphasized regarding Gregory is the impact of his own upbringing and ethnic background upon his work. Gregory rarely used the ethnic label ‘Frank’ when referring to his contemporaries; in particular, he tends to avoid labeling individual members of society as having Frankish ethnicity.¹⁸ This is further complicated by the fact that when Gregory applies the term *barbarus* to an individual in order to possibly convey a barbaric quality, it has sometimes been ‘potentially misinterpreted’ as a personal grudge or dislike Gregory felt for people of Frankish ethnicity.¹⁹ The expression ‘potentially misinterpreted’ may at first come

¹⁶ For a clear and concise biography of Gregory the introduction in the translated version is of great value, see Gregory of Tours, *The History of the Franks*, pp. 7-21. It has been advocated that ethnicity was only of consequence to the ruling elite, and that the local populace of a given *civitas* were registered to the location of their birth despite their backgrounds, see J. Durliat, “ ‘Episcopus’, ‘Civis’, et ‘Populus’ dans les *Historiarum Libri* de Grégoire,” *Actes des XVIe Journées internationales d’archéologie mérovingienne*, p. 18.

¹⁷ *Ibid*, p. 24.

¹⁸ A good example of this discrepancy between the translated English and original Latin can be seen in the rant of King Theuderic against the atrocities of the Thuringians. Thorpe emphasizes the Frankish identity of the audience and their anger, whereas the original Latin states: *Quod ille audientes et de tanto scelere indignantes uno animo eademque sententiam thoringiam petierunt*. See Gregory of Tours, *The History of the Franks*, pp. 167-78, and Gregory of Tours, *Libri Historiarum X*, III. 7. 27-28. p. 115 respectively. Some modern scholars have denounced Frankish ethnicity entirely and view it as strictly a socio-political grouping, see A. Simmer, ‘Francs, Romans ou Mérovingiens, a Audun-le-Tiche (Moselle) au VII siècle,’ *Actes des XXIXe Journées internationales d’archéologie mérovingienne* (Marle, 2008) p. 99.

¹⁹ The best case which shows this application of the term ‘barbaros’ to a cruel master, can be found in the description of the bondage of Attalus near Trier. This individual later comes into conflict with the church, which had offered manumission and sanctuary to Attalus and Leo, the two runaway slaves. It could be this conflict with the ecclesiastical authorities which caused Gregory to take such a view of his character, when he writes *erat enim intra treverici termini territorio cuidam barbaro serviens*. See Gregory of Tours, *Libri Historiarum X*, III. 15. 14-15. p. 122.

across as slightly odd or contradictory, but it is appropriate granted that the man in question may very well have been of Frankish origin, which would counter any notions of the term being misinterpreted by later readers. Whether it was used to refer to someone of savage characteristics or to someone of a non-Roman background remains unclear, but given the tendency of Gregory to avoid focusing on ethnicity and his lack of explicit dislike for the Franks as a group, the former explanation seems most likely.

When we take into account the fact that the writings of Gregory are most often translated as ‘The History of the Franks’, rather than the more accurate ‘Ten Books of Histories’, it clearly reflects the importance of his ten books to the study of Frankish and Merovingian development in the early medieval period as a historical narrative. There is indubitable value of Gregory of Tours as a source for Frankish history, and despite his own Gallo-Roman heritage and ecclesiastical biases due to his position as bishop, we cannot fully attribute the lack of direct mention of Frankish individuals to any personal biases or contextual factors. The fact of the matter is that Gregory never intended his work to be read as a ‘History of the Franks’ to begin with. Rather than focusing upon the impact of the Franks on the previous Late Roman provinces of Gaul, Gregory wrote a ‘universal history’ beginning from Genesis and presented his views on the history of the world from its earliest creation right through until the latter sixth century.²⁰ This offers one possible explanation for the lack of ethnic detail to be found in the *Libri Historiarum*, as it was never his agenda to distinguish people based on their cultural background, so long as they were residents within *Francia* and subject to the Merovingian rulers. That being said, Gregory was aware of various ethnic groups in the realm, as his description of

²⁰ P. Périn, ‘Settlements and Cemeteries in Merovingian Gaul’, p. 67.

the ‘strange’ Syrian and Jewish speech he heard at Orléans during the visit of the King of Burgundy Guntram (561-92) on his way up to Paris in 585 demonstrates.²¹ The ten books produced by Gregory provide a useful insight into the central and local governance of the *Teilreiche* at both the royal and local aristocratic levels, even if ethnicity and cultural exchange was not a main focal point to the author.

Unfortunately the histories of Renatus Frigideridus and Sulpicius Alexander, upon which Gregory of Tours based his own work to some extent, have been lost to the ages, yet the latter does refer to these sources in a professional and credible manner.²² Along with such experiences and skills as an historian, Gregory also benefited from first hand knowledge of the local government within the Merovingian kingdoms due to his position as the Bishop of Tours, which was one of significant authority and responsibility. His conflicts over the governance of Tours with the Frankish *comes* Leudast, whom he portrays as the most scandalous and depraved of individuals in great detail,²³ not only demonstrate the types of friction between ecclesiastical and secular authorities, but also two other interesting points: First, with the arrival of one Ansovald at Tours, who had been sent by King Chilperic upon request, the people along with the clergy were able to elect a new *comes* to the city, by the name of Eunomius.²⁴ This clearly demonstrates both the royal prerogative and power within the local governance of the *civitas*, and also

²¹ This is particularly interesting, as Gregory refers to their speech being distinct from that of the Gallo-Roman population, but he makes no reference to the Franks. This either implies Orléans had no major Frankish population with which to contrast their speech, or that he did not notice oddities in Frankish speech compared with Gallo-Romans in his everyday life. See Gregory of Tours, *Libri Historiarum X*, VIII. 1. p. 326.

²² The second book of the *libri historiarum* is full of direct quotes from these previous works, in particular see *Ibid*, II. 9.

²³ *Ibid*, V. 48-49.

²⁴ *Ibid*, V. 47.

the authority which the bishopric possessed in relation to the secular authorities. Second, the competition within the *Teilreiche* between the Merovingian kings is directly reflected, when, while being questioned by Chilperic over his maltreatment of the people of Tours, Leudast states that Gregory wished to hand the position of *comes* over to a son of King Sigibert (535-75).²⁵ Whether or not this was the case, Leudast was aware of the potency such a remark might have in causing insecurities within the sphere of the Merovingian rulers. However, the royal authority was not limited to the appointment of the *comes* within the city, as the king was equally capable of raising individuals to the bishopric and ecclesiastical office within his territory.²⁶ The Merovingian rulers, perhaps as a reflection of their Roman legal traditions, retained a monopoly on the issuing of currency within the Frankish realm.²⁷ Clearly the Merovingian kings had vested interests in both the secular and ecclesiastical administrative spheres, and through the latter Gregory of Tours had a direct insight into the activities of the ruling elite.

Gregory was not only a primary actor in the Merovingian *civitas* of Tours, he was also a witness and observer of events which occurred within the Frankish realm as a whole. Scholars have in the last decade illustrated some of the qualities Gregory possessed as a military historian. The understanding of birth, upbringing, and inherent

²⁵ Ibid, V. 47.

²⁶ Although he advocates a fairly conservative view of Merovingian government over the urban environment, one which tried to maintain Late Roman networks and administrative structures, S.T. Loseby does acknowledge the appointment of bishops by Merovingian kings. For an example, of the appointment of a bishop to the *vicus* of Aristum by King Sigibert. See S.T. Loseby, 'Urban failures in late-antique Gaul,' in T.R. Slater, ed., *Towns in Decline AD 100-1600* (Aldershot, 2000) p. 88.

²⁷ E.A. Arslan, 'Un incontro inaspettato: i monetieri del re longabardo Liutprando,' in M.R. Alföldi ed., *Die Münze* (Frankfurt, 1991) p. 7.

ability being central to the overall success of a given commander,²⁸ and also his knowledge of basic strategies applied by military leaders reflect the above point.²⁹ Although this is certainly true when one reads through the *libri historiarum*, it is difficult to ascertain whether this knowledge came from witnessing such events on a regular enough basis to develop such an awareness, or whether it was due to the learned and well-read upbringing Gregory himself enjoyed, which would have provided access to some literary materials related to warfare. Since Gregory was serving as Bishop of Tours during a period of civil war between Sigibert I and Chilperic I, it is likely that his knowledge of military matters would have come from both of these sources. Indeed his description of the fortifications at Dijon,³⁰ which had been a *castrum* up until that point,³¹ shows a relatively high level of experience with martial affairs.

Gregory and the significance of his work are not limited to the display of local conflict between the secular and ecclesiastical authorities, the role of the kingship and royal court in such matters, nor to the military structures and fortifications of the urban areas. He also gives us some detailed information concerning the types of administration that took place within the *civitates* of early medieval Gaul. In his description of the murder of the tax collector Mark who had been sent to Limoges, and the harsh retribution such an act incurred from King Chilperic,³² Gregory not only demonstrated that taxation was a feature of sixth-century life in Gaul, but also that the people who resented such

²⁸ B. Bachrach, 'Gregory of Tours as a Military Historian,' *The World of Gregory of Tours*, p. 353.

²⁹ Ibid, pp. 353-56.

³⁰ Gregory of Tours, *Libri Historiarum X*, III. 19.

³¹ N. Gauthier, 'From the Ancient City to the Medieval Town: Continuity and Change in the Early Middle Ages,' *The World of Gregory of Tours*, p. 54.

³² For the full description of the taxes demanded and their repercussions, see Gregory of Tours, *Libri Historiarum X*, V. 28.

taxes resided in urban areas.³³ The questions of urban residency and taxation are complicated ones, yet Gregory does indicate quite clearly that both continued in the sixth century to some extent.

Mark was not the only tax collector to experience the wrath and vengeance of discontented urban residents during the mid-sixth century under Merovingian rule. Another example is given by Gregory in his discussion of the events surrounding one Parthenius. He had served as a tax collector for the late King Theudebert I (533-48) and was forced to flee to Trier under the protection of two bishops, but was later found hiding in a chest within the church and stoned to death by the angry mob.³⁴ The above passage described is particularly interesting in that it clearly emphasizes the Frankish element of urban society bitterly hating Parthenius. This implies not only that communities could be identified by their contemporaries as 'Frankish' but also that they were of sufficient numbers to cause social unrest and potential riots when they felt compelled to do so. It is also possible that the depiction of Parthenius as a glutton and uncouth individual reflected genuine character traits that contributed to the animosity people felt towards him. The passage also discusses his remorse over having killed a couple, Ausanius and Papianilla, out of jealousy, but it is unclear whether or not this was well known to the public; we are unable to determine whether these murders were the main reason for the events that unfolded, or if it was simply due to his abuse of office while serving under Theudebert I. The importance of taxation was not limited to the Merovingian monarchy or local

³³ Although this may seem an obvious point, the passage does clearly show both urban and suburban or rural residency of the population surrounding Limoges in the sixth century: *Qua de causa multi relinquentes civitates illas vel possessiones proprias, alia regna petierunt, satius ducentes alibi peregrinare quam tali periculo subiacere*. See Ibid, V. 28. 14-15. p. 222.

³⁴ Ibid, III. 36.

officials, it was also of prime importance to the aristocracy and regional *duces* of the *Teilreiche* as well.

Detail concerning the importance of taxation at the city level to the Merovingian aristocrats is provided when Gregory tells of *dux* Desiderius restoring Burgundian cities to Chilperic I from the territories of Guntram, after which Chilperic immediately set about appointing new *comites* to the *civitates* and ordered taxes to be levied.³⁵ Along with such statements regarding the connections between local administration and the royal government, Gregory also demonstrates that the cities within the Merovingian kingdoms were by no means uniform in their socio-political status or relationship to the royal capital.³⁶ For example, when in 578 Chilperic planned to campaign in Brittany and called upon the men of Tours to provide arms, Gregory claimed an ancient exemption from such military service.³⁷ This reinforces the view that the Merovingian elite left the urban administration and systems more or less in place from the Late Roman era, only interfering directly or restructuring such networks when it was fundamental to the interests of the kingdom, or moreover, to the royal treasury. Sven Schütte also supports this view in the case of Late Roman Cologne; after the last Roman officials left around the mid-fifth century, there is no evidence for a Frankish remodeling of the city.³⁸ The loss of imperial, centralized government would have been accompanied by some decrease

³⁵ Ibid, VI. 22.

³⁶ The cosmopolitan nature of the region and its cities is discussed in J. Guyon, 'Grégoire de Tours et le Midi de la Gaule,' *Actes des XVIe Journées internationales d'archéologie mérovingienne*, p. 9.

³⁷ Gregory of Tours, *Libri Historiarum X*, V. 26, also for the lack of evidence regarding civic obligations to the royal fisc or military service in anything resembling a uniform manner, see M. Innes, *Introduction to Early Medieval Western Europe, 300-900: The Sword, the Plough and the Book*, p. 280, and I. Wood, *The Merovingian Kingdoms 450-751*, p. 63.

³⁸ S. Schütte, 'Continuity Problems and Authority Structures in Cologne,' p. 164.

in urban vitality and efficiency in terms of output, or in the overall function and purpose of an urban area,³⁹ but as we have seen the *civitates* continued to provide the basic unit of financial and social assessment under the Merovingian dynasty.

According to Gregory and modern historians then, there exists a general consensus that the new Merovingian aristocracy who governed over what had been the Roman Gallic provinces generally left the localized administration in place. One of the best studied examples from the *libri historiarum* and its portrayal of secular, cultural events lies in the ascension of Clovis I to the kingship. The supposed *imitatio imperii* of Clovis, in his use of the titles Augustus and Consul following the battle of Vouillé in 507, alongside the wearing of an imperial purple tunic and diadem,⁴⁰ have been promoted as examples of the level of Romanization which the Frankish aristocracy had experienced by the early sixth century. Steven Fanning raises an interesting idea regarding this process, when he writes that such use of titles may not reflect a deliberate attempt by the Frankish ruler to come across as particularly Roman in character, but rather that it was a more natural occurrence; for Gallo-Roman subjects who found themselves under Merovingian governance, it was only natural that they would refer to their new ruler using familiar Roman terminology.⁴¹ The political and military functions of *duces* and *comites* continued to be used as well, although the *graphio*, which fulfilled many of the

³⁹ For example, in the tethering of new lay and ecclesiastical elite property to monastic foundations rather than the Late Roman city-based administration, see H.J. Hummer, *Politics and Power in Early Medieval Europe: Alsace and the Frankish Realm, 600-1000*, p. 27.

⁴⁰ Gregory, *Libri Historiarum X*, II. 38, and also for more detail concerning the usage of such Roman titles by Clovis see Yitzak Hen, 'The uses of the Bible and the perception of kingship in Merovingian Gaul,' *Early Medieval Europe*, Vol. 7, No. 3 (Oxford, 1998) p. 282.

⁴¹ S. Fanning, 'Clovis Augustus and Merovingian *Imitatio Imperii*,' in *From the Ancient City to the Medieval Town: Continuity and Change in the Early Middle Ages*, p. 333.

same functions at the local level as the *comes*, but with a more regional focus similar to the *dux*, seems to have been a Frankish innovation predominant in the northern areas of Gaul.⁴² The regions of northern Gaul, Frisia and Bavaria have been viewed by modern historians as somewhat autonomous regions of the Merovingian realm,⁴³ and it remains unclear in exactly what capacity the *graphiones* served as royal officials in contrast with their southern equivalents. Clearly, the Merovingians of the sixth century were willing to both maintain Late Roman administrative structures, but they were also forced to adapt to the new social and political circumstances into which they emerged following the fall of imperial government.

From the point of view of the reader, the writings compiled by Fredegar often lack the sense of continuation and ‘grand narrative’ that is so apparent when reading the *libri historiarum* of Gregory. This is to be expected given the nature of the source, as it is in fact a collection of five previous histories to which Fredegar is believed to have added his own additions.⁴⁴ For a study of Merovingian society and identity in the seventh century, it is the fourth book of this work which is of the most relevance, covering the years 584 through 642; after the year 603 the style of the writing leans more towards that

⁴² For example, in Ripuaria and Hesbaye, see M. Innes, *Introduction to Early Medieval Western Europe, 300-900: The Sword, the Plough and the Book*, p. 282, their urban authority is described in I. Wood, *The Merovingian Kingdoms 450-751*, p. 61, and for a description of their authority see A.C. Murray, ‘The position of the *grafio* in the constitutional history of Merovingian Gaul,’ in *Speculum*, 64 (Cambridge, MA, 1989) pp. 787-805.

⁴³ W. Pohl, ‘The barbarian successor states,’ in M. Brown and L. Webster, edd., *The Transformation of the Roman World AD 400-900* (London, 1997) p. 42.

⁴⁴ For a list of the contributors to the Chronicle of Fredegar, along with his own insertions, see Fredegar, *The Fourth Book of the Chronicle of Fredgar with Its Continuations*, J.M. Wallace-Hadrill, trans., (London and NY, 1960) pp. x-xiii.

of a primary account which may suggest first hand experience of the author.⁴⁵ Fredegar himself was a partisan of the Austrasian aristocracy, in particular that of the Pippinid-Arnulfing line,⁴⁶ and it is due to this political affiliation that the chronicle generally identifies the Austrasians separately from the Neustrian ‘Franks’ to the West. For example, in describing the Austrasian resolve under Sigibert III (634-c. 656) to defend the eastern borders of the realm, the Austrasians agreed to defend “their frontier and the Frankish kingdom against the Wends.”⁴⁷ Whether this is in fact a deliberate distinction between the Austrasian and other Frankish kingdoms, or rather a more general reference to the overall realm of *Francia* remains difficult to judge, but they clearly viewed themselves as maintaining some level of autonomy within the political environment of the seventh century.

One point of interest regarding the *chronica* is that unlike the *libri historiarum* of Gregory, the later writings attributed to Fredegar often refer to the Franks as an ethnic label, both in terms of individual members of society and also groups of people as well. An example of the former case can be seen in his description of a *dux* Beppelen using the title ‘Duke of the Franks’,⁴⁸ and although the individual ethnicity of this Beppelen is not given, it nevertheless clearly shows the association with military affairs and the Frankish identity becoming representative of the populace as a general term. With respect to the latter case, the *chronica* not only identifies the Austrasians directly, for example, in describing Theudebert II (595-612) arriving in Alsace *cum magno exercito*

⁴⁵ Ibid, p. xiii.

⁴⁶ F. Curta, ‘Slavs in Fredegar and Paul the Deacon: medieval gens or ‘scourge of God’?’ *Early Medieval Europe*, Vol. 6, No. 2 (Oxford, 1997) p. 146.

⁴⁷ Ibid, p. 147, and also Fredegar, *Fredegarii et aliorum chronica*, IV. 75. p. 63.

⁴⁸ Beppelen is given the title *bepellenus dux francorum*, and was killed by the Bretons in c. 590, see Fredegar, *Fredegarii et aliorum chronica*, IV. 12. 7. p. 127.

austrasiarum,⁴⁹ but also in a broader Frankish context as well. When the Gascons revolted against Dagobert I (603-39) in 635 and Chadoind was dispatched with an army to quell the uprising, the *chronica* refers to this force as *exercitus uero francorum*.⁵⁰ If an armed conflict involved a foe from outside the *Teilreiche*, the *chronicle* felt less hesitation to use the general identification of the members as Franks.

He made for Gascony with his army in company with ten dukes and their forces- namely the Franks Arnebert, Amalgar, Leudebert, Wandalmar, Walderic, Hermenric, Barontius and Chaira, the Roman Chammelen, the Burgundian patrician Willebad, the Saxon Aighyna and in addition many counts who had no duke over them.⁵¹

The above passage contradicts the traditional view of Frankish supremacy and monopoly over military activity within the Merovingian kingdoms, as it is quite apparent the force sent against the Bretons was a cosmopolitan one consisting of high ranking commanders from a wide range of ethnic backgrounds. Bernard Bachrach referred to the Merovingian armies as a ‘heterogeneous lot’ and believed them to have maintained their own cultural identities and customs within the *exercitus*.⁵² Unfortunately the works of Procopius and Agathias upon which Bachrach based his work are not particularly useful when it comes to determining cultural traits of individual groups, as there is a strong tendency in the eastern sources to group such peoples into a single ‘barbaric’ identity. For example, Agathias attributes the victory of Narses over the Franks in 554 as a just punishment for their ‘wickedness’.⁵³ This is by no means an early medieval phenomenon

⁴⁹ Ibid, IV. 37. 9-10. p. 138.

⁵⁰ Ibid, IV. 78. 17. p. 160.

⁵¹ Fredegar, *The Fourth Book of the Chronicle of Fredgar with Its Continuations*, p. 65.

⁵² B. Bachrach, ‘Procopius, Agathias and the Frankish Military,’ *Speculum*, Vol. 45, No. 3 (Cambridge, MA, July, 1970) p. 435.

⁵³ Agathias, *The Histories*, J.D. Frendo, ed., (Berlin, 1975) p. 42, for the Greek and Latin text see Agathias, *Agathiae Myrinaei Historiarum Libri Quinque*, B.G. Niebuhr, ed., (Bonn, 1828) II. 12. p. 89.

or trend exclusive to the eastern Mediterranean in its views of the West. It is well known that the term 'Frank', the Arabic *ferenghi*, was applied as a general label for western Europeans during the various Crusades centuries later. Due to a lack of direct reference in the primary accounts, the degree to which the common warrior identified with either his tribal heritage or broader Frankish service to the Merovingian aristocracy is difficult to ascertain. However, a more prominent Frankish identity emerges from reading the *chronicle* in contrast with the earlier *libri historiarum* of Gregory, and the works of Fredegar provide a few other examples regarding this shift in local identities within the Merovingian realm.

A potential indication of such seventh century developments taking place within the mindsets of the inhabitants of Merovingian *Francia* can be seen in how the *chronicle* treats the issue of foreign relations. There is a level of pride displayed in the writings when describing the tribute of twelve thousand *solidi* paid from the Lombards to Guntram up until 625.⁵⁴ If this passage was a later addition by Fredegar, who hailed from Burgundy himself originally, then it is only natural he would glorify such events favouring his homeland. If this was not a deliberate projection of Frankish identity, it nonetheless demonstrated that by the late sixth century the 'Germanic' kingdoms of early medieval Europe were becoming more secure in their political functions and diplomacy at the state level, and by the seventh century they had become more or less defined with relation to one another.⁵⁵ With respect to the *Teilreiche* and how the Merovingians perceived one another, the *chronicle* provides us with an interesting case that clearly

⁵⁴ Fredegar, *Fredegarii et aliorum chronica*, IV. 45.

⁵⁵ P.S. Barnwell, 'War and peace: historiography and seventh-century embassies,' *Early Medieval Europe*, Vol. 6, No. 2, p. 129.

shows not only an affiliation with the individual kingdom, but also a notion of overall Frankish identity. When Dagobert I demanded the return of Austrasian territories to his kingdom from his father Clothar II (584-629) the latter initially refused this demand, but by sending twelve Frankish lords under the leadership of Arnulf of Metz to diffuse the situation, military conflict was avoided and the matter was resolved peacefully.⁵⁶ On the one hand, Dagobert was trying to regain the *civitates* and finances previously associated with his kingdom, and on the other, the matter was clearly seen as concerning the Frankish element of society due to the nature of negotiations. It is clear that when it came to resources and control over the cities, the Merovingian ruler set about boosting his own wealth and prestige, which naturally brought occasional conflict with the other kingdoms, but in matters of diplomacy and general ethnic identification, the Merovingian elite maintained and cultivated a coherent Frankish identity.

This duality of political affiliations, with the respective kingdom governed by an individual sense of identity, while at the same time maintaining a level of general loyalty to the concept of *Francia* and Frankish culture, is further reinforced when one looks at the events following the death of Chlothar II in 629. There has been a tendency among historians to emphasize the division of Frankish territory into separate kingdoms, along with the internecine feuds which accompanied such a system, as being central to the development and cohesion of the realm during the sixth and seventh centuries,⁵⁷ and while this is often the case, it is by no means the sole defining characteristic of their

⁵⁶ Apparently Clothar II returned all of the Austrasian territories to his son Dagobert I, but the former kept Provence and the territories beyond the Loire, for this conflict between the two kings see Fredegar, *Fredegarii et aliorum chronica*, IV. 53.

⁵⁷ P. Geary, *Before France and Germany: the Creation and Transformation of the Merovingian World* (Oxford, 1988) p. 119.

administration within the *Teilreiche*. For example, upon succeeding his father Clothar II in 629 to become ‘King of all the Franks’, Dagobert I then, according to the *chronicle*, due to feelings of pity gave Gascony and the Pyrenees to his ‘simple-minded’ half-brother Charibert II (629-32) to govern as King of Aquitaine.⁵⁸ Although there was a history of conflict between the two brothers over Neustria upon the death of Clothar II, this concession of lands and revenue simply out of generosity on the part of Dagobert I may represent the pro-Austrasian leanings of Fredegar rather than historical accuracy. The above transfer of territory does reflect that armed conflict was not always a foregone conclusion with respect to the interaction of the Merovingian rulers. Although the separate kingdoms had existed since the early sixth century, the prerogative to divide up the overall Frankish realm or to keep it intact continued to be exercised by powerful rulers such as Clothar II and Dagobert I into the seventh century.

The composition of the *Liber Historiae Francorum* is usually attributed to the year 727 at the abbey of Saint-Médard in Soissons,⁵⁹ and after relying heavily upon the *libri historiarum* of Gregory it goes on to provide an historical account of Merovingian activity in the late seventh and early eighth centuries. In keeping with the view that over time the ruling aristocracy in what had been Roman Gaul gradually began to adopt a Frankish identity rather than maintaining their Gallo-Roman heritage from the sixth to eighth centuries, the *LHF* further illustrates this shift in both the central and local levels of society. Although it has been argued that the Franks of the sixth century assimilated

⁵⁸ Fredegar, *Fredegarii et aliorum chronica*, IV. 56.

⁵⁹ Matthew Innes and Ian Wood both place it at some point in the 720s in or near Soissons, see M. Innes, *Introduction to Early Medieval Western Europe, 300-900: The Sword, the Plough and the Book*, p. 285, and I. Wood, *The Merovingian Kingdoms 450-751*, p. 223, and for a thorough study of the *LHF* see R.A. Gerberding, *The Rise of the Carolingians and the Liber Historiae Francorum* (Oxford, 1987)

into a larger Gallo-Roman populace,⁶⁰ the adoption of Frankish names by the aristocracy,⁶¹ most likely due to the social mobility and opportunity such an ethnic identity would provide, indicates that while there continued some Roman influence upon the new elite the Franks were successfully exerting themselves as the ruling class.

One of the most significant indications of this Frankish identity at the upper levels of society emerging by the mid-seventh century lies in the events surrounding the acclamation of Clovis II (637-c. 658) as King of Neustria and Burgundy following this death of his father Dagobert I. It is clear that Clovis II was selected to the kingship by the *franci*, as the Latin text makes a direct reference to this ethnic term.⁶² The illegal torture of one Bodilo by King Childeric II (653-75), and the outrage which ensued from the Frankish nobility, provides another example of the ethnic label being used. The nobility who felt slighted by his actions were apparently of Frankish composition, and their titles were hereditary ones in the Merovingian period.⁶³ This is a direct consequence of the royal patronage and bestowal of lands and political rank upon the aristocracy in the sixth

⁶⁰ This was not a one way assimilation of the Franks, and despite being dispersed across Gaul in the sixth century, they nevertheless made a cultural impact upon the local surroundings, see P. Périn, 'Settlements and Cemeteries in Merovingian Gaul,' p. 85.

⁶¹ Edward James discusses this trend of Gallo-Roman aristocrats attempting to integrate with the new elite by adopting Frankish names, and he uses the example of *dux* Gundulf, who was uncle to the mother of Gregory of Tours, see E. James, 'Gregory of Tours and the Franks,' pp. 57-58, and for the reference to Gundulf see Gregory of Tours, *Libri Historiarum X*, VI. 11. p. 281.

⁶² *Chlodovechum, filium eius, franci super se regem statuunt...* in *Liber Historiae Francorum*, B. Krusch, ed., *MGH, SRM*, II (Hanover, 1888) 43. 20-21. p. 315. It is also illustrated in the English translation that while Frankish identity became less of a question and more evident, the competition between Neustria and Austrasia continued to become more intense, see R.A. Gerberding, *The Rise of the Carolingians and the Liber Historiae Francorum*, pp. 174-75.

⁶³ *Haec videntes franci, in ira magna commoti, ingobertus videlicet et amalbertus, et reliqui maiores natu francorum, sedicionem contra ipsum childericum concitantes*, see *LHF*, 45. 11-15. p. 318.

century in order to maintain a base of aristocratic support. For example, the bestowal of new title-deeds to one Anastasius by Clothar I, with the objective of preventing such revenues and lands being taken away in future.⁶⁴ It must be acknowledged that although the general makeup of the aristocracy was Frankish and hereditary, it was still possible for an individual of Gallo-Roman descent to attain high secular office in the Merovingian kingdoms early in the seventh century, as was the case with one Claudius becoming *maior domo* under Theuderic II in c. 606.⁶⁵ The example of Claudius was an exception to the rule in terms of secular government, rather than a regular occurrence, as the literary evidence does not provide enough accounts of such Gallo-Roman individuals obtaining high secular authority for scholars to advocate it as the norm.

The kingship had by this point become less of a direct authority and more of an arbiter between opposing factions,⁶⁶ and it is for this reason that the Merovingian kings following Dagobert I have been historically labeled as *les rois fainéants*, or the ‘do-nothing kings’.⁶⁷ Although it has recently been argued that these later Merovingian rulers were not as useless as they have traditionally been portrayed,⁶⁸ it cannot be denied

⁶⁴ *Presibiter autem, acceptis a rege praeceptionibus, res suas ut libuit defensavit posseditque ac suis posteris dereliquit*, see Gregory of Tours, *Libri Historiarum X*, IV. 12. 24-26. p. 149, and the English translation places particular importance upon the long term security of this grant, see Gregory of Tours, *The History of the Franks*, IV. 12. p. 207.

⁶⁵ Fredegar, *Fredegarii et aliorum chronica*, IV. 28.

⁶⁶ One possible sign of this decline in direct governance that has been put forth is the case of seventh century Alsace and the royal palace at Marlenheim. While royal visits to this palace had been frequent in the early seventh century, by the middle of the century such royal tours ceased to take place. See H.J. Hummer, ‘Politics and Power in Early Medieval Europe: Alsace and the Frankish Realm, 600-1000,’ p. 48.

⁶⁷ E. James, *The Franks*, p. 231.

⁶⁸ Ian Wood makes a convincing point that while the aristocratic power and their local authority over the lands increased in the seventh century, the Merovingian kings

that the aristocracy, largely due to gaining control over their own lands or *civitates*,⁶⁹ was beginning to challenge the royal authorities much more openly. This is quite evident in the case of Grimoald, the majordomo of Austrasia (643-56), who attempted a failed coup d'état by attempting to have his son Childebert placed on the Austrasian throne rather than the legitimate heir Dagobert II (676-79).⁷⁰ As a member of the Pippinid or Arnulfing house, this failed coup nearly cost the dynasty its wealth and prestige,⁷¹ upon which its future victory against the Neustrians at Tertry in 687,⁷² and the eventual establishment of Carolingian monarchy were largely dependent.⁷³ The consolidation of an overall Frankish identity while maintaining separate kingdoms, albeit with periods of unification under a single ruler, was unfortunately not of benefit to the Merovingian dynasty in the long term, as it was eventually supplanted by the Frankish aristocracy, a process which had truly begun to build momentum in the latter half of the seventh century.

The successes of the Merovingians in the realms of urban administration and socio-political structures is reflected in the later smear campaign and propaganda

continued to be the central focal point of the system, see I. Wood, *The Merovingian Kingdoms 450-751*, p. 221.

⁶⁹ Guy Halsall follows this view of the aristocracy by the seventh century becoming tied to their local holdings in the northern regions of the realm, see G. Halsall, 'Villas, Territories and Communities in Merovingian Northern Gaul,' *People and Space in the Middle Ages, 300-1300*, Studies in the Early Middle Ages, Vol. 15 (Turnhout, 2006) p. 227.

⁷⁰ *LHF*, 43. pp. 315-16.

⁷¹ H.J. Hummer, *Politics and Power in Early Medieval Europe: Alsace and the Frankish Realm, 600-1000*, p. 32.

⁷² I. Wood, *The Merovingian Kingdoms 450-751*, p. 256.

⁷³ For a Carolingian reference to the tonsuring of Childeric III and his being sent into monastic life, see *Annales regni Francorum 741-829*, F. Kurze, ed., *MGH, SRG* (Hanover, 1895) VI. 750, translated in *Carolingian Chronicles: Royal Frankish Annals and Nithard's Histories*, B.W. Scholz, trans., (Ann Arbor, 1972) p. 39.

produced from the late eighth century onwards. The Carolingian rulers and elite felt the need to assert themselves as preferable to the previous dynasty, and felt the need to suppress them through literary means; this type of political policy and initiative generally reflects a degree of insecurity and apprehension. There began a systematic derogation of the Merovingians, as the sources belittled the former royal administration.⁷⁴ This raises an interesting point regarding the question of cultural identity and the early medieval elite of the region. Historians have advocated that the *Annales Mettenses Priores* written in the early ninth century, which largely denounced the Merovingian dynasty, was an attempt to reconcile the Carolingian rulers with the local magnates who viewed them as ‘un-Frankish’.⁷⁵ By denouncing the prior government, the Carolingian sources looked to supplant their concepts of Frankish identity with their own. This notion is further supported by the continued association of the Carolingians as being synonymous with the *Franci* in military and administrative spheres throughout the *Annales Regni Francorum* as well.⁷⁶ Clearly the Merovingians had maintained a high level of Frankish identity within the upper strata of society, in order to have been considered such a threat to the later perceptions of the Carolingians once they took over the realm.

Thus far the chapter has been primarily concerned with historically based authors, either an historian who was intending to write a grand narrative such as Gregory of Tours, and to a lesser degree the anonymous author of the *LHF*, or the chronicled works

⁷⁴ R. McKitterick, ‘Political ideology in Carolingian historiography,’ in Y. Hen and M. Innes, ed., *The Uses of the Past in the Early Middle Ages* (Cambridge, 2000) p. 165.

⁷⁵ Y. Hen, ‘The Annals of Metz and the Merovingian past,’ in *The Uses of the Past in the Early Middle Ages*, p. 177-179, and for the annals themselves see *Annales Mettenses Priores*, B. Von Simson, ed., *MGH, SRG* (Hanover, 1905) 10.

⁷⁶ For an examination of this, see R. McKitterick, ‘Political ideology in Carolingian historiography,’ p. 167.

collected and supplemented by Fredegar. The Frankish laws representing the Merovingian period essentially consisted of Salic and Ripuarian Law, the *Pactus Legis Salicae* and the *Lex Ribuaria*, which were applied to the western and eastern regions of the Frankish realm respectively.⁷⁷ In order to demonstrate how these codes are relevant to studies of ethnicity and local urban culture, we will now examine the material from the earlier Salic laws and afterwards focus on the Ripuarian legal text.

It is not intended here to give a full historiographical study of the *Pactus Legis Salicae* and its authorship or authenticity,⁷⁸ but nonetheless the context under which it was constructed must be presented. Although it is difficult to judge exactly when the laws were first officially decreed, it is most likely to have occurred at some point early in the sixth century prior to the Battle of Vouillé in 507 and the expulsion of the Visigoths to Spain and Septimania, although historians have recently suggested that it may have taken place as late as 511 when an ecclesiastical council was called at Orléans.⁷⁹ The distinction between Gallo-Roman and Frankish settler is often rather striking when one reads these law codes, and this is to be expected in the sixth century with the newcomers trying to establish a new socio-political constitution, while at the same time preserving and enhancing their own political authority.

⁷⁷ *Lex Ribuaria*, F. Beyerle and R. Buchner, edd., *MGH, LS*, I (Hanover, 1854) 3.2, and *Pactus Legis Salicae*, K.A. Eckhardt, ed., *MGH, LS*, I (Hanover, 1962) 4.1, and available in an English translation, see *Laws of the Salian and Ripuarian Franks*, J.T. Rivers, trans., (New York, 1986).

⁷⁸ For an in depth examination of the Merovingian legal tradition and its application see 'Chapter Seven Laws and Law-Codes: Merovingian Legislation' in I. Wood, *The Merovingian Kingdoms 450-751*, pp. 102-20.

⁷⁹ G. Halsall, *Barbarian Migrations and the Roman West 376-568* (Cambridge, 2007) p. 307.

The matter of financial compensation is the underlying principle for the laws themselves, and in this respect they clearly favour those individuals who associate themselves with a Frankish identity. For example, on the subject of robbery, should a Roman rob a Frank, the former must either present 25 oath-takers or go through an ordeal by water as compensation, or if that fails he must pay 2400 *denarii* as a fine to the Frank in question.⁸⁰ In the inverse situation, that of a Frank stealing from a Roman, the former must produce 20 oath-takers or pay a 1200 *denarii* fine.⁸¹ The incentive to try and adopt a Frankish ethnic identity at the everyday level of sixth century society is quite striking, although this is mainly related to laws concerning theft, property or land.⁸² With regards to the majority of laws that do not concern the above conflicts, the term ‘freeman’ is more commonly used;⁸³ the case of entering into slavery should a free individual marry another person’s maidservant is one example of this general social term being applied.⁸⁴ At the upper levels of Merovingian society, the discrepancy between the murder of a

⁸⁰ *Pactus legis Salicae*, XIV. 2. pp. 64-65.

⁸¹ *Ibid*, XIV. 3. p. 65.

⁸² An interesting case concerning property, involves the illegal enslavement of a Roman or Frank, with the former being required to pay a sum of 1200 *denarii* in compensation, whereas the Frank would be required to pay half that amount, see *Pactus legis Salicae*, XXXII.3, XXXII.4. pp. 122-123.

⁸³ Guy Halsall interprets the lack of mention of formal land-holding or roles of dependency as being due to the fact that the aristocracy were essentially of the same ‘free’ status as the population at large, despite having the rights of the former to extract royal taxes, see G. Halsall, ‘Social Identities and Social Relations in Early Merovingian Gaul,’ *Franks and Alamanni in the Merovingian Period: An Ethnographic Perspective* (Woodbridge, 1998) p. 149

⁸⁴ *Si uero ingenuus cum ancilla aliena publice se iunxerit, ipse cum ea in seruito permaneat*, see *Pactus legis Salicae*, XXV. 3. p. 94, and for a study on the various levels of ‘free’ status in the Merovingian social order, see P. Bonnassie, ‘Aquitaine et Espagne aux V^e-VIII^e siècles: Pour une approche historiques et archéologiques de quelques grands problèmes,’ in P. Périn ed., *Gallo-Romains, Wisigoths et Francs en Aquitaine, Septimanie et Espagne: actes des VIIe Journées internationales d’archéologie mérovingienne* (Toulouse, 1985) p. 3.

trustis or the killing of a Roman member of the court is again double the value paid in compensation in favour of the Frankish element of society.⁸⁵ This is likely due to the military heritage of the *trustis* as traditional war band leaders associated with the Merovingian rulers, and the *Pactus legis Salicae* does refer to the penalty for the theft of a stallion belonging to a Frank as costing 1800 *denarii*;⁸⁶ the high cost of such a crime possibly implies that individuals of sufficient wealth to own a horse had generally assumed a Frankish identity. The Gallo-Roman populace was incorporated into the Merovingian legal system with a degree of representation in the sixth century, but there was a strong incentive towards adopting Frankish culture, nomenclature, and socio-political status.

While the above examples for the sixth century illustrate some examples of Merovingian society and the nature of its judicial system, the *Lex Ribuaria* has more of a basis in the Austrasian and eastern territories of the realm and was issued at some point in the latter sixth or early seventh century.⁸⁷ When one reads the *Lex Ribuaria* it is clear that the people of the eastern lands continued to identify themselves in relation to outside and neighbouring peoples, for example, in the continued reference to crimes against Frankish or Roman *peregrini*, or foreigners.⁸⁸ This may have been issued regarding the treatment of foreigners in general, yet the overall style and continued application of the term implies that it was more a case of Franks and Romans genuinely being viewed as distinct from the Austrasian populace. Generally throughout the Ripuarian laws there are

⁸⁵ Ibid, XLI. 5., XLI. 9. p. 157.

⁸⁶ Ibid, XXXVIII. 2. p. 136.

⁸⁷ Most likely by either Childebert II, Chlothar II or Dagobert I, see I. Wood, *The Merovingian Kingdoms 450-751*, p. 116.

⁸⁸ *Lex Ribuaria*, LV. 36. 1, and LV. 36. 3 respectively.

not many references to Franks or Romans by name apart from the ones mentioned above, which would support the view that by the seventh century the ethnic identity of the Franks as the aristocracy and governing class of *Francia* was becoming taken for granted in what had been Roman Gaul.⁸⁹ Modern historians have suggested that in the northern lands where Frankish identity had deeper roots, this ethnic label became more prominent by the seventh century, which in turn led to an increase in the military class due to its exemption from taxation, and the rulers then resorted to fines for dereliction of duty as a counter to such developments.⁹⁰ The penalty concerning this refusal of the royal order, or *bannitus*, was universally sixty *solidi* with no reference to ethnic groups whatsoever.⁹¹ This symbolizes the increasing solidarity of the Franks, and it could be the case that Roman subjects were not of a significant number in the territories of the *Lex Ribuaria* to merit specific mention, except when visiting as foreigners for diplomatic reasons.

With respect to the above question of dereliction of duty, the situations differed for individuals who possessed a high social status. The penalty of sixty *solidi* for refusing a royal order was extracted from the populace at large, but for a Roman, king's man (*trustis*), or churchman the penalty was half that, at thirty *solidi*.⁹² More specifically, whoever had authority over these individuals or was responsible for them was obliged to pay the penalty for dereliction. The cases of the *trustis* or clergy most likely had to do with structures within the vassalage of the court or the church itself, but

⁸⁹ Guy Halsall has also emphasized this as a means to attaining a broader political reach, rather than being strictly tied to the local land holdings, see Guy Halsall, 'Villas, Territories and Communities in Merovingian Northern Gaul,' p. 227.

⁹⁰ Matthew Innes, *Introduction to Early Medieval Western Europe, 300-900: The Sword, the Plough and the Book*, p. 291.

⁹¹ *Lex Ribuaria*, LXVIII. 65. 1.

⁹² *Si autem Romanus aut regius *) seu ecclesiasticus *) homo hoc fecerit, unusquisque contra auctorem suum 30 solidos culpabilis iudicatur*, see *Ibid*, LXVIII. 65. 2.

the singling out of the Roman is more problematic. In keeping with the earlier context of being viewed as a foreigner to the Austrasian territories, perhaps this is an indication that when a Roman was residing within the kingdom he was put under a form of royal supervision or official protection by a member of the court, who was in turn responsible for his actions while in Austrasia. The author admits this is an extrapolation from the two separate laws, but it nevertheless raises an interesting point on the division between the Neustrian and Austrasian kingdoms and their relationships with the Gallo-Roman population, one that should be further explored by scholars of early medieval legal systems and cultural representation. While there do exist substantial gaps in the literature covering the Merovingian *Teilreiche* of the sixth to eighth centuries, in contrast with the evidence for the Visigoths or Lombards one can gain a better sense of chronology and overall image as to how the government and society of the Franks evolved. This is partly due to the ultimate success of the Frankish aristocracy in establishing itself as the dominant western European political power under the Carolingians, but the sources covering the earlier Merovingian era should still be lauded for their detail and contribution to our understanding of the Franks in the centuries prior to this.

Local identities in the archaeological record for the Franks

The level of urbanization within Late Roman Gaul in relation to other Late Roman provinces has traditionally been viewed as relatively low, but apart from the southern regions of Provence and Narbonnensis, the actual territory governed by the individual *civitas* was relatively large at approximately ten thousand square kilometres.⁹³ In the late

⁹³ S.T. Loseby, 'Urban failures in late-antique Gaul', p. 74.

fourth century the *Notitia Galliarum* listed urban centres of the region at the time,⁹⁴ although it is often difficult to tell which *civitates* continued to be used as administrative units under the Merovingians. It has even been argued that the lesser *pagus* replaced the *civitas* as the administrative unit, with a *comes* residing over the former, and the latter changing into a strictly ecclesiastical measure of urbanity.⁹⁵ Since it is important to avoid polarizing between ‘Roman’ and ‘Germanic’ forms of urban government,⁹⁶ we must remember that the *civitas* was already undergoing changes prior to the sixth century which explain the need for further localized administration and the incorporation of local towns into the urban network.⁹⁷ Changes both in terms of general early medieval urban society and also ones specific to *Francia* must be examined in order to understand what function the *civitas* assumed under the Merovingian rulers, and how its inhabitants and local aristocracy interacted within the urban area.

There exists a significant archaeological record for the Merovingians despite the general lack of early medieval evidence earlier discussed, for example, in the well preserved seventh-century wooden throne of Dagobert I.⁹⁸ Patrick Périn has also

⁹⁴ ‘Notitia Galliarum’, in *Notitia Dignitatum in Partibus Orientis et Occidentis*, O. Seeck, ed., (Berlin, 1876) pp. 261-74.

⁹⁵ G. Halsall, ‘Villas, Territories and Communities in Merovingian Northern Gaul,’ p. 226.

⁹⁶ This notion of looking at archaeological evidence in a more fluid and dynamic way has been called ‘histoire des mentalités’, see M. Alkemade, ‘Elite lifestyle and the transformation of the Roman World in northern Gaul,’ *The Transformation of the Roman World AD 400-900*, pp. 181-82.

⁹⁷ A. Dierkens and P. Périn, ‘Death and burial in Gaul and Germania, 4th-8th century,’ *The Transformation of the Roman World AD 400-900*, p. 86.

⁹⁸ P. Périn, ‘Le trône de Dagobert,’ in J.J. Aillagon, dir., *Rome et les Barbares: La Naissance d’un Nouveau Monde*, (Venice, 2008) pp. 436-38, and for assertions that the throne is more likely Carolingian, see S. Gasparri, ‘Il tesoro del re,’ in S. Gelichi and C. La Rocca edd., *Tesori: Forme di accumulazione della ricchezza nell’alto medioevo (secoli V-XI)*, (Rome, 2004) p. 47.

discussed the state of urban archaeology in France during the last twenty years, with the first national conference for urban archaeology taking place at Tours in November, 1980,⁹⁹ and has emphasized the overall structure and administration of the cities remained intact from the Late Roman era, albeit with changes in taste towards schematic patterns and abstraction taking place under the Merovingians from the sixth century onwards.¹⁰⁰ In opposition to this view of overall structural continuity historians have advocated that the only continuity was the occupation of the same space, but in terms of urban structure and organization the urban landscape underwent a drastic alteration.¹⁰¹ Modern archaeologists remain divided as to the level of continuity within the urban environment, and in that respect the case of the Merovingian kingdoms does reflect developments similar to that of its Visigothic and Lombard counterparts.

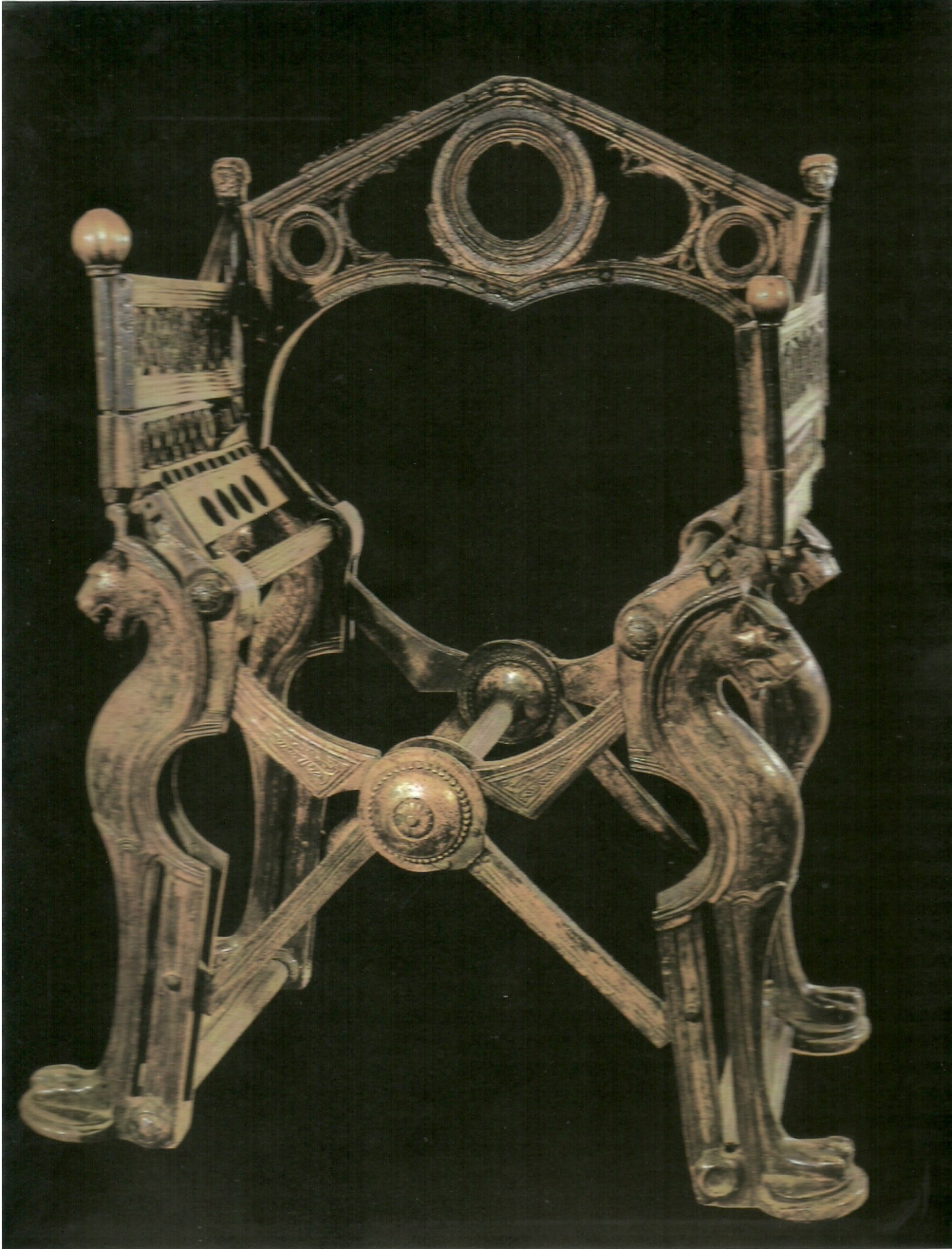
A further similarity can be seen in the establishment of new urban structures with a particular social function, in particular that of the *xenodochium*, which served as a form of early medieval hospice for anyone requiring medical attention.¹⁰² Unfortunately archaeological evidence does not exist for either of these structures referred to in the literature, but if these structures did exist they would be a demonstration not only that the successor states were capable of establishing new urban structures, but more importantly that the people of the surrounding area were aware of the city as an important social focal point where medical aid would be provided. This continuity of the Late Roman *civitas* as

⁹⁹ P. Périn, 'Settlements and Cemeteries in Merovingian Gaul,' p. 68.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 73.

¹⁰¹ N. Gauthier, 'From the Ancient City to the Medieval Town: Continuity and Change in the Early Middle Ages,' *The World of Gregory of Tours*, p. 47.

¹⁰² For a description of the Visigothic *xenodochium* see chapter 3 of this thesis, p. 115, and for the reference to a Merovingian *xenodochium* being founded, albeit by a man of Gallo-Roman ancestry, see *Vita Caesarii*, B. Krusch, ed., *MGH, SRM*, III (Hanover, 1888) I. 20. p. 464.



The wooden throne above is often attributed to Dagobert I, although the true owner remains unknown, image found in P. Périn, 'Le trône de Dagobert,' in Aillagon, J.J., dir., *Rome et les Barbares: La Naissance d'un Nouveau Monde* (Venice, 2008) p. 437.

a centre of secular administration, according to Henri Galinié made up one half of the typical Early Medieval urban landscape in Gaul, alongside the rise of towns surrounding holy tombs.¹⁰³ The *civitas* remained an important part of life and socio-political focal point throughout the Merovingian period.

The view that the new Frankish aristocracy was capable of maintaining the structures of the Late Roman *civitas* is challenged when we look at the archaeology relating to spectacles or public entertainment. Due to the primarily military function of the settlements, it can be very difficult to trace the *civitates* of northern Gaul,¹⁰⁴ but the central and southern regions had been involved in a long tradition of Roman games and such popular activities, largely due to the trade network coming up from the Mediterranean via Marseilles.¹⁰⁵ That being said, despite the dubious story of Chilperic I and his supposed revival of such events by his constructing amphitheatres at Paris and Soissons at some point in the late 570s,¹⁰⁶ according to archaeological evidence such spectacles had by the sixth century generally ceased to be held.¹⁰⁷ The views over why

¹⁰³ For a more detailed description of these two models, see H. Galinié, 'Tours de Grégoire, Tours des archives du sol,' in N. Gauthier and H. Galinié, edd., *Grégoire de Tours et l'espace gaulois* (Tours, 1997) pp. 65-80.

¹⁰⁴ G. Halsall, 'Villas, Territories and Communities in Merovingian Northern Gaul,' p. 222.

¹⁰⁵ S. Lebecq, 'Routes of change: production and distribution in the west (5th-8th century),' in *The Transformation of the Roman World AD 400-900*, pp. 68-70.

¹⁰⁶ S. Fanning, 'Clovis Augustus and Merovingian Imitatio Imperii,' p. 324. There was some suburban commercial vitality in sixth-century Soissons though which could back up such claims; for example see information on the suburban ceramics workshop in S. Thouvenot, 'Nouvelle approche sur l'organisation et les productions de l'atelier de Poitiers mérovingien de Soissons (Aisne),' *Actes des XXIXe Journées internationales d'archéologie mérovingienne*, pp. 64-65.

¹⁰⁷ The decline in Gaul of gladiatorial shows occurred c. 400, the *venationes*, or arena hunts, around c. 500, and the chariot races generally cease at some point in the mid-sixth century although the hippodrome at Arles may have continued to be used c. 560, see Y. Hen, *Culture and Religion in Merovingian Gaul A.D. 481-751* (Leiden, 1995) pp. 216-17,

this occurred are divided along the lines of it being either a decline in ‘popular taste’ due to possible Frankish impact,¹⁰⁸ to more economic and pragmatic concerns. “Local government could not afford any more to organize the spectacles and to spend huge amounts of public money in this way.”¹⁰⁹ The chances are that both of these views are responsible for the decline in public spectacle, since during the sixth century some Gallo-Romans were beginning to adopt a more Frankish identity in order to gain a level of social mobility outside of the ecclesiastical sphere.

The shifting of the Gallo-Roman members of society towards a new elite sphere of activity required the sacrifice of certain elements of *romanitas*, whether as a deliberate decision on the part of the individual, or simply as a result of having a high enough number of Romans abandoning their social traditions as to collectively bring about the decline in demand for such urban forms of entertainment. With the transition of Gaul into the Merovingian *Teilreiche* following the end of Late Roman government, the costs for maintaining such shows would have been enormous to the monarchs, who had to invest their resources into more immediate concerns during such a period of consolidation. Unfortunately such matters are very difficult to determine from either the literary or archaeological remains, since neither shed much light into areas related to Gallo-Roman decision-making with the coming of Merovingian government in the sixth century.

p. 221, and p. 228. Also, for a reference to the chariot races at Arles, see Procopius, *Procopii Caesariensis Opera Omnia*, Vol. 2, J. Haury and G. Wirth, edd., (Munich, 2001) VII. 33. 5.

¹⁰⁸ A. Cameron, *Circus Factions, Blues and Greens at Rome and Byzantium* (Oxford, 1976) pp. 216-17.

¹⁰⁹ Y. Hen, *Culture and Religion in Merovingian Gaul A.D. 481-751*, p. 222.

One of the major problems common to the three case studies of this work is related to the early methods of archaeology used in Spain, Italy and France; such early methods often did particular damage to the early medieval levels with which we are concerned.¹¹⁰ However, there is interesting evidence in the burial evidence which points towards an adoption of Frankish local culture and identity by the previous inhabitants.¹¹¹ Essentially there is a move towards larger funerary displays by the seventh century, in order to bond areas together following the disruptive events of the preceding sixth century.¹¹² The quality, quantity and nature of the finds vary depending on the location and purpose of the burial site itself,¹¹³ but this evolution towards communal burials implies the Gallo-Roman inhabitants were beginning to merge with the Frankish culture at the local level. By the late seventh century burials were having less to do with the

¹¹⁰ This was certainly the case at Metz, as we will explore in more detail later on in this work, see G. Halsall, 'Towns, Societies and Ideas: The Not-so-strange Case of Late Roman and Early Merovingian Metz,' in N. Christie and S.T. Loseby, edd., *Towns in Transition: Urban Evolution in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages* (London, 1996) p. 239.

¹¹¹ It has been argued that in the northern regions Frankish style burials with weapons and brooches spread following the sixth century so that it afterward applied to a wider range of peoples, see M. Kazanski and P. Périn, "'Foreign' objects in the Merovingian cemeteries of Northern Gaul," in D. Quast ed., *Foreigners in Early Medieval Europe: Thirteen International Studies on Early Medieval Mobility* (Mainz, 2009) p. 151, and for the diverse range of weaponry found in the northern territories, see P. Périn, 'L'archéologie funéraire reflète-t-elle fidèlement la composition et l'évolution de l'armement mérovingien?' in A. Bos et al., dir., *Materia Superabat Opus: Hommage à Alain Erlande-Brandenburg* (Paris, 2006) p. 95.

¹¹² Although describing Austrasia, many of these points would potentially be applicable in the other Merovingian kingdoms, see G. Halsall, 'Female status and power in early Merovingian central Austrasia: the burial evidence,' *Early Medieval Europe*, Vol. 5 (Oxford, 1996) p. 13.

¹¹³ For some examples of Frankish artifacts such as swords, brooches, belt buckles, jewelry or ornaments, see M. Martin, 'Wealth and treasure in the West, 4th-7th century,' in *The Transformation of the Roman World AD 400-900*, pp. 48-67, P. Périn, 'Le mobilier funéraire de la tombe d'Arégonde,' in *Rome et les Barbares: La Naissance d'un Nouveau Monde*, pp. 432-35, and P. Périn, 'Objets de parure et modes vestimentaires dans le monde mérovingien,' in *Ibid*, pp. 512-15.

quality and amount of good buried within the tomb itself, and were becoming more concerned with external displays such as visible tombstones or monuments.¹¹⁴ This is a possible representation of Gallo-Roman influence upon the communities over time, with traditionally ‘Roman’ styles and methods of displaying wealth for the departed replacing those ascribed to ‘Germanic’ burials.

The cultural exchanges taking place as reflected in the burial evidence represent a reciprocal process, one that took place gradually over generations, which experienced moments of direct alteration from the new elite if it was in their interests to effect such changes. As we have seen the upper stratus of Merovingian society generally favoured a Frankish identity in the military and secular spheres, but was not entirely exclusive to this, but for the everyday inhabitants of the realm and individuals who did not have any direct need to recreate themselves for social mobility, identity formation would have been a more organic process based upon a synthesis between the various peoples. The archaeological material generally represents such a synthesis through the sixth and seventh centuries in *Francia*, which corresponds with the histories, chronicles and legal texts earlier examined.

Paris, predominant capital of the Merovingian kings

The success of Paris as a capital city is obvious when one considers its role in the development of western civilization since the early medieval era, yet much like the cases

¹¹⁴ G. Halsall, *Cemeteries and Society in Merovingian Gaul: Selected Studies in History and Archaeology, 1992-2009* (Leiden, 2010) p. 213. This is also evident in the common usage of plaster for sarcophagus construction in the sixth and seventh centuries in Île-de-France, see S. Poignant and N. Warmé, ‘Les sarcophages de plâtre de la région parisienne: nouvelles approches et perspectives,’ *Actes des XXXe Journées internationales d’archéologie mérovingienne* (Bordeaux, 2009) p. 27.

of Toledo and Pavia, it served as the base for royal authority under a new non-Roman government. It is for this reason, despite the fact that unlike its counterparts it often had several royal *civitates* under competing Merovingian rulers, that Paris was selected as the first case study of this chapter. Exactly when the city of Paris came under the direct authority of the Franks is difficult to know for certain, but recent work has demonstrated the possibility of the Paris basin being controlled by Frankish forces as early as the reign of Childeric I (c.440-c.481).¹¹⁵ His successor Clovis I, following his victory over Alaric II (485-507) at Vouillé and then being raised to the consulate, established his royal seat of power at Paris at some point in 508.¹¹⁶ Although both Soissons and Paris would develop as major Neustrian political centres, and until 614 competing capital cities,¹¹⁷ it was the latter that would continue to be hotly contested as the predominant focal point with regards to the *civitates* of the *Teilreiche*.

There is also evidence for sixth-century settlement north of the Seine near what is now the suburb of Beaubourg,¹¹⁸ and this reflects the continued awareness contemporaries must have felt concerning Paris as a *civitas* of importance following the end of imperial government. Unfortunately during the French Revolution, certain Parisian sites, particularly at Saints-Innocents, were subjected to rapid excavation for reasons of sanitation, and much of the early medieval context was destroyed.¹¹⁹ Despite such setbacks it remains clear that under the heirs of Clovis its status was maintained and

¹¹⁵ G. Halsall, *Barbarian Migrations and the Roman West 376-568*, p. 303.

¹¹⁶ Gregory of Tours, *Libri Historiarum X*, II. 38.

¹¹⁷ M. Innes, *Introduction to Early Medieval Western Europe, 300-900: The Sword, the Plough and the Book*, p. 285.

¹¹⁸ N. Gauthier, 'From the Ancient City to the Medieval Town: Continuity and Change in the Early Middle Ages,' pp. 62-3.

¹¹⁹ B. Effros, *Merovingian Mortuary Archaeology and the Making of the Early Middle Ages*, p. 15.

further reinforced by various methods, particularly during the reigns of Childebert I, Chilperic I and Chlothar II regarding its urban vitality and significance.

Although Paris was one of several cities associated with Clovis I during his reign, along with Orléans, Soissons and Rheims,¹²⁰ his selection of this urban centre as his capital and subsequent burial at the basilica of St. Denis in 511,¹²¹ elevated Paris to a higher status in terms of *dignitas* and prestige. It has been argued that the farther from the centre of the Merovingian court one went, the lesser the extent of direct royal authority,¹²² so along the same reasoning it would make sense that the location of the tomb for such a king as Clovis I would be where Merovingian power was at its strongest and most potent. It is perhaps no coincidence that the only documented large-scale market of Merovingian Paris is found in St. Denis,¹²³ although, since it was founded c. 634-5 by Dagobert I with toll privileges more than a century later,¹²⁴ it is difficult to know for certain if such factors played a role in his decision to set up this economic structure. Gregory does refer to a *domus negotiantum* within the urban area of Paris

¹²⁰ G. Halsall, *Barbarian Migrations and the Roman West 376-568*, p. 309.

¹²¹ Gregory of Tours, *Libri Historiarum X*, II, 43. The burial of royal family members continued at Saint Denis, for the example of Queen Arégonde, see M. Fleury and A. France-Lanord, 'Fouilles de la nécropole de la basilique de Saint-Denis,' *L'Île-de-France de Clovis à Hugues Capet : du Ve siècle au Xe siècle*, p. 86, and P. Périn 'Nouvelles propositions pour la reconstitution du costume d'Arégonde,' *Actes des XXIXe Journées internationales d'archéologie mérovingienne*, p. 17, and for the local aristocracy emulating this *ad sanctos* inhumation rather than traditional mound burials, see M. Schmauder, 'The relationship between Frankish *gens* and *regnum*: a proposal based on the archaeological evidence,' in H.W. Goetz et al., edd., *Regna and Gentes: The Relationship between Late Antique and Early Medieval Peoples and Kingdoms in the Transformation of the Roman World* (Leiden and Boston, 2003) pp. 285-286.

¹²² H.J. Hummer, *Politics and Power in Early Medieval Europe: Alsace and the Frankish Realm, 600-1000*, p. 48.

¹²³ For information regarding the market at St. Denis see Y. Hen, *Culture and Religion in Merovingian Gaul A.D. 481-751*, p. 232.

¹²⁴ *Gesta Dagoberti*, B. Krusch, ed., *MGH, SRM*, II (Hanover, 1888) 34.

itself,¹²⁵ so in the sixth century there continued to exist some official institution pertaining to trade and commerce.

The location of the royal treasury and fisc within Paris as the capital was also an important factor in the evolution of the city from the sixth century onwards. “Clovis’ formidable widow, Chlothild, controlled Paris and the royal treasury and forced Theuderic to divide the kingdom with his young half-brothers, Chlodomer, Childebert and Chlothar.”¹²⁶ As was mentioned earlier in this chapter, Childebert I took Paris as his seat of power, and would in the year 558 found the church of St. Croix-et-St. Vincent (the modern St. Germain-des-Prés) to hold both a piece of the True Cross and the tunic of St. Vincent.¹²⁷ In keeping with the growing trend of settlements growing around holy relics and tombs, such possessions further promoted Paris as a major urban centre at not only the ecclesiastical level, but also at the secular, since the Frankish aristocracy and monarchs desired association with such sacred items. The continued success of this foundation is illustrated with the burial of Chilperic I there in 584,¹²⁸ although this is to be expected of this particular ruler, who is supposed to have not only aimed to reintroduce chariot racing in the city,¹²⁹ but also to have kept a private residence outside

¹²⁵ Gregory of Tours, *Libri Historiarum X*, VI. 32, and VII. 33.

¹²⁶ G. Halsall, *Barbarian Migrations and the Roman West 376-568*, p. 308.

¹²⁷ A. Dierkens and P. Périn, ‘Death and burial in Gaul and Germania, 4th-8th century,’ p. 86.

¹²⁸ Gregory of Tours, *Libri Historiarum X*, VI. 46, and Nancy Gauthier, ‘From the Ancient City to the Medieval Town: Continuity and Change in the Early Middle Ages,’ p. 50.

¹²⁹ As Nancy Gauthier has pointed out, we are not only unsure about whether or not such a circus was constructed in Paris, but also whether it was *extra muros* or *intra muros*, so its potential function as an urban facility is questionable on all levels, see N. Gauthier, ‘From the Ancient City to the Medieval Town: Continuity and Change in the Early Middle Ages,’ p. 61.

Paris in Chelles,¹³⁰ both of which point to an individual with a strong connection to urban life and suburban residency which the Roman aristocracy had favoured.

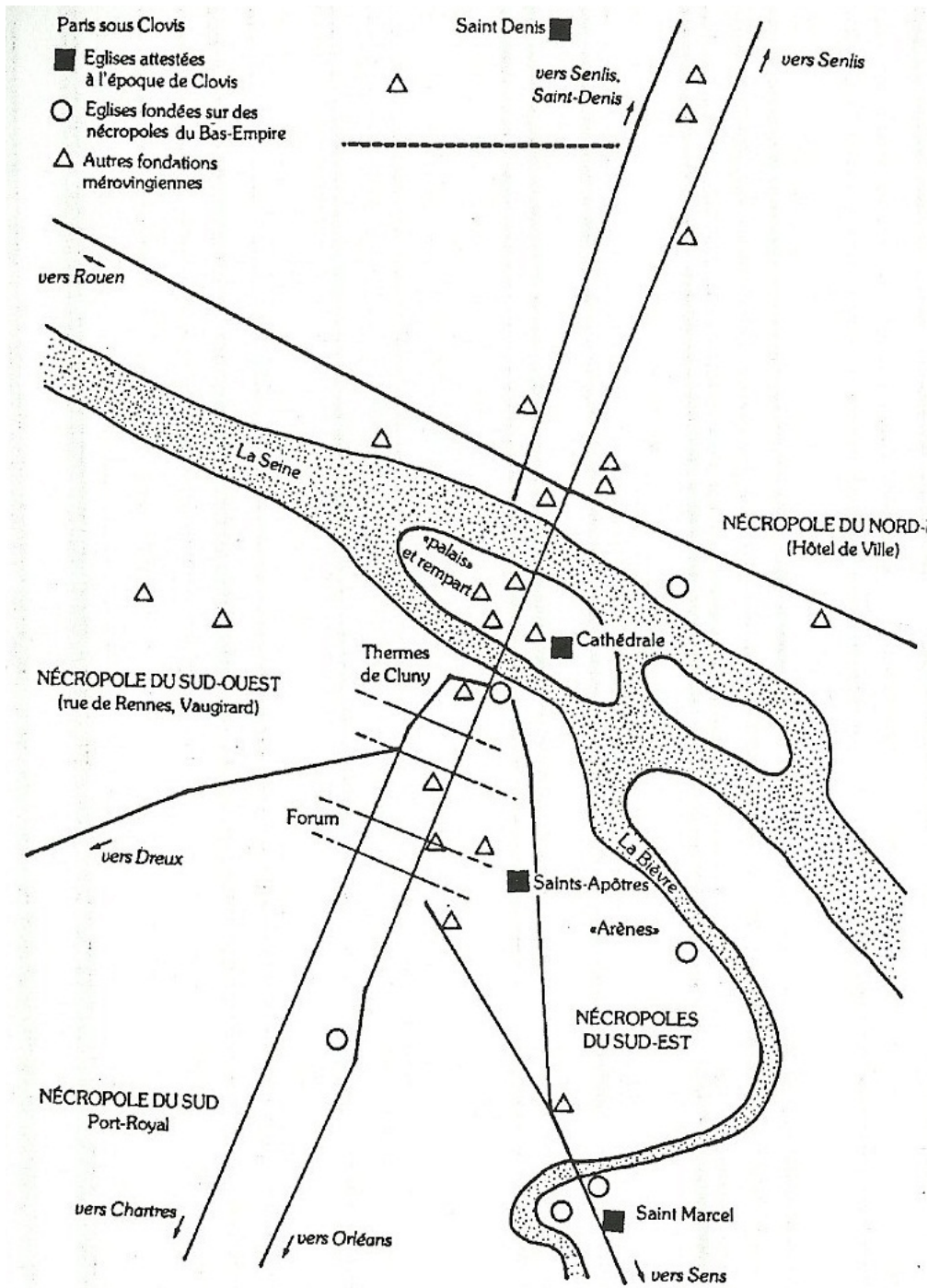
The division of the Frankish realm into four constituent *Teilreiche* occurred again upon the death of Chlothar I in 561, with his four sons establishing themselves in the following manner: Charibert (561-7) ruled from Paris, Sigibert I (561-75) based himself at Rheims, Chilperic I (561-84) inherited his father's traditional territory at Soissons, and finally, Guntramn (561-92) set up his throne in Orléans.¹³¹ Although this at first seems like a straightforward transition of power to four equal capitals, it must be acknowledged that with the death of Chlothar I his son Chilperic I rushed to try and seize Paris before any of his brothers established themselves first.¹³² Clearly to Merovingian contemporaries of the latter sixth century, Paris was the most important economic and political hub in the Frankish territories; it was of such value that Chilperic I felt it worthwhile to risk his inheritance of Soissons in order to try and seize Paris from Charibert.

The view of Paris as 'first among equals' by both the Merovingian royalty and Frankish aristocracy continued into the seventh century; the assembly of 614 shortly after Chlothar II had reunited the Frankish realm reflects this special prestige associated with

¹³⁰ Gregory of Tours, *Libri Historiarum X*, V. 39.

¹³¹ R. Collins, 'The western kingdoms' p. 120.

¹³² It is unclear as to whether Chlothar had made arrangements for this division prior to his death, or whether his sons acted in their own interests in order to counter Chilperic's ambition. The fact that Gregory displays a constant dislike for Chilperic I may perhaps further obscure our view of the events through his own biases and agenda when writing. For the accession of the sons of Chlothar I, see Gregory of Tours, *Libri Historiarum X*, IV. 22.



Although technically referring the early sixth century, this map shows the key Merovingian sites and layout of early medieval Paris. For the original version of this map see L.C. Feffer and P. Périn, *Les Francs* (Paris, 1997) p. 174.

the city.¹³³ Historians have emphasized the reign of Chlothar II from Neustria as a fundamental re-stabilizing of the region, due to the reforms and reaffirmation of local power which were promulgated in his edict.¹³⁴ Although the elite of Austrasia continued to view rule from Paris as Neustrian, and eventually requested that Chlothar II send his son Dagobert I to act as co-ruler from Metz in 623,¹³⁵ there is a clear illustration of the preeminence of Paris when, following the death of the former in 629, Dagobert I then immediately set out to rule from Paris and later sent his own son Sigibert III to rule in Austrasia.¹³⁶ Unfortunately for the Merovingian line, this very stability within the *Teilreiche* would pave the way for the gradual Pippinid rise to power over the seventh and eighth centuries, and to their eventual establishment of the Carolingian dynasty in 751.

Although *les rois fainéants* continued to act as arbiters in conflicts, the real mechanisms of government and authority were transferred over time to the *maior domo*. Following his victory at Tertry in 687, Pippin of Herstal, the majordomo of Austrasia (680-714), and of Neustria and Burgundy (687-95), established his own mayorial dynasty along the same lines as the Merovingian kingdoms, with his focus upon Paris and Neustria as the hinterland of the Frankish realm.¹³⁷ It is quite clear that the Merovingian

¹³³ M. Innes, *Introduction to Early Medieval Western Europe, 300-900: The Sword, the Plough and the Book*, p. 286.

¹³⁴ P. Geary, *Before France and Germany: the Creation and Transformation of the Merovingian World*, pp. 152-53.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 154, and for a distinct cultural difference between ‘Latin’ Neustria and ‘Germanic’ Austrasia in the 620’s, see E. James, *The Franks*, p. 233.

¹³⁶ Fredegar, *Fredegarii et aliorum chronica*, IV. 75, and I. Wood, *The Merovingian Kingdoms, 450-751*, p. 145.

¹³⁷ H.J. Hummer, *Politics and Power in Early Medieval Europe: Alsace and the Frankish Realm, 600-1000*, p. 34, and for a concise account on the rise of the Pippinid

rulers were not the only ones willing to risk everything for a chance at governing Neustria, the local aristocracy was equally interested in the social, economic and political function attached to Paris and the territories it governed.

It is likely that on Île de la Cité there is a seventh-century Merovingian palace underneath what is now the Palais de Justice.¹³⁸ The site is considered to date from approximately the second half of the sixth century to the beginning of the seventh



An overhead depiction of what Merovingian Paris likely looked like based on archaeological and literary sources. For this illustration and more information see *L'Île de France de Clovis à Hugues Capet*, (exposition), (Île-de-France, 1993) p. 135.

dynasty, see P. Périn and G. Duchet-Suchaux, *Clovis et les Mérovingiens, vers 250-751* (Paris, 2002) pp. 130-131.

¹³⁸ N. Gauthier, 'From the Ancient City to the Medieval Town: Continuity and Change in the Early Middle Ages,' p. 61.

century, and consists of a palatine along with the complex associated with it; the site has been attributed to the same period as the palatine complex found in Reccopolis which was examined in the third chapter of this thesis.¹³⁹ Earlier works contemplated a strong Gallo-Roman influence in the architecture of the Merovingian palace in Paris.¹⁴⁰ A substantial palace complex is to be expected in the major capital of the Frankish kingdoms, but the fact that it dates to the same period as the first phase of Reccopolis is interesting. It coincides roughly with the period in which Chlothar II was unifying the Frankish realm under his rule, and could potentially represent a royal project at reinforcing the royal prestige within the city of Paris, in order to bolster his authority in the capital. Even though it has been argued that Chlothar II retired to his rural estate at Clichy near Saint Denis,¹⁴¹ the outward display of royal status within Paris to his subjects would have been worth maintaining by means of an expensive palace complex. The king would also be required to be present in Paris for various secular and ecclesiastical functions, those which his estate at Clichy lacked the logistics to support, and it is reasonable to assume he would desire suitable accommodation when this occurred.

The recent discovery of seven new examples of Merovingian bone and antler buckle-plates, ranging from Champagne to Île-de-France, have been used as potential

¹³⁹ L. Olmo Enciso, 'Recópolis: una ciudad en una época de transformaciones,' in L. Olmo Enciso ed., *Recópolis y la ciudad en la Época Visigoda* (Alcalá de Henares, 2008) p. 51.

¹⁴⁰ N. Duval, P. Périn and J.C. Picard, 'La topographie de Paris au Haut Moyen Age,' *L'Île-de-France de Clovis à Hugues Capet : du Ve siècle au Xe siècle*, pp. 134-135. Whether or not this is the site of the original *palatium* which Clovis used as his royal palace is unclear. For Clovis using this Late Roman structure, see L.C. Feffer and P. Périn, *Les Francs* (Paris, 1997) p. 175.

¹⁴¹ J. Barbier, 'Palais royaux et possessions fiscales en Île-de-France,' *L'Île-de-France de Clovis à Hugues Capet : du Ve siècle au Xe siècle*, p. 42.

signs that the ‘Germanic’ custom of being buried with items from daily life continued into at least the mid-sixth century in the western and central regions of the Frankish realm.¹⁴² Earlier ‘delphiniformes’ buckles from the fourth to fifth centuries have been argued as representative of a ‘Germanic’ population and settlement in the region of Paris,¹⁴³ and the views on the bone and antler finds dating to the sixth century follow the same school of thought. It could be that such finds represent the above settlements, but trying to attribute them to any particular ethnic group within the overall ‘Germanic’ label is troublesome. It does demonstrate that into the seventh century these types of burials were taking place in the Neustrian region of the Frankish kingdom to some extent, and not only in Austrasia which has traditionally been viewed as less Romanized and more Frankish in its identity.

It is also in the final quarter of the sixth century that the coinage issued in the Merovingian *Teilreiche* begins to undergo an important transformation. Throughout the century prior to this the coins issued in *Francia* showed clear signs of *imitatio imperii* and displayed the image and name of the Byzantine emperor at the time.¹⁴⁴ After about the year 575, however, the name and image of the king begin to replace this, and in the sixth and seventh centuries coins bearing the stamp ‘PA’ begin to circulate; whether the stamp refers to ‘Paris’ or ‘Palais’ is currently unknown.¹⁴⁵ In any case, this clearly shows that not only were the Merovingian rulers beginning to distinguish themselves from the

¹⁴² J. F. Goret et al., ‘Mérovingiennes en matière dure animale,’ *Archéologie Médiévale*, No. 40 (Caen, 2010) p. 33.

¹⁴³ P. Van Ossel, ‘L’Antiquité Tardive (IV^e-V^e siècle),’ in *L’Île-de-France de Clovis à Hugues Capet : du Ve siècle au Xe siècle*, p. 26.

¹⁴⁴ J. Lafaurie, ‘Monnaies émises en Île-de-France et circulation monétaire,’ *L’Île-de-France de Clovis à Hugues Capet : du Ve siècle au Xe siècle*, p. 47.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid*, p. 47.

Byzantine East and a heritage of Late Roman federate service, but also that urban centres were viewed as a fundamental point of commercial activity, with the initials of either cities such as Paris, or of the administrative buildings responsible for their minting, stamped on to the coins.

The Merovingian capital of Paris differed from the previous Visigothic and Lombard cases from a structural perspective, in that it was not traditionally enclosed by a singular city wall during the Late Roman period. “En effet, à la différence de la plupart des villes gallo-romaines et pour raisons topographiques propres, Paris ne s’est pas enfermé au Bas-Empire dans une vaste enceinte, mais a fondé sa défense sur deux points fortifiés, la Cité et le Forum.”¹⁴⁶ The fortifications that emerged around Île de la Cité and the previous Roman forum created a unique socio-political and ecclesiastical dynamic in early medieval Paris; the ruling elite and holders of high secular or religious office were primarily based in the former section of the city, while commercial and residential functions were met by the latter.¹⁴⁷ The situation is paralleled to some degree by the developments in Tours, where fortification of the *castrum* eventually led to a division of the urban space into what would become Tours and Châteauneuf by the tenth century. Having examined the underlying factors contributing to how Paris was established as the *sedes regia* of the Merovingian realm, and the relationships between the ruling elite and the urban environment there, it is clear that the city witnessed a continuity of some Late Roman traditions, due to the initial policies of the Frankish kings

¹⁴⁶ P. Périn, ‘Les cimetières mérovingiens de Paris,’ in *Paris et Île-de-France: Mémoires*, Vol. 32 (Paris, 1982) p. 98.

¹⁴⁷ This bipolar division of early medieval Paris has been attributed to earlier fourth century fortifications constructed in Late Roman *lutecia* as well, see A. Dierkens and P. Périn, ‘Les Sedes Regiae Mérovingiennes entre Sein et Rhin,’ in J. Gurt and G. Ripoll edd., *Sedes Regiae (ann. 400-800)*, (Barcelona, 2000) p. 274.

up until the seventh century, but was then followed by a clear alteration to the urban framework. There was also a promotion of more ‘Frankish’ customs in seventh-century Paris as well, for example, in the removal of imperial imagery from coinage in favour of depictions of the Merovingian kings.

Tours as an ecclesiastical centre during the Merovingian period

For any historian attempting to gain an understanding of secular urban life during the Merovingian period, with particular interest in the city of Tours, the vast material produced by its nineteenth bishop Gregory is a mixed blessing. Although writing a primary account of the events which occurred in the *civitas*, Gregory of Tours only refers to his see with respect to his own ecclesiastical office and tasks, otherwise his style of ‘grand narrative’ tends to focus upon political events taking place at royal centres such as the neighbouring city of Orléans.¹⁴⁸ This often prevents the reader from gaining any knowledge of cultural interaction taking place within Tours itself, but as we saw earlier with the feud between Gregory and the *comes* Leudast, the former does occasionally make direct references to secular authorities and local administration.¹⁴⁹ Much like the Visigothic case of Merida, Tours was a prominent ecclesiastical and economic centre with a relatively well documented history.

¹⁴⁸ Perhaps the most interesting example is that of Guntramn refusing to rebuild the local Synagogue in the city, with a clear display of anti-semitism, of which Gregory is in full support as to be expected in an Early Medieval Christian context, see Gregory of Tours, *Libri Historiarum X*, VIII. 1.

¹⁴⁹ For example, in the discussion of Mummolus and his success in restoring Tours and Poitiers to King Sigibert I after the failed campaign of Chilperic I to gain control, see *Ibid*, IV. 45.

It is interesting that throughout the conflict with Leudast, it was not only the secular authorities of *dux* Berulf and *comes* Eunomius who supported the accusations against Gregory for slander against Queen Fredegund,¹⁵⁰ but also some of the native clergymen of Tours itself. Concerning this issue, Ian Wood illustrated just how powerful a concept such as local urban identity could be in the sixth century, when he wrote: “It was during this crisis that Gregory was criticized as not being a local: even a bishop who belonged to the episcopal dynasty of Tours could be portrayed by his own clergy as an outsider.”¹⁵¹ It is likely that these members of his clergy were of Gallo-Roman ancestry similar to Gregory himself, so this opposition is most likely not due to any particular local animosity between Frankish and Roman residents or officials, although this may have been a factor with respect to the secular authorities such as Berulf or Leudast. There is little chance of determining such motives through the evidence, so unfortunately we will have to be content with the knowledge that there did exist a strong sense of local identity in sixth century Tours, or at the very least, such a sentiment could be conveniently used in order to ostracize an individual.

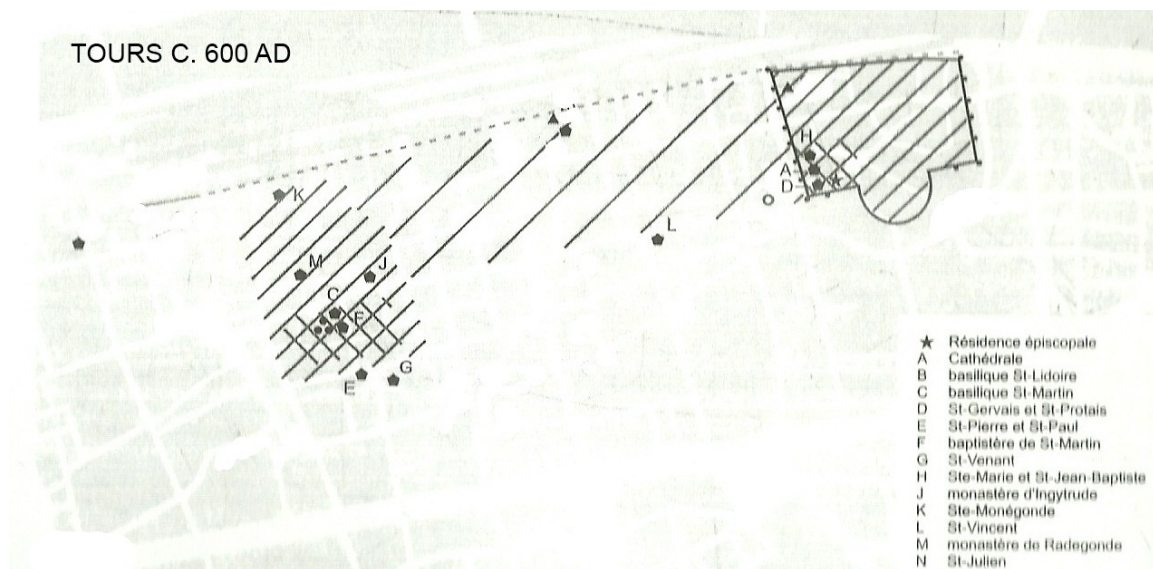
The notion of *civitates* such as Tours having a strong sense of localized urban culture is further reinforced in the avoidance of taxation and military service by the people of Tours on the grounds of Late Roman exemptions. Along with clinging to the past prestige and legal standing of the specific *civitas* if it was of continued benefit under the Merovingian kings, it has been proposed that the elections of officials, both secular and ecclesiastical, were localized affairs over which the ruler gave his approval and

¹⁵⁰Ibid, V. 49.

¹⁵¹ I. Wood, *The Merovingian Kingdoms 450-751*, p. 87, Ian Wood also discusses how the bishopric of Tours essentially functioned as a family see in the sixth century in I. Wood, *Gregory of Tours* (Bangor, 1994) p. 10.

consent.¹⁵² We observed a clear illustration of this localized administration and social system earlier with the discussion surrounding the removal of Leudast from office, and this also had strong implications with regards to the the patronage of the Merovingian rulers of the *civitas* and its environs.

On this connection between the royal court and local authorities, Gregory provides insight into the summoning of members of the government to suburban residences of the king. For example, Gregory was summoned by King Chilperic to his



The above map shows the layout of early medieval Tours in around the seventh century, with a number of key sites illustrated. The original map prior to modification is available in H. Galinié, 'La formation du secteur martinien,' in H. Galinié, ed., *Tours antique et médiévale: Lieux de vie, temps de la ville. 40 ans d'archéologie urbaine* (Tours, 2007) p. 365.

¹⁵² M. Innes, *Introduction to Early Medieval Western Europe, 300-900: The Sword, the Plough and the Book*, p. 279.

manor at Nogent-sur-marne, apparently in order for the latter to display several luxury items brought back by an embassy to the East.¹⁵³ Gregory then goes on to tell how the Bishop of Rheims arrived at the manor leading an embassy from the court of Childebert with the proposal of an alliance,¹⁵⁴ and these passages represent some interesting points concerning the relationship between the local elite and royal court: First, the fact that, in the sixth century at least, kings continued to maintain suburban residences in some form is made quite clear. Second, the fascination of Chilperic with Roman culture is reflected in his desire to display the many Byzantine treasures brought back to *Francia*. Finally, although the *comites* were responsible within the *civitates* for collection of taxes and local administration, it was not unusual for ecclesiastical members of the aristocracy to lead embassies or attend upon the king at one of his suburban homes. Unfortunately archaeological work in the area around Tours has not as yet yielded any evidence for such sixth century Merovingian structures, but the continued reference to such buildings by Gregory provides a strong case for their continued use.

The connection between Tours itself and the *territorium* which it governed over that was *extra muros* is also worth examining in the records. Gregory wrote that *dux* Berulf, upon learning that the men of Bourges planned to invade the district around Tours, marched his army into the area and the territory around Yzeures and Barrou both of which were near Tours itself were completely devastated.¹⁵⁵ This shows that military campaigns did not always have to directly assault or occupy the main *civitas* of the area,

¹⁵³ Gregory of Tours, *Libri Historiarum* X,VI. 2.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid*, VI. 3.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid*, VI. 12.

but by damaging its revenues from the surrounding countryside and respective towns a substantial blow could be dealt to the opposing Merovingian ruler. The fact that the aristocracy and *leudes* in the sixth century, and most likely into the seventh and eighth centuries, were aware of the strong economic and social ties between the urban, suburban and rural areas demonstrates that to the Frankish elite a sense of urban identity was at the very foreground of their decision-making processes.¹⁵⁶ The city of Tours did not have the social or political import that the royal capital of Paris did during the Merovingian period, but it remained a site of significance both in terms of its ecclesiastical status and also its strategic importance with regards to revenues and control over the neighbouring territories. The writings of Gregory of Tours have given further prestige and status to this city as well, due to the fact that it is one of the best documented *civitates* in the Merovingian realm because of his work.

There are some structures and urban developments concerning early medieval Tours which the archaeological record provides more detail. For example, with the incorporation of the Roman amphitheatre into the local defences of the *castrum* and *domus episcopi* during the sixth century. “En Tours, la *domus episcopi* está defendida por las murallas del anfiteatro.”¹⁵⁷ It is precisely due to this reutilization of the

¹⁵⁶ The rural and agrarian aspects of this relationship were particularly important in the northern territories of the realm, see E. Louis, ‘A de-Romanized landscape in Northern Gaul: The Scarpe Valley from the 4th to 9th century AD,’ in W. Bowden et al., edd., *Recent Research on the Late Antique Countryside* (Leiden, 2004) p. 482.

¹⁵⁷ P. Mateos Cruz, *La Basílica de Santa Eulalia de Mérida: Arqueología y Urbanismo* (Madrid, 1999) p. 191, and for the seventh and eighth century enlargements of the ramparts at Tours, see H. Galinié, “Le fouille du site du ‘Château’,” in Galinié, H., ed., *Tours antique et médiéval: Lieux de vie, temps de la ville. 40 ans d’archéologie urbaine* (Tours, 2007) p. 70. For the earliest phase of fortifications dating to the third century, see J. Seigne, ‘La fortification de la ville au Bas Empire, de l’amphithéâtre-forteresse au *castrum*,’ *Tours antique et médiéval: Lieux de vie, temps de la ville. 40 ans*

amphitheatre in the early medieval fortifications at Tours that a section remained from the earlier period of what had been one of the largest amphitheatres in Roman Gaul;¹⁵⁸ the vast majority of the Roman city was abandoned and ceased to be maintained. The map of Tours included in this thesis clearly illustrates the protrusion of the amphitheatre from the *castrum* and the open spaces between the fortified area and early medieval settlements as well. The amphitheatre was first discovered in 1850, and it took some time for the structure to be distinguished from the ramparts which it had been used to support.¹⁵⁹ It is clear that the local aristocracy of Tours was capable of modifying the local urban infrastructure to suit new functions during the early medieval period, and compared with the preceding case studies Tours provides what is arguably the clearest example of breaking with Late Roman architectural tradition.

Although urban archaeology was conducted sporadically at Tours over the course of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, it was not until the 1980's that a more concerted effort to understand the evidence for early medieval Tours began to develop and build momentum.¹⁶⁰ Recent work has demonstrated that the temple on la Rue

d'archéologie urbaine, p. 248. A recent study of the decisions behind reutilizing the amphitheatre at Tours for various reasons can be found in B. Lefebvre, 'Modèles de réutilisation des amphithéâtres antiques dans la formation des tissus urbains,' *M@ppemonde*, No. 101. 1 (Avignon, 2011) pp. 1-22.

¹⁵⁸ B. Lefebvre, 'Modéliser les dynamiques spatiales d'un tissu urbain dans la longue durée (en plan et en volume),' *In Situ*, Vol. 9 (Tours, 2008) p. 5.

¹⁵⁹ H. Galinié, 'L'archéologie dans son siècle, 1840-1960,' in H. Galinié, ed., *Tours antique et médiéval: Lieux de vie, temps de la ville. 40 ans d'archéologie urbaine*, p. 25.

¹⁶⁰ M. Massi, 'Politiques publiques, aménagement et archéologie depuis 1960,' *Tours antique et médiéval: Lieux de vie, temps de la ville. 40 ans d'archéologie urbaine*, p. 34, and for a detailed description of each of the seven main contributing organizations to urban archaeology in Tours, such as L'Association pour les Fouilles Archéologiques Nationales, see L. Bourgeau, H. Galinié and S. Janichen, 'Les acteurs de l'archéologie aujourd'hui, 1968-2007,' *Tours antique et médiéval: Lieux de vie, temps de la ville. 40 ans d'archéologie urbaine*, pp. 36-38.

Nationale, established in around 39 AD, was converted to a *necropolis* at some point between the sixth and eighth centuries, but that it was only briefly used due to a general low number of burials.¹⁶¹ The situation in Merovingian Tours was one of gradual division between the sector associated with the secular administration and Late Roman city, centred around the fortified *castrum*, and the new ecclesiastical focal points outside the walls such as the *vicus* associated with the basilica of Saint Martin.¹⁶² The burial of Gregory of Tours at Saint Martin in 594 also served to reinforce and enhance its status as the most important suburban structure in the area to its contemporaries of the sixth century.¹⁶³ The space between the two urban poles of Tours was occupied by the lands belonging to the Saint Julien and Saint Vincent monasteries.¹⁶⁴ The urban space since the time of Roman *Caesarodunum* had by the time of the Merovingians already experienced significant ruralization of open spaces, and Christianization of the locale.

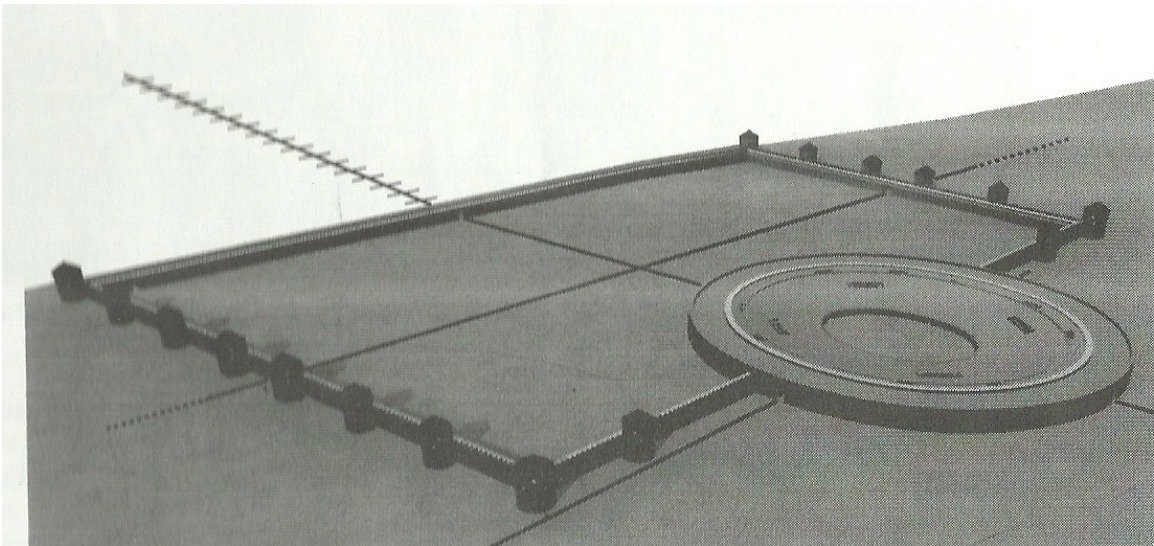
¹⁶¹ A.M. Jouquand, 'La fouille du temple de la rue Nationale,' *Tours antique et médiéval: Lieux de vie, temps de la ville. 40 ans d'archéologie urbaine*, p. 197. For information on the difficulties of insufficient burial goods in Merovingian *necropoles*, consult J.M. Sauget and B. Fizellier Sauget, 'L'archéologie funéraire mérovingienne en Auvergne. Note de présentation,' in B. Fizellier-Sauget dir., *L'Auvergne de Sidoine Apollinaire à Grégoire de Tours: Histoire et Archéologie* (Clermont-Ferrand, 1991) p. 183.

¹⁶² H. Galinié, 'La formation du secteur martinien,' *Tours antique et médiéval: Lieux de vie, temps de la ville. 40 ans d'archéologie urbaine*, p. 365, and for more information on the revitalization of Tours in the sixth century, see D. Dubant, 'Commerce et navigation sur la Loire. Le cas des portes de Tours au Haut Moyen Age,' *Actes de XXe Journées internationales d'archéologie mérovingienne*, p. 83.

¹⁶³ C. Lelong, *La Basilique Saint-Martin de Tours* (Tours, 1986) p. 25, and for the prior burials that had already boosted the local piety of the basilica, see H. Galinié, 'Tours du IVe siècle au VIe siècle: La ville de Grégoire et celles des archéologues,' *Actes des XVIe Journées internationales d'archéologie mérovingienne*, p. 20.

¹⁶⁴ H. Galinié, 'Reflections on Early Medieval Tours,' in B. Hobley and R. Hodges, edd., *The Rebirth of Tours in the West, AD 700-1050* (London, 1986) p. 58. It is worth nothing that Merovingian monasteries in the sixth to seventh centuries were often highly fortified, more closely resembling *castella* or *castra*, see J. Le Maho, 'La côte neustrienne: observations sur le littoral norman du VI^e au IX^e siècle,' *Actes des XVIIe Journées internationales d'archéologie mérovingienne* (Caen, 2006) p. 22.

The above process was continued during the Merovingian period, with the division of the city into secular-military and ecclesiastical focal points. The sixth to eighth centuries saw an increased level of construction and population in the *suburbium civitatis* of Tours as well. It is easy to see why Gregory of Tours and Leudast were unable to accommodate one another, given the socially divided nature of the city they lived in. This is not to say that there was urban collapse at Tours, as the construction of new buildings did occur in the early medieval period, but that there was a high level of reorganization taking place in contrast with the other cases.



The above image shows how the amphitheatre at Tours was utilized and incorporated into the ramparts of the castrum of the city, for this model and greater information on the fortifications at Tours refer to J. Seigne, 'La fortification de la ville au Bas Empire, de l'amphithéâtre-forteresse au castrum,' in H. Galinié, ed., *Tours antique et medieval: Lieux de vie, temps de la ville. 40 ans d'archéologie urbaine* (Tours, 2007) p. 253.

The Austrasian political centre of Metz

The literary sources and material evidence with which we will examine the city of Metz is slightly unique in relation the previous two case studies, in that there are no extent primary sources written from an Austrasian perspective concerning the city itself, in contrast with the situation in Paris or Tours, and also in that there has recently been somewhat of a boom in the archaeological study of Metz, largely due to to the continued efforts of Guy Halsall since 1995.¹⁶⁵ The site of Metz was chosen for its political role as a later Merovingian capital following the early seventh century, although in contrast to Reccopolis a functioning and enduring one, and due to the fact that like Cividale in the *regnum Langobardorum*, Metz was defending the eastern frontiers of the Frankish realm once Rheims was overwhelmed by the Avars at some point during that time.¹⁶⁶ The importance of Metz in the areas of frontier defence and clerical influence within Austrasia were two of the main reasons for its prominence under Merovingian rule.

The *civitas* of Metz had grown under Roman government with significant economic output during the second and third centuries, although by c. 350 evidence of a fire at Metz is potentially representative of a period of social strife and declining

¹⁶⁵ In particular see G. Halsall, 'Female status and power in early Merovingian central Austrasia: the burial evidence,' G. Halsall, *Settlement and Social Organization: The Merovingian Region of Metz* (Cambridge, 1995), G. Halsall, 'Towns, Societies and Ideas: The Not-so-strange Case of Late Roman and Early Merovingian Metz,' and G. Halsall, 'Villas, Territories and Communities in Merovingian Northern Gaul,'.

¹⁶⁶ Even though Austrasia largely rose in power around Rheims in the sixth century, it has been advocated that Metz was in fact the political centre of the kingdom, see M. Innes, *Introduction to Early Medieval Western Europe, 300-900: The Sword, the Plough and the Book*, p. 285.

fortunes.¹⁶⁷ There is a hiatus in the archaeological record from c. 400-550 with regards to the level of urbanization or economic output at Metz,¹⁶⁸ although for the years c. 525-625 the excavation of the largest cemetery in the diocese of Metz, that of Ennery, which consists of 82 graves of which 50 are intact, has yielded some interesting evidence concerning the local culture.¹⁶⁹ By the seventh century there appears to have been a shift away from shared cemeteries in favour of each settlement having one of its own,¹⁷⁰ which may reflect, as Halsall has argued, an attempt to reform local social bonds following the disruption caused during the sixth century.¹⁷¹ This is indicative of a Frankish identity emerging at the local levels; if the new settlers were initially buried separately from the indigenous population as has been suggested,¹⁷² then logically with the establishment of one cemetery per settlement in the seventh century,¹⁷³ some degree of synthesis and integration had taken place up to that point.

It is worth bearing in mind when examining cemeteries that the term ‘Merovingian’ technically referred to the royal dynasty of the Franks, but did not

¹⁶⁷ G. Halsall, ‘Towns, Societies and Ideas: The Not-so-strange Case of Late Roman and Early Merovingian Metz,’ p. 241.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid, p. 245.

¹⁶⁹ G. Halsall, ‘Female status and power in early Merovingian central Austrasia: the burial evidence,’ p. 4.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid, p. 11.

¹⁷¹ Ibid, p. 13.

¹⁷² A. Dierkens and P. Périn, ‘Death and burial in Gaul and Germania, 4th-8th century,’ p. 89.

¹⁷³ For details concerning the role of the clergy in the populace adopting cemetery burials during the sixth and seventh centuries, see B. Effros, ‘Grave goods and the ritual expression of identity,’ in T.F.X. Noble ed., *From Roman Provinces to Medieval Kingdoms* (London, 2006) p. 220.

distinguish between the ethnicities of those individuals who were subject to the crown.¹⁷⁴ On the topic of burials at Metz, six primary *necropoles* were in use during the early medieval period and constitute the basis, along with their respective ecclesiastical structures where present, for archaeological research of burials within the urban area; those of le Jardin-Botanique, Halles, Brasserie Messine, Saint-Pierre-aux-Nonnains, Saint Arnoul and the amphitheatre.¹⁷⁵ There is evidence for Gallo-Roman artistic influences in the sculptures found in the chancellery of Saint-Pierre-aux-Nonnains, particularly noticeable in the heads of the statues.¹⁷⁶ There is also evidence for probable Merovingian artistic style found at the same location, in the usage of spiral and cross-based designs along with the thematic depictions of birds in the artwork and sculpture.¹⁷⁷ The sculptures at Saint-Pierre-aux-Nonnains are interesting in that they are taken from approximately the same context of the sixth to seventh centuries, and represent a range of cultural styles and differing artistic themes.

The original basilica was built in around the year 400 AD, and after having been damaged by a fire in the mid-fifth century, it was later reoccupied by the Merovingians at

¹⁷⁴ Bonnie Effros discusses this matter and its relation to the study of early medieval burials in *Francia* and Early Medieval Europe, see B. Effros, *Merovingian Mortuary Archaeology and the Making of the Early Middle Ages*, pp. 4-5.

¹⁷⁵ An abundance of high quality goods have been uncovered from these sites, see M. Clermont-Joly, 'Metz a l'epoque mérovingienne. Etats des découvertes archéologiques,' in F. Yves le Moigne, dir., *Patrimoine et Culture en Lorraine* (Metz, 1980) p. 81.

¹⁷⁶ G. Collot, 'Le chancel de Saint-Pierre-aux-Nonnains,' *Patrimoine et Culture en Lorraine*, p. 138.

¹⁷⁷ For these points and more information on common Merovingian artistic themes, see *Ibid*, p. 143, M. Will, 'Un nouvel essai de datation du chancel de Saint-Pierre-aux-Nonnains à Metz,' *Actes des XVIIe Journées internationales d'archéologie mérovingienne de l'Association Française d'Archéologie Mérovingienne*, p. 39, and F. Heber-Suffrin, 'Le décor animalier du chancel de Saint-Pierre-aux-Nonnains à Metz,' *Actes des Xe Journées internationales d'archéologie mérovingienne* (Metz, 1988) p. 47.

some point in the seventh century.¹⁷⁸ This is a reflection of the strong ecclesiastical developments the Frankish kingdoms experienced during the seventh and eighth centuries, particularly in the area of religious construction, and the Christianization of the city and countryside that had begun in the fifth and sixth centuries throughout Gaul. Outside of the urban centre of Metz itself about twelve kilometres to the North lies the Merovingian cemetery of Ennery, consisting of eighty tombs; this site has been extensively studied by individuals such as Guy Halsall due to its high number of burial goods found.¹⁷⁹ Items such as *scramasaxes*, lances, axes and javelins constitute some of the finds associated with male burials, while cosmetic items such as bone combs and brooches have been attributed to the female burials at Ennery.¹⁸⁰ The *scramasaxes* uncovered at Ennery and at Metz have been shown to reflect those of other Frankish regions.¹⁸¹ This represents a possible military trend shared by the Frankish warrior caste of society in the early medieval period across the realm, although it is difficult to tell just

¹⁷⁸ X. Delestre, 'Saint-Pierre-aux-Nonnains,' *Actes des XIe Journées internationales d'archéologie mérovingienne* (Poitiers, 1989) p. 93.

¹⁷⁹ For the original inventory of the eighty tombs, refer to M.E. Delort, 'Le Cimetière Franc d'Ennery (Moselle),' *Gallia*, Vol. 5, No. 2 (Paris, 1947) pp. 400-403, and for the recent work of Halsall concerning Ennery refer to G. Halsall, *Cemeteries and Society in Merovingian Gaul: Selected Studies in History and Archaeology, 1992-2009* (Leiden, 2010)

¹⁸⁰ M.E. Delort, 'Le Cimetière Franc d'Ennery (Moselle),' p. 360 for the weaponry found, and p. 378 for the cosmetic items.

¹⁸¹ W. Hübener, 'Les *scramasaxes* du musée de Metz,' *Actes des Xe Journées internationales d'archéologie mérovingienne*, p. 77, and for the common zoomorphic themes seen on the blades found at Metz, see M. Will, 'Un nouvel essai de datation du chancel de Saint-Pierre-aux-Nonnains à Metz,' p. 40, and for *scramasaxes* found at the cemetery attached to Saint Denis, see V. Gallien, 'Un cimetière urbain au Haut-Moyen Âge (Saint-Denis, Seine-Saint-Denis),' in X. Delestre and P. Périn ed., *La datation des structures et des objets du Haut Moyen-Âge: méthodes et résultats*, Actes des XV^e Journées internationales d'archéologie mérovingienne (Rouen, 1998) p. 23.

how common such items were across the entire *Teilreiche* based upon these sites.¹⁸²

Scholars have advocated a gradual fusion of ‘Germanic’ and Gallo-Roman cultures over the sixth and seventh centuries,¹⁸³ and the various types of burial goods found at Ennery could possibly be seen as a reflection of this process, although it is important to bear in mind a sense of chronology and the specific context of each burial.

The fortunes of Metz began to recover in the 560’s under Merovingian rule and by the year 700 approximately thirty churches had been constructed within the urban area.¹⁸⁴ Throughout the seventh century Metz was one of the primary Austrasian royal residences alongside Cologne and Strasbourg,¹⁸⁵ and such status clearly reflects that the Merovingian royalty and also Austrasian aristocracy were familiar with Metz and its position as a prominent *civitas* within the kingdom. The royal palace was located within the city walls, and the unearthing of several high quality cut gems in the area dating from the Merovingian period has provided one of the main contributions to the Museum of Metz.¹⁸⁶ Also, the burials of Childebert II (570-95), Theudebert II and Sigibert III

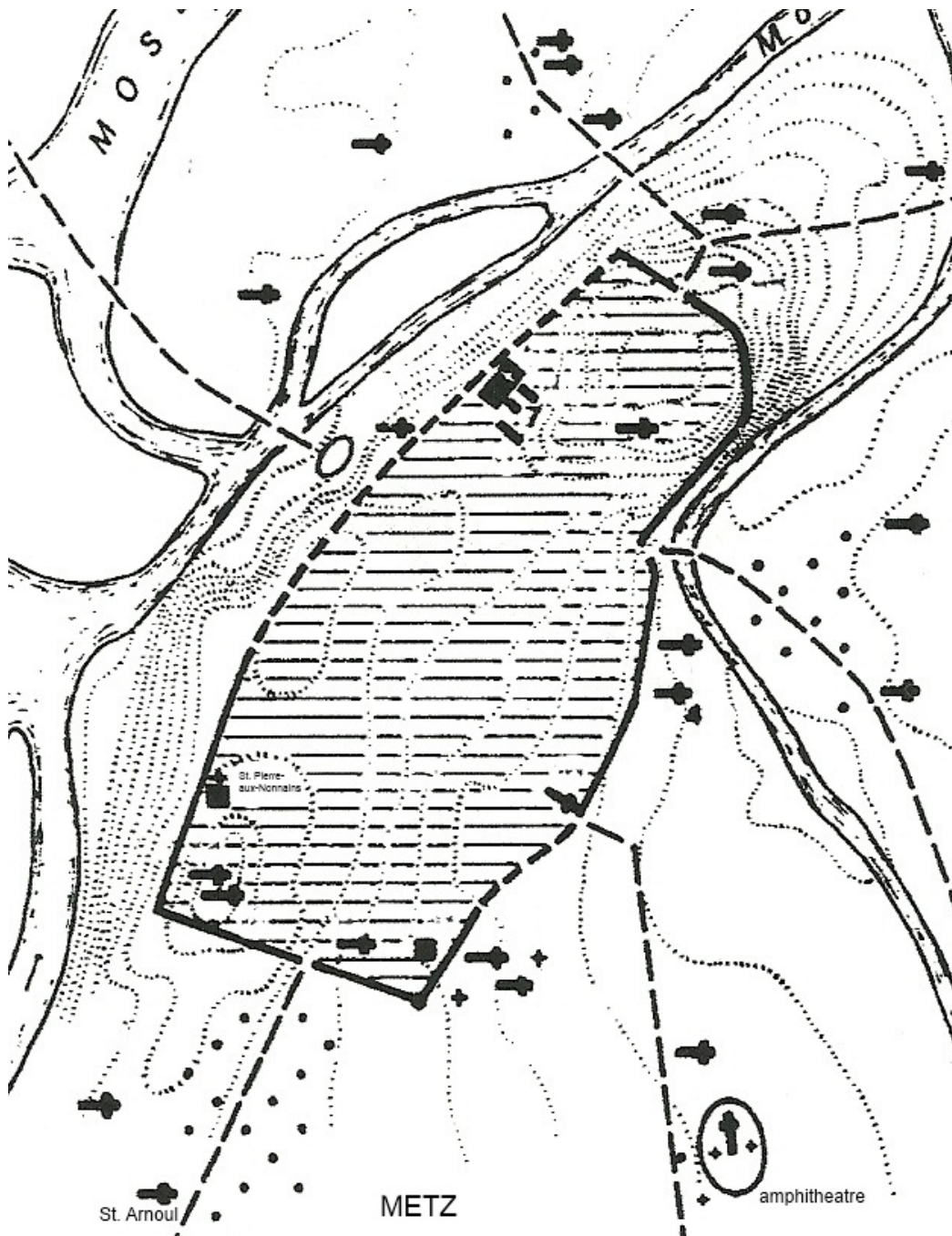
¹⁸² Max Martin has advocated that the scramasaxe and Frankish weaponry could be modified versions of previous Gallo-Roman types, see M. Martin, ‘Observations sur l’armement de l’époque mérovingienne précoce,’ in M. Kazanski and F. Vallet edd., *L’Armée Romaine et les Barbares du III^e au VII^e siècle* (Paris, 1993) p. 397.

¹⁸³ N. Gauthier, ‘Les origines chrétiennes de la Lorraine: Histoire et Archéologie,’ *Actes des Xe Journées internationales d’archéologie mérovingienne*, p. 69. It is also important to remember that while Gallo-Roman type burials using votive objects and ‘Germanic’ ones utilizing burial costumes and ‘inhumation habillée’ sometimes coincide in the same cemetery, this is not always a direct indication of Frankish identity, see B. Young, ‘Text aided or Text misled? Reflections on the uses of Archaeology in Medieval History,’ in B.J. Little ed., *Text-Aided Archaeology* (Ann Arbor, 1992) pp. 135-143.

¹⁸⁴ G. Halsall, ‘Towns, Societies and Ideas: The Not-so-strange Case of Late Roman and Early Merovingian Metz,’ p. 253.

¹⁸⁵ M. Innes, *Introduction to Early Medieval Western Europe, 300-900: The Sword, the Plough and the Book*, p. 298.

¹⁸⁶ M. Clermont-Joly, ‘Metz à l’époque mérovingienne. Etats des découvertes archéologiques,’ *Patrimoine et Culture en Lorraine*, p. 67.



Map showing the predominant ecclesiastical centres around Metz in the early medieval period, its fortifications, and its position on the Moselle river. This map was modified from the original, see N. Gauthier, 'Province ecclésiastique de Trèves (Belgica Prima),' in N. Gauthier and J. Picard, edd., *Topographie chrétienne des cités de la Gaule, des origines au milieu du VIIIe siècle*, Vol. I (Paris, 1986) p. 35.

at Saint Martin bolstered the local prestige and royal affiliation of the city.¹⁸⁷ The position of Arnulf of Metz in the peacekeeping mission between Chlothar II and Dagobert I demonstrates the ability of the local aristocracy to engage in strategic and diplomatic matters which concerned the highest levels of government and the Merovingian kingdoms as a whole, and his association with the Austrasian capital would have lent him a high degree of royal prestige when engaging in foreign affairs.

There is evidence for not only patronage and modification of urban structures by the Austrasian elite at Metz, for example, with the conversion of Saint Pierre-aux-Nonnains from a bath house into a public basilica,¹⁸⁸ but also for later ‘reactive patronage’ at Stavelot-Malmedy and Metz by Pippin of Herstal following his victory at Tertry in 687.¹⁸⁹ The competition between such groups is visible in the increase of furnished burials within a one day ride of Metz, as such displays enhanced their status in the suburban areas outside the city itself.¹⁹⁰ Not much is said in the literature regarding the activities of the inhabitants or kings at Metz, but Gregory of Tours does provide an interesting account of Childebert II watching a pack of dogs attack some type of ‘beast’ while residing at his palace in Metz.¹⁹¹ It would seem that the royal accommodations at Metz were capable of providing a degree of diversion for the king when he was residing

¹⁸⁷ A. Dierkens and P. Périn, ‘Les Sedes Regiae Mérovingiennes entre Sein et Rhin,’ p. 290.

¹⁸⁸ P. Périn., ‘Settlements and Cemeteries in Merovingian Gaul,’ p. 69.

¹⁸⁹ H.J. Hummer, *Politics and Power in Early Medieval Europe: Alsace and the Frankish Realm, 600-1000*, p. 34.

¹⁹⁰ G. Halsall, ‘Villas, Territories and Communities in Merovingian Northern Gaul,’ pp. 222-23.

¹⁹¹ Gregory of Tours, *Libri Historiarum X*, VIII. 36, and Y. Hen, *Culture and Religion in Merovingian Gaul A.D. 481-751*, p. 219.

there, although the exact facilities used for such activities and their scope in terms of audience size or local participation are unclear.

The above points could be an indication of the more 'Germanic' continuity found in the Austrasian lands, as was illustrated earlier through the content of the *Lex Ribuaria* and several other factors, although such a view is of course speculative. Metz was a dynamic city during the Late Roman and early medieval periods, with its political and economic roles fluctuating often, and yet it provided the main base of power for the Austrasian mayors of the palace who would go on to govern the Merovingian kingdoms following 687, eventually establishing themselves as a new reigning dynasty following the removal of Childeric III from the throne in 751. It is precisely this growth of local identity and strength centred upon the *sedes regia* of Metz that facilitated the growth of the Pippinid and Carolingian dynasties during the eighth century.

Conclusion: The gradual adoption of Frankish cultural values

With the gradual consolidation of Frankish authority over what had been Late Roman Gaul during the sixth and seventh centuries, and with the establishment of the *Pactus legis Salicae* and *Lex Ribuaria*, which clearly favoured Frankish identity in political matters, and enabled one to avoid being tied strictly to traditional areas of familial influence, the previous Gallo-Roman inhabitants in some cases deliberately adopted the ethnic identity of the new ruling elite. This was the case with Gundulf, the uncle of Gregory's mother, but if a person was not opposed to being tied locally to a given territory, it was also possible to maintain and cultivate his Gallo-Roman ancestry, with Gregory of Tours providing an excellent example of this. Unfortunately the above

represents an example of identity formation taking place within the highest level of society in the sixth century, and we cannot apply the values or circumstances of the Late Roman senatorial class to the overall populace. However, with respect to the governing elite and those individuals who were responsible for the urban administration it is indicative of such a process taking place by the sixth century.

The above model is by no means absolute and exceptions were more common than we have traditionally thought as historians; the cosmopolitan command structure of the army sent into Gascony by Dagobert I is an indication of this, as it included a Roman commander in the list of generals. It is worth noting that with a name such as Chammelen, it is rather difficult to determine the exact degree of Roman heritage he possessed. This may be an example of an individual whose family acquired citizenship in the third century but retained their non-Roman identity, but it is more likely that Chammelen represents a Roman individual who adopted a Frankish identity to maintain social mobility, along the same lines as the case of Gundulf. There is also the case of the majordomo of Theuderic II named Claudius in c. 606, although generally speaking when one reads the literature regarding Merovingian *Francia*, there is a clear tendency for individuals of Gallo-Roman descent to serve within the church and clergy of the *Teilreiche*, while Franks such as Leudast or Berulf typically served in a secular or military capacity to the kings. The question of how the aristocracy and kingdoms viewed themselves in relation to one another, for example, in the regional identities of Neustria and Austrasia coinciding with an overall Frankish one, is deserving of further research by early medieval historians.

It is clear that with the burial of Clovis I at Paris and his choosing of the city as capital, it continued to hold a certain prestige and position of ‘first among equals’ in relation to the other Frankish *sedes regiaie* in the early medieval period. The impact of the ruling elite upon the urban landscape was relatively high at Paris, as the continued fortification of the Île-de-la- Cité and construction of structures in both the urban and suburban areas demonstrated. In a similar fashion to the urban developments taking place at Tours, Merovingian Paris also became gradually polarized between two main focal points of the city. While the architectural technology employed was sometimes of a lower grade than its Late Roman counterparts, the urban vitality and growth of Paris in from the sixth to eighth centuries greatly overshadowed its role as *Lutecia* within the Late Roman Empire as a major hub for socio-political, religious and commercial activity. The constructions of secular infrastructure for local administration, and for the governance of Neustria or sometimes the *Teilreiche* as a whole, illustrates that the early medieval Merovingian elite understood the primary importance of the *civitas* and its connection with the suburban and rural spheres of interest. The administrative systems established in Paris were then emulated by the local elite in the competing capitals, and in the other cities of *Francia* as a whole during the sixth to eighth centuries.

The situation at Tours, much like the case of Merida under the Visigoths, was one of a strong ecclesiastical function accompanied by literary pursuits, while it also served as a hotspot of conflict between the secular Frankish authorities and the Gallo-Roman clergymen, as well as being contested over by several Merovingian kings. The bipolarity which characterized early medieval Tours between the *castrum* and Saint Martin districts of the city was an underlying theme which shaped the way the local elite and populace

viewed themselves in relation to the urban environment. The incorporation of the Roman amphitheatre into the local defences demonstrated an explicit reshaping of the urban framework, and the Christianization of the suburban and rural areas surrounding the city reflect its important role as a major ecclesiastical centre during the Merovingian period. The city and its inhabitants were not disconnected from their Roman past, as they claimed tax exemptions and understood the value of such traditions, but they were also willing to make relatively high alterations to the Late Roman buildings themselves when compared with other early medieval urban centres.

In Metz during the Early Middle Ages we are presented with the Merovingian capital farthest on the periphery from the hinterlands of Neustria and Burgundy, and the rich archaeological data collected in recent years has enabled us to gain a better sense of understanding of local interaction in and around the city itself. The burial data from Metz and its environs has shown that the local aristocracy and royalty possessed a relatively high degree of wealth for the period, as evidenced by the cut gems discussed in the case study. The sculptures found at Saint-Pierre-aux-Nonnains depict various forms of stylistic and thematic devices, and possibly represent the presence of both Gallo-Roman and Frankish inhabitants in the area around Metz. After recovering around the mid-sixth century, which can be attested for by the increased amount of ecclesiastical construction in the urban and suburban spheres, by the seventh century a local identity and merging of the populace became more apparent in the use of single cemeteries to represent each residential area. Metz provided the local aristocracy with a strong urban base for administration and the experiences associated with such activities, and by the eighth

century its ruling elite grew strong enough to challenge and eventually overthrow the Merovingian dynasty to the West.

The cities continued to serve as the main unit of taxation under the Merovingians, due largely in part to their hesitation to make direct alterations to the previous Late Roman administration. The development of Paris as the main capital of the *Teilreiche* alongside the partitioning of the realm into constituent kingdoms had crucial repercussions to the socio-political framework of the region following the sixth century; the successful division of the Frankish territory would eventually prove detrimental to the Merovingian dynasty as the regional aristocracy gained ascendancy over them during the eighth century.¹⁹² Despite the internecine conflicts which took place between the Frankish ruling classes, the system promoted an overall Frankish group consciousness with a degree of acceptance and incorporation of the Gallo-Roman values.

The example of Parthenius, or rather the hatred directed towards him by the Frankish residents of Trier, demonstrated that urban settlement by the Franks did take place to some extent as early as the sixth century.¹⁹³ This brings us to three points that must be emphasized regarding the settlement of Franks in the urban sphere and their impact upon it. First, it must be remembered that the relatively high degree of urbanism in southern Gaul vis-à-vis the northern areas such as Austrasia cannot be traced to Merovingian impact as this had also been the case for centuries under Roman rule as

¹⁹² It is worth noting that the civitates were the crucial administrative division of the *Teilreiche* system, see I. Wood, *Gregory of Tours*, p. 11.

¹⁹³ This certainly took place from the late-sixth to seventh centuries, as the Merovingian courts became more sedentary and the Franks settled in emulation of the royal and aristocratic classes, and also settled to serve as their retinues. For the Merovingians becoming more stationary see Y. Hen, *Roman Barbarians: The Royal Court and Culture in the Early Medieval West* (Basingstoke, 2007) p. 100.

well. Second, the literature and archaeological record discussed in this chapter, and to an extent in the second chapter of this thesis, have demonstrated that in the sixth century the Franks promoted the *civitates* as social and political centres of importance. Third, the seventh-century tendency of Merovingian rulers to reside within suburban villas does not necessarily reflect the decreased importance of these same urban centres. It may have been that with the increased inhabitation of these cities their desirability for living decreased despite their overall economic growth, and those with sufficient wealth then chose to establish themselves in comfort elsewhere, while at the same time governing them by proxy or through representatives.¹⁹⁴ The Frankish nobility appear to have greater hereditary control of offices than their Lombard counterparts from the seventh century onwards, with the exception of Brescia, and they could make such expensive plans for construction and accommodation in suburban residences near their respective cities without fear of their family being shifted elsewhere in the immediate future.

After having examined some of the specific points concerning cultural exchange and urban settlement within Merovingian *Francia*, the following chapter of this thesis will now compare and contrast the three early medieval kingdoms which this study has focused upon, and it will apply the same methodology to each of the respective urban case studies as well. This will help us to better understand how much of an impact the new peoples and their ruling classes truly had upon Late Roman social structures, by illustrating both similarities and differences. Furthermore, in contrasting how the Roman inhabitants of these three cases adapted to the new socio-political environment of the

¹⁹⁴ The exact function of these Merovingian villas remains unclear, see B. Ward-Perkins, 'Land, labour and settlement,' *The Cambridge Ancient History*, Vol. XIV (Cambridge, 2000) p. 327.

sixth to eighth centuries we can advance our understanding of early medieval techniques of cultural exchange and identity formation.

Chapter 6. A Comparative Approach to Ethnic Identity and Urban Settlement, c. 565-774 AD

Essentially for reasons of organizational convenience, the chapter will consist of five subsequent sections. First, a comparison and contrast of how the ethnic terminology and cultural identifications have been viewed by modern historians for the three regions will be discussed, taking into account the developments of these views along both archaeological and literary lines. Second, the primary sources for the three cases will be further examined, building upon the foundations established in the cases, with particular attention being given to how they differ in terms of cultural exchanges and formation of identities. Third, the urban administration and network of *civitates* in each of the three regions will be compared with respect to their role in the development of local identities and socio-political frameworks. Fourth, the royal capitals will be examined along these lines, to demonstrate how they differed in their relationships with the surrounding territories as political focal points from which royal policy was determined; particular attention will be paid to matters such as identity formation and urban administration. Finally, the theory discussed above will be constructed to include the insights gained from the preceding sections into a coherent framework, one which could be applied to future case studies and to the study of ethnic and cultural identities during the Early Middle Ages.

The absence of this type of comparative approach to the study of group identity formation has recently been advocated by Peter Heather,¹ and this thesis aims to provide some degree of resolution to the problem. It will prove a worthwhile attempt in itself if these studies of group formation and urban administration during the early medieval period are advanced, particularly if the methodology applied to the subjects can be further utilised and expanded upon in future cases. It is also beneficial since this thesis has focused upon the sixth to centuries rather than earlier migrations, as it is in this period that the long term urban developments and policies of the aristocracy manifest themselves. Let us turn to the first of the five subsequent sections, concerning how modern historians view group identities in Visigothic Spain, Lombard Italy and Merovingian *Francia* over the period covering the mid-sixth to mid-eighth centuries AD.

Identity formation and strategies of settlement

This first section will present some of the main points surrounding the questions of group identity and ethnic interaction regarding the *regnum Visigothorum*, and, after having done this, they will be compared and contrasted with any similar points that can be seen in the case of the *regnum Langobardorum*. Finally, the views of modern historians concerning the *regnum Francorum* will be compared and contrasted with both of the former cases to gain a better overall perspective. The difficulty of identifying distinctly Visigothic artifacts and material evidence in the archaeological record is further exacerbated by the fact that the majority of burials at sites such as El Carpio de Tajo are void of any

¹ P. Heather, 'Ethnicity, Group Identity, and Social Status in the Migration Period,' in I. Garipzanov, P. Geary and P. Urbanczyk, ed., *Franks, Northmen and Slavs: Identities and State Formation in Early Medieval Europe* (Turnhout, 2008) p. 35.

remains.² At urban and suburban sites such as la Vega Baja, it is difficult to clearly judge the ethnic identity of the inhabitants based on the archaeological record and the structures that have been examined. Based upon the evidence available, consisting largely of bronze coinage and feminine burial goods discussed in the third chapter, scholars have advocated the adoption of Hispano-Roman cultural values by the Visigothic sector of society, particularly following 589,³ but the lack of any correlating settlement for El Carpio de Tajo reduces this to the realm of speculation. In a sense the inverse scenario of this can be seen at El Bovalar, where despite the high quality and historical significance of its burial goods, for example, the coinage dating from the latter decades of the *regnum Visigothorum*, there exists no literary reference to the settlement that has been unearthed and associated with the site.⁴ It should also be noted that historians have emphasized the fact that not all settlements were occupied to the same degree,⁵ and using information gathered from one or two sites such as those mentioned above does not necessarily reflect processes of identity formation taking place throughout the Visigothic territories as a whole.

² G. Ripoll López, 'The arrival of the Visigoths in Hispania: population problems and the process of acculturation,' *Strategies of Distinction: The Construction of Ethnic Communities, 300-800* (Leiden, 1998) p. 167.

³ G. Ripoll López, 'Symbolic life and signs of identity in Visigothic times,' *The Visigoths from the Migration Period to the Seventh Century: An Ethnographic Perspective* (Woodbridge, 1999) p. 414.

⁴ For information regarding the settlement found to the south of the ecclesiastical centre, see P.de Palol, "Las excavaciones del conjunto de 'El Bovalar'," *Los visigodos: historia y civilización* (Murcia, 1986), pp. 513-25.

⁵ I. Martín Viso, 'Central Places and the Territorial Organization of Communities: The Occupation of Hilltop Sites in Early Medieval Northern Castile,' in W. Davies, G. Halsall and A. Reynolds, ed., *People and Space in the Middle Ages, 300-1000* (Turnholt, 2006) p. 168.

If the views of modern archaeologists on Visigothic Spain shed little light on the nature and processes of cultural interaction and identity formation taking place over the sixth to eighth centuries in the Iberian peninsula, even with the recent work at la Vega Baja and sites such as El Tolmo de Minateda, there are some other points contemporary scholars have emphasized as important in this sphere of socio-political activity. We examined earlier that although the Visigoths settled in Hispania in relatively low numbers vis-à-vis the Hispano-Roman population,⁶ the former constituted a high percentage of the aristocracy and governing classes. It is difficult to judge within this framework consisting of a Visigothic elite ruling within an overall Hispano-Roman polity, whether or not lower ranking members of society with a Visigothic affiliation were able to rise into high positions of authority; the singular case of the *gardingus* Hildigisus was discussed in this context during the third chapter of this thesis.⁷ Modern historians and archaeologists tend to view the processes of cultural interaction and identity formation within the *regnum Visigothorum* as taking place between a newly landed elite and the much larger Hispano-Roman population under which previous inhabitants such as Greek, Jewish, Suevi or other such residents often stretching back to the Late Roman period have usually been lumped together.

The current tendency of modern historians is to view a gradual adoption of Hispano-Roman identity and cultural values, particularly following the conversion of Reccared (586-601) to Catholicism in 589, although there is some evidence in the primary sources for the persistence of a Gothic identity in certain spheres of activity in

⁶ J.D. Dodds, *Architecture and Ideology in Early Medieval Spain* (London, 1990) p. 8.

⁷ A. Isla Frez, "El 'officium palatinum' visigodo: Entorno region y poder aristocrático," *Hispania: Revista Española de Historia*, Vol. 62, No. 212 (Madrid, 2002) pp. 846-847.

the centuries following this as well. The general lack of archaeological information concerning how the communities of Visigothic Spain viewed themselves, or how individual members of society hoped to be perceived with a certain agenda, is one explanation for the almost exclusive focus of modern scholars upon the aristocratic and elite sectors within the kingdom.

The first parallel that will be drawn between the Lombard and Visigothic settlements and administration lies in their relatively small numbers compared with the inhabitants who could trace their roots to the Late Roman period. It has been advocated by some modern historians that the numbers of Lombard settlers who initially entered the Italian peninsula were much less than their Visigothic counterparts, and that they could have potentially been settled within a few of the urban centres of northern Italy in the mid-sixth century.⁸ Although the numbers of settlers may have in both cases been relatively low, the nature of the settlement of the Lombards within northern Italy differed from that of the Visigoths on several levels. For example, it has been suggested that in the earliest decades of Lombard settlement in the Po valley, there existed a tendency to shun the urban centres which were associated with the Roman or Gothic populations in favour of more rural accommodations.⁹ However, apart from settlements outside the

⁸ N. Christie, *From Constantine to Charlemagne: an Archaeology of Italy, AD 300-800* (Aldershot, 2006) p. 59.

⁹ As was discussed in the fourth chapter of this work, Jorg Jarnut emphasizes the ties between *farae* and king as being more important to the early Lombards than questions of urban bases of power, see J. Jarnut, 'Die langobardische Ethnogenese,' in *Typen der Ethnogenese unter besonderer Berücksichtigung der Bayern*, Vol. 1 (Vienna, 1990) pp. 97-102, and Procopius also emphasizes the rural traditions of the early Lombards see Procopius, *Procopii Caesariensis opera omnia*, Vol. 2, J. Haury and G. Wirth, edd., (Leipzig, 1962-64) VI. XIV. 10-22.

gates of Pavia in the mid-sixth century that have been attributed to the Lombards, the archaeological record is at the moment rather quiet on this matter.

The above view promoted by both modern historians and primary authors represents an important point on how the Visigothic and Lombard establishment of power differed; the latter lacked the decades of service as *foederati* to the Late Roman Empire and established their rule in northern Italy without the familiarity with urban administration and society this would have to some extent provided, although it should be noted they did on occasion serve as mercenaries to the Byzantine rulers and were not completely inexperienced with Late Roman political structures.¹⁰ The context under which these two kingdoms were established differed in such ways, with respect to group identity formation and the exchanges of culture taking place, but there exist some interesting similarities between the Visigothic and Lombard cases.

The majority of the Roman elite within the *regnum Langobardorum* eventually adopted a Lombard identity in order to remain socially and politically mobile in the secular sphere,¹¹ and the emphasis placed upon the *Gothi* by Wamba (672-80) as his military retainers is possibly a representation of similar processes taking place in Visigothic Spain, with the traditional Gothic or Lombard identities becoming more broadly applied to those individuals capable of engaging in military service or secular administration.¹² While this may be the case, in both realms there did take place some degree of *imitatio imperii*, although such identities tend to be viewed in the numismatic

¹⁰ For example, under Tiberius II (574-82) in his Persian campaign, see S. Mitchell, *A History of the Later Roman Empire, 284-641* (Oxford, 2007) p. 407.

¹¹ S. Gasparri, 'The aristocracy,' in C. La Rocca, ed., *Italy in the Early Middle Ages: 476-1000* (Oxford, 2002) p. 62.

¹² Julian of Toledo, *The Story of Wamba*, J.M. Pizarro, trans., (Washington D.C., 2005) IX, pp. 192-193.

evidence; the gold *solidi* minted by the Lombard rulers and their Late Roman style by the seventh century provides one such example.¹³ An important way in which the Lombards differed from the Visigoths, in terms of how they perceived themselves and the inhabitants of their kingdom, can be found in the very term ‘Roman’ itself. While the term in Visigothic Spain largely revolved around either a Hispano-Roman subject or the Byzantine administration in *Spania*, in Lombard Italy this term had the additional connotation of meaning an inhabitant of the city of Rome itself. This is not to say the Visigothic aristocracy were unfamiliar with Rome as a focal point for the clergy or as an urban centre of great historical and religious significance, but rather it would have been a greater consideration in the eyes of the Lombards due to its mutual interests within the Italian peninsula.

The third chapter of this work greatly emphasized the need for further excavation of urban sites in Spain regarding the early medieval context, with the recent stimulus in Toledo and Merida having been given as examples, and scholars have illustrated the need for such urban archaeology being increased with respect to the Lombard centres of northern Italy as well.¹⁴ We have examined the problem of such an approach in northern Italy, as the sites associated with Lombard rule continue to be densely populated in a highly urbanized landscape. The extent to which this truly differs from the situation in Spain remains open to debate, since centres such as Barcelona, Seville, Toledo and Merida have also continued to be inhabited. A final point of similarity between the two

¹³ E. Arslan, ‘Monnaies lombardes de la collection du Musée archéologique national de Cividale,’ in J.J. Aillagon, dir., *Rome et les Barbares: La Naissance d’un Nouveau Monde* (Venice, 2008) p. 534.

¹⁴ R. Balzaretto, ‘Cities and Markets in the Early Middle Ages,’ in G. Ausenda, ed., *After Empire: Towards an Ethnology of Europe’s Barbarians* (Woodbridge, 1995) pp. 120-21.

cases, but one which is ultimately to the detriment of scholars and archaeologists of group identities and cultural interaction, can be seen in the promotion of one or a small number of sites as representing the processes taking place on a broader scale across the kingdoms on the whole. Like the example of El Bovalar in Spain being used in such a manner, the same could potentially be said for that of Castelseprio serving as a template for Lombard fortified settlement on the frontiers of the kingdom.¹⁵ Unfortunately part of the problem of this study is the lack of archaeological evidence in any shape or form referring to processes of identity formation and cultural synthesis taking place at the lower levels of society, and although we must make use of whatever evidence does come to light, we should bear in mind that it is equally important to avoid applying one or two such cases to the overall picture.

As was discussed earlier in the respective chapter on Merovingian *Francia* this study will be primarily concerned with the third stage of identity formation taking place as described by Edward James,¹⁶ that of the period following the battle of Vouillé in 507 and the subsequent establishment of Frankish authority over what had been Roman and then Visigothic Gaul. Like the Visigothic aristocracy and ruling elite, the Franks had a heritage of serving as *foederati* dating to the fourth century,¹⁷ and were also active in

¹⁵ There does however exist archaeological evidence that does suggest certain common functions being broadly witnessed across a number of sites, for example, in the proximity of Lombard *castra* to river networks and waterways, see R. Balzaretti, 'Cities, Emporia and Monasteries: Local Economies in the Po Valley, c. AD 700-875,' in N. Christie and S.T. Loseby, ed., *Towns in Transition: Urban Evolution in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages* (Aldershot, 1996) p. 216.

¹⁶ E. James, 'Gregory of Tours and the Franks,' in A.C. Murray, ed., *After Rome's Fall: Narrators and Sources of Early Medieval History. Essays Presented to Walter Goffart* (Toronto, 1998) p. 59.

¹⁷ Ammianus Marcellinus, *Ammiani Marcellini Rerum gestarum libri qui supersunt*, W. Seyfarth, ed., (Leipzig, 1978) XV. 5. 11

mercantile spheres, as the earlier example of Cologne demonstrated. There is a general consensus that Merovingian rulers generally left urban networks and administrative structures in place from the Late Roman period,¹⁸ a policy that has arguably more in common with their Lombard counterparts than their Visigothic ones who founded an entirely new capital at Reccopolis. However, the establishment of constituent kingdoms under which the *civitates* emerged as focal points for social interaction and economic competition between rulers was a distinctly Frankish development. As for the occupation of the urban centres themselves under the Merovingians, the debate ranges from scholars who support the notion that the settlements remained largely intact from the Late Roman period, with a change towards schematic patterns and stylistic abstractions, to those who view the occupation of the same space as the only continuity from the earlier period.¹⁹ Although both views have certain merits, the overall division of the Frankish realm into the *Teilreiche* must have significantly impacted how the aristocracy and individual members of society had to construct their group identities and personal perceptions to fit in with their local socio-political environment, while at the same time some level of greater 'Frankish' identity bound the kingdoms together, although to what extent these ties were valued in everyday life is difficult to determine.

The above point is intended to emphasize the notion that the overarching structure of Frankish rule between the *Teilreiche* differed greatly from the case in Visigothic

¹⁸ S. Schütte, 'Continuity Problems and Authority Structures in Cologne,' *After Empire: Towards and Ethnology of Europe's Barbarians*, p. 164.

¹⁹ For changes in the style of structures in the Merovingian urban environment see P. Périn., 'Settlements and Cemeteries in Merovingian Gaul,' *The World of Gregory of Tours* (Leiden, 2002) p. 73, and for the Frankish elite making a larger impact upon the urban landscape, see N. Gauthier, 'From the Ancient City to the Medieval Town: Continuity and Change in the Early Middle Ages,' *The World of Gregory of Tours*, p. 47.

Spain, which had by the eighth century emerged as the predominant power in the Iberian peninsula, and as a unified *regnum Visigothorum* ruled at least nominally by one monarch. As for the case of the *regnum Langobardorum*, the fragmentary and localized system of government that developed there can be paralleled on a greater scale with the division of the *Teilreiche*, if the Merovingian kings are used to represent the Frankish equivalent of the Lombard *duces* and local authorities. However, unlike the Lombards the Merovingian rulers were not surrounded by what could be considered ‘Roman’ military forces as was the case in the Italian peninsula. It is for this reason that the dynamics of cultural exchange and identity formation in *Francia* often seem to paint a picture of being more malleable and reciprocal between the Gallo-Roman and Frankish population, and in this respect quite similar to what was happening in Visigothic Spain at the time.

Historians have suggested that examples of Merovingian *imitatio imperii* were the organic result stemming from the expectations of the Gallo-Roman subjects in what they considered to be a ruler,²⁰ although it was emphasized in the fifth chapter that Gallo-Romans would sometimes adopt a Frankish identity when they aspired to high military command or secular office.²¹ For the everyday inhabitants of *Francia* it has been argued that the emergence of singular burial sites in place of separate ones which can be attributed to Frankish or Gallo-Roman settlements demonstrates the merging of Frankish

²⁰ S. Fanning, ‘Clovis Augustus and Merovingian *Imitatio Imperii*,’ *From the Ancient City to the Medieval Town: Continuity and Change in the Early Middle Ages*, p. 333.

²¹ E. James, ‘Gregory of Tours and the Franks,’ pp. 57-58, and for the opportunism of the aristocracy under the Merovingians in siding with new rulers to try and immediately benefit from their patronage, a point which in many cases could go hand in hand with adopting a Frankish identity, see A.E. Jones, *Social Mobility in Late Antique Gaul: Strategies and Opportunities for the Non-Elite* (Cambridge, 2009) p. 92.

identities with those of the local populace,²² although the extent to which one particular group dominated this gradual and fluid transition remains very difficult to judge, if such trends can be traced at all. This represents a difficulty shared by all three of the case studies in question, when it comes to determining indicators for the formation of local identities and cultural exchanges taking place between different peoples.

The creation of the position of *graphio* or *grafio* has been attributed by modern scholars to the Merovingian rulers,²³ and it represents one instance of Frankish impact upon the local socio-political system of administration; the responsibilities of this office possibly parallel some of those attributed to the *gardingus* in Visigothic Spain. The notion that these Austrasian communities to an extent maintained their own identities, particularly those groups serving in the *exercitus*, has also been put forth by modern scholars,²⁴ a point which parallels the diverse range of commanders present in the Visigothic armies discussed in the third chapter, and to a lesser extent officers in the Lombard forces as well. Despite the above concept of fairly mixed groups of peoples constituting the military caste of society, going against our traditional views of such positions being strongly associated with the governing 'Germanic' elite, as was the case with the ethnic term *Gothi* being applied by Wamba to his followers at the end of the seventh century, by the end of the eighth century the label of *Franci* had also emerged as a dominant rhetorical tool for the creation of group identity.

²² G. Halsall, 'Female status and power in early Merovingian central Austrasia: the burial evidence,' *Early Medieval Europe*, Vol. 5 (Oxford, 1996) p. 13.

²³ A.C. Murray, 'The position of the *grafio* in the constitutional history of Merovingian Gaul,' *Speculum*, Vol. 64 (Cambridge, MA, 1989) pp. 787-805.

²⁴ B. Bachrach, 'Procopius, Agathias and the Frankish Military,' *Speculum*, Vol. 45, No. 3 (Cambridge, MA, July, 1970) p. 435.

One potential example of this shifting perception lies in the return of Charlemagne (768-814) to *Francia* with his 'Franks' from his campaign against the Lombards in northern Italy.²⁵ Although referring to a later period, the foundations for Frankish identity becoming associated with the political and military spheres took place over generations stretching back into the Merovingian era, whether the term itself was altered to suit different purposes and represent different regions within the *regnum Francorum* or not; Reimitz has nonetheless convincingly argued for the significance of these alterations in contributing to how the term was perceived by the eighth century. Scholars have advocated a relatively high level of opportunism taking place during the Merovingian period, as local aristocrats sought immediate and short term benefits by supporting one of the kings who had recently risen to power, for example, in the establishment of their *civitas* as a royal power base.²⁶ While the same could be said for the elite sectors of society in Visigothic Spain or Lombard Italy, these cases lacked the explicit and deliberate divisions of their realms into smaller constituents as was the case in early medieval *Francia*; this point must have significantly influenced how members of the social and political spheres perceived themselves, and how they desire to be viewed in varying contexts as well.

Primary sources and processes behind early medieval ethnogenesis

The first and foremost point regarding the case of Visigothic Spain is its overall lack of a detailed chronicler from whom a sense of chronological narrative can be deduced, at least

²⁵ H. Reimitz, 'Omnes Franci: Identifications of the Early Medieval Franks,' *Franks, Northmen and Slavs: Identities and State Formation in Early Medieval Europe*, p. 57.

²⁶ A.E. Jones, *Social Mobility in Late Antique Gaul: Strategies and Opportunities for the Non-Elite*, p. 92.

prior to the writings of Julian of Toledo which are concerned with the latter decades of the seventh century. We are often forced to glimpse the Visigothic rise to power and their settlement by using a combination of scarce references from different types of sources, and to a large extent these writers are primarily concerned with ecclesiastical or dogmatic matters, particularly in the council records during the decades of the sixth century leading up to the Third Council of Toledo in 589.²⁷ This is not to say that the ecclesiastical authors did not occasionally shed light upon questions of individual ethnic identities or the processes of interaction between groups. For example, in its description of the *dux* Claudius of Merida being singled out explicitly as a Roman, and in its continual emphasis on the Arian identity of the Visigothic population, the *Vitae Sanctorum Patrum Emeritensium* provides us with some valuable insights regarding cultural interaction and perceptions of ethnic labels in the sixth century.²⁸ Unfortunately such direct references to either Hispano-Roman or Visigothic individuals are very hard to come by, and in the cases of Lombard Italy and Merovingian *Francia*, generally only concerned with the elite sectors of society as well.

The beginning of the seventh century in Visigothic Spain was relatively void of any significant primary material, and it was not until the latter half of the century that two significant sources were constructed, the *Historiae Wambae Regis* of Julian of Toledo and the various revisions to the Visigothic legal codes. Unfortunately, the importance of the former author has more to do with questions of royal prerogative and high political

²⁷ For a thorough presentation and study of the Visigothic councils, see J. Vives et al., *Concilios Visigoticos e Hispano-Romanos* (Barcelona, 1963).

²⁸ The direct passage discussing Claudius was presented in the third chapter of this work as put forth in the most recent edition by Maya Sanchez, see *Vitae Sanctorum Patrum Emeritensium*, M. Sanchez, ed., (Turnhout, 1999) V.X. 32-33.

events taking place during the latter seventh century than broader issues such as cultural exchanges or identity formation. The passage we examined regarding Wamba praising the valour of his *Gothi* prior to joining battle is perhaps an example not of the Visigothic element of the kingdom ethnically constituting the armed forces,²⁹ but rather that it had become an umbrella identity under which any man of free status could become associated with by serving in such a capacity. This was likely the case with the terms *Langobardi* or *Franci*, and potentially reflects that as time went on and the landed aristocracy became more established from the sixth century onwards, there was a need due to their relatively low numbers to somehow accommodate the prior inhabitants into the military sphere, while at the same time maintaining a certain level of dominance in the realm of group identities and socio-political structures. Despite the exchanges and creations of new local identities taking place under such a system, the rulers and aristocracy were nonetheless required to emphasize their own traditional values and senses of ethnicity, and the application of their own valued labels such as *Gothi*, *Langobardi* or *Franci* reflect this. Whether this was due to any sort of deliberate political agenda or was a more organic and naturally occurring by-product of the overall social context is difficult to judge due to the nature of the primary evidence.

The Visigothic legal code as we have seen was largely based upon the earlier code of Euric from 469, and was later revised in 654, 681 and 693 most likely,³⁰ at least in the case of the 654 revision, to make it more suitable in the greatly altered political system that had emerged following the end of the Western Roman Empire in 476 and the

²⁹ Julian of Toledo, *The Story of Wamba*, pp. 191-193. IX.

³⁰ G. Ausenda, 'Kinship and Marriage among the Visigoths,' *The Visigoths from the migration period to the seventh century: an ethnographic perspective*, pp. 140-141.

eventual movement of the Visigoths into the Iberian Peninsula following 507. The twelve books provide more information with respect to urban administration, due to the fact that they tend to lump social groups together along the lines of economic class and the degree of freedom possessed by the individual rather than ethnic ones.³¹ It would seem that while the Gothic identity was promoted at the military levels by the elite as a way of creating some sense of belonging to those soldiers who did not come from traditionally Visigothic ancestry, when it came to the legal proceedings of the kingdom at large the rulers were more concerned with financial status and ones degree of connection to the king rather than to which ethnic group they had traditionally been ascribed.

In terms of methodology and our ability to examine the issue of identity formation in the sources concerning Italy at the time of the Lombards, we are faced with a similar problem of chronology as was evident for Visigothic Spain, in this case pertaining to the lack of a contemporary Italian author prior to the eighth century. A matter that further exacerbates this problem is the charter evidence, which deal almost exclusively with the eighth century as well.³² Unfortunately authors such as Fredegar or Gregory of Tours, who do offer earlier occasional glimpses into the Lombards and its peoples, rarely focus upon matters such as their identity formation, interaction between local communities, or the ways in which the Lombard aristocracy perceived itself or was viewed by others. They were instead primarily concerned with events such as war, political marriages, court intrigues and relationships between the ecclesiastical and secular authorities, bringing the

³¹ For example, the law which stipulates that a freeman is expected to provide ten percent of his slaves for service to the exercitus despite his ethnic sense of identity, see *Leges Visigothorum*, K. Zeumer, ed., *MGH*, I (Hanover, 1902) IX. II. IX.

³² S. Fanning, 'A Review of Lombard Prosopography,' *Medieval Prosopography*, 2: 1 (Kalamazoo, 1981) p. 17.

Lombards into their writings only when they were directly connected to such topics. This was also the case with these Frankish sources only occasionally referring to the Visigoths as well, and it is to be expected given that the authors would have felt no real need to elaborate upon the creation of local identities within another kingdom, when their discussion of such issues regarding their own territories was minimal to begin with.

Even if we are to generally agree with the notion that by 643 the term *langobardi* referred to an individual of sufficient social status and freedom to serve in the *exercitus*, the chronological gap for the earlier centuries of Lombard rule in northern Italy makes tracing their impact upon socio-political systems and cultural values in the region difficult to tell with any degree of certainty. The Lombard aristocracy and kingship did seem to maintain some level of continuity with their past, for example, in the ‘giving of the lance’ ceremony following coronation,³³ but granted that Paul the Deacon wrote the *Historia Langobardorum* during the eighth century while the realm was at its height of power, his attempts to explain such earlier processes during the sixth to seventh centuries were impeded by his inherent disposition and ways of thinking about the Lombards as a people. He does however illustrate one potential point of similarity between the Visigothic and Lombard cases, in the figure of the *dux* Droctulf who rose to power on his own merits.³⁴ Although the term *Langobardi* may have become generally applicable to the military sphere of society by the seventh century, individuals could still be associated with the other social elements and traditional ethnic labels; the case of Droctulf represents a Suevic-Alamanni nobleman within the Lombard polity, and the example of

³³ D. Harrison, ‘Political rhetoric and political ideology in Lombard Italy,’ *Strategies of Distinction: The Construction of the Ethnic Communities, 300-800*, p. 246.

³⁴ Paul the Deacon, *Storia dei Longobardi*, L. Capo, ed., (Milan, 2006) III. 18. 5-7.

dux Claudius represents a Hispano-Roman member of society commanding in the Visigothic forces as a direct parallel. It is clear that while broad ethnic terms traditionally associated with the landed elite who rose to power falling the end of the Western Empire in the fifth century could be applied in order to induce some degree of affinity between soldiers of differing backgrounds, those individuals seeking high office or command could still be distinguished to some extent along cultural lines by their contemporaries. However, to what extent such labels genuinely reflected the heritage of the individual remains unclear, granted that it was a system largely fuelled by opportunism and willingness to alter one's identity to attain social promotion or to curry favour with the aristocracy.

With the revisions of the *leges Langobardorum* taking place from 668 through 755 on several occasions, and their reconfiguring along more Roman traditions of legislation such as judicial hearings and reparations rather than oath taking or duels,³⁵ there is evidence that at least on paper the Lombard kings aimed towards using the Late Roman administrative and legal systems to govern over their territories which had by this point become consolidated. At the same time, the usage of the title *rex gentis Langobardorum* in the legal texts rather than the more 'Roman' *Flavius* is a potential reflection of the rulers by the seventh and eighth centuries viewing all free subjects of the crown under this ethnic label and expected to live according to their laws.³⁶

Unfortunately as was the case with the Visigothic laws, the *leges Langobardorum* do not

³⁵ C. Wickham, *Land and Power: Studies in Italian and European Social History. 400-1200* (Oxford, 2005) p. 238.

³⁶ A. Gillett, 'Was Ethnicity Politicized in the Early Medieval Kingdoms?' *On Barbarian Identity: Critical Approaches to Ethnicity in the Early Middle Ages* (Turnhout, 2002) pp. 103-05.

illuminate our understanding of how the Visigothic or Lombard rulers governed over their respective peoples during their initial phases of settlement into both the Iberian peninsula and northern Italy.

For the earliest centuries of Frankish identity formation and settlement within the *limes* of the Western Roman Empire, their employment by the Late Roman authorities as *foederati* and commanders can be seen in both primary sources at the time in the fourth century and later material as well.³⁷ This tradition of Roman service in the military spheres, which largely constituted the area of activity for the later aristocratic circles with which we are concerned, or at least an area in which the exchanges of cultural values were taking place, can be demonstrated for both the Visigothic and Frankish cases. Although the situation regarding the Lombards differs due to their late settlement into the former territories of the Western Roman Empire following 568, they were nonetheless often employed as mercenaries by Constantinople from the sixth century onwards and possibly earlier. They lacked the centuries-old heritage of service as federate troops unlike the Visigoths or Franks, but it is clear that many of them understood the potential opportunities for wealth and employment being hired by the *basileus* in the East provided.

One way the case of the Merovingians benefits is from the greater detail and number of chroniclers who recorded the events of the sixth to eighth centuries in their kingdoms. Although there are gaps in the material, for example, in the early sixth

³⁷ For the fourth century references to the Franks see Ammianus Marcellinus, *Ammiani Marcellini Rerum gestarum libri qui supersunt*, W. Seyfarth, ed., (Leipzig, 1978) XV. 5. 11, and writing later in the sixth century Gregory of Tours discusses their military positions see Gregory of Tours, *Libri Historiarum X*, B. Krusch and W. Levison, edd., *MGH, SRM I*, 1 (Hanover, 1951) II. 9.

century prior to Gregory of Tours about which he wrote as a secondary source, there is generally a broader coverage for the Frankish realm than for its two early medieval counterparts. The picture that emerges regarding the development of group identities, at least in the aristocratic and military spheres of Merovingian society is quite similar to the ones we examined in the previous two cases; over time the ethnic identities of the ruling elite became more broadly associated with those individuals capable of serving in a military capacity, or who entered into a career that entailed service in a secular position of government. Regarding the sixth century Gregory of Tours wrote his *decem libri historiarum* from 573 to 591, and as we saw he rarely uses the actual ethnic label of *Francus* to describe an individual member of society.³⁸ The fact that no overt anti-Frankish sentiments are presented during his serious conflict with the *comes* Leudast indicates that the reasons for this were less to do with his own Roman traditions and more a reflection that such concerns for cultural identity and interaction were not of primary interest to his overall agenda for writing.

The next account is that of Fredegar covering the years 584 to 642, and unlike its predecessor upon which it was largely based at least up until 603, after which point the work takes on a more personal style that has been attributed to Fredegar writing his own accounts, the term *franci* is often employed to represent the body politic of the Merovingian kingdoms at large, while also acknowledging and illustrating that the regional political divisions were nonetheless viewed as belonging to this overarching

³⁸ This point and the discrepancy between modern translations and the original Latin was discussed in detail in the previous chapter of this thesis, see chapter 5, pp. 252-253.

identity.³⁹ The *LHF* emphasizes the continued growth of a Frankish identity in the elite sectors of Merovingian society, for example, in the election of Clovis II (637-58) to the kingship by the *Franci* of Neustria and Burgundy,⁴⁰ but it is difficult to tell the nature and degree of this cultural association taking place at the lower levels of society in the seventh century, a point that demonstrates yet another way in which the three cases are similar to one another. With respect to the *pactus legis salicae* or the *lex ribuaria* which were examined in greater detail in the preceding chapter,⁴¹ the former shows a clear incentive towards associating oneself with the Frankish element of society in order to reap legal benefits particularly in the area of reparations, while the latter scarcely employs the terms *Francus* nor *Romanus* at all. This makes it difficult to understand what sort of incentives were put in place, at least in theory, for any adoption of Frankish identity by the lower levels of society within Austrasia, yet for Neustria and the western constituents of the *Teilreiche* the legal texts suggest a similar picture to what was taking place in Visigothic Spain and Lombard Italy with the reinforcing of the cultural identities of the elite, and the protection of their position vis-à-vis the larger Late Roman populace by means of a superior legal status.

While the specific details of cultural exchange differ from case to case, their comparison nevertheless represents a degree of continuity in the traditions and identities of the aristocracy who first entered into the previously Late Roman territories. Whether

³⁹ An example of this being the granting of Gascony and the Pyrenees to Charibert II (629-32) to rule over by Dagobert I (623-39) who viewed this as part of his personal patrimony as the *rex Francorum*, see Fredegar, *Fredegarii et aliorum chronica*, B. Krusch, ed., *MGH, SRM*, II (Hanover, 1888) IV. 56.

⁴⁰ *Liber Historiae Francorum*, B. Krusch, ed., *MGH, SRM*, II (Hanover, 1888) 43. 20-21. p. 315.

⁴¹ See chapter 5, pp. 270-274.

terms such as *Gothi*, *Langobardi* or *Franci* were beginning to be applied on a broader scale by the seventh and eighth centuries was due to an earnest adoption of these labels on the part of the individual members of society, or their being applied to all free subjects of the crown to cover a range of mixed backgrounds and ethnicities is difficult to judge for certain. Considering the benefits one could reap both from a legal perspective and from the opportunities for social mobility provided, particularly in the realm of secular administration, it is logical to assume both processes were taking place simultaneously. This is of course a generalization of the complex and dynamic nature of such developments, as we have already discussed individuals of Roman heritage who were nonetheless able to embark upon fruitful secular administrative careers in each of the cases, yet as we can tell from the material available men such as Claudius the *maior domo* in Austrasia represented an unusual occurrence rather than one which was commonplace.

Ethnic exchanges and secular administration outside of the capitals

This section will now present some of the key focal points regarding the non-royal cities of the three regions, and how they can be seen as indicators of cultural interaction or aristocratic impact based on their studies in the preceding three chapters of this work. In the case of Merida, a *civitas* with a long history of Roman traditions as *Emerita Augusta* and one with continued political importance into the sixth century, when it served as a base of operations for the war of Agila I (549-54) against the rival and future king

Athanagild (554-67),⁴² the picture that emerges regarding cultural interaction and identities by the eighth century is one of a relatively high level of interaction between the various inhabitants. For example, the *VSPE* refers to the Hispano-Roman aristocracy and *senatores* as continuing to exist in the environs surrounding Merida,⁴³ however, it should be noted that their specific socio-political functions within the urban environment itself are not often explicitly detailed.

It should not only be emphasized that Merida was of a mixed population of various peoples, at least at the aristocratic stratus of its society, but also that it retained a relatively high degree of economic productivity into the sixth and seventh centuries. This does not mean that ‘market gardening’ was not taking place by the seventh century,⁴⁴ a sign that has often been attributed to either declining urban vitality or a shift in the function of the *civitas* itself, but rather such examples as the construction of the *xenodochium* by the Bishop Masona,⁴⁵ or the unearthing of twenty gold *tremisses* in Merida,⁴⁶ demonstrate that while the nature of urban administration and life was undergoing alterations, the local aristocracy nonetheless understood the importance of the city as a focal point for trade, commerce and socio-economic interactions. Although

⁴² G. Ripoll López, ‘Changes in the topography of power: from *civitates* to *sedes regiae* in *Hispania*,’ *The Transformation of the Roman World*, Vol. 12 (Leiden, 2003) pp. 130-131.

⁴³ A precise study of the roles of Goths or Hispano-Romans in the administrative structures within Merida, as was discussed during the third chapter of this work, can be found in J. Arce, ‘The city of Merida (Emerita) in the *Vitae Patrum Emeritensium* (VIth century AD),’ *East and West: modes of communication: proceedings of the first plenary conference at Merida* (Leiden and Boston, 1999) p. 11.

⁴⁴ R. Collins, *Visigothic Spain, 409-711* (Oxford, 2006) p. 216.

⁴⁵ *VSPE*, V.3.4.

⁴⁶ P. Mateos Cruz, A. Pizzo, and R. Pliego Vázquez, ‘Un tesoro de tremises visigodos hallado en el llamado (foro provincial) de Augusta Emerita,’ *Anejos de Archivo Español de Arqueología*, Vol. 78, No. 191-92 (Madrid, 2005) pp. 251-71.

it is difficult to determine to what extent interactions of cultural values were taking place outside of the elite circles in Merida, this economic output and relatively successful social balance reflects a localized identity emerging based largely around Merida itself, with Hispano-Roman or Visigothic identities being promoted when they were useful social or political tools.

In the second example from the *regnum Visigothorum* of Reccopolis, we see a very different model of urban society and politics during the sixth century. It represented an ambitious building project constructed under royal patronage, although the extent to which this was for external prestige or internal security, for example, in the notion of ‘aldstadt’ and ‘neustadt’ as discussed in the third chapter,⁴⁷ remains elusive to modern scholars. It was never to replace Toledo as the primary *sedes regia* but the construction of walls, aqueducts, minting facilities and a *palatium* represent an earnest attempt towards the construction of a new urban focal point which could be used to assert royal authority over its respective *territorium* and resources, rather than an empty high political gesture aimed towards garnering foreign respect or prestige. It also represents the impact of the Visigothic aristocracy upon the pre-existing urban networks and Late Roman system; while Merida serves as an example of a relatively heterogeneous environment within the kingdom that nonetheless continued to preserve a degree of self sufficiency, Reccopolis represents a direct breaking away from the Late Roman urban network by the foundation of a new *civitas* by Leovigild (569-86), which is rather ironic granted the high level of *imitatio imperii* that was used in the very founding itself, for example, in the use of the traditional Greek *polis* within the name of the city. This demonstrates that while

⁴⁷ See chapter 3, p. 156.

the Visigothic aristocracy were capable of interacting and cooperating with the Hispano-Roman populace as was the case in Merida, they also seem to have valued the urban environment and its socio-political role on a more intrinsic level as well.

We already established that the Lombards, despite being initially cautious regarding settlement within the walls of the cities of northern Italy, were nevertheless aware of the importance of the *civitates* as socio-political centres as is evident by the burial of Alboin (c. 565-73) underneath the *palatium* at Verona.⁴⁸ Brescia shared a long standing Roman heritage with its counterpart of Merida, and following the fall of *Brixia* to the Lombards in 569 it was placed under the direct authority of a *dux* with strong ties to the *rex Langobardorum* and this administrative structure would remain largely unaltered into the eighth century.⁴⁹ Much like the example of Merida in Visigothic Spain, the *civitas* of Brescia represents an urban centre which possessed a relatively high degree of economic and ecclesiastical continuity following the sixth century, and it played a central role in the development of the *regnum Langobardorum*, as can be seen in its mediation of royal conflicts during the seventh century.⁵⁰ There is also evidence that in the area of urban function and vitality there did exist some level of intramural farming taking place, although it should be noted that the monumental heart of what had been the Late Roman *civitas* went on to be used as the administrative base of power under the Lombard aristocracy, who likely resided in suburban residences as the extramural burial

⁴⁸ See chapter 4, p. 193.

⁴⁹ G.P. Bognetti, 'Brescia dei Goti e dei Longobardi,' in G. Treccani Degli Alfieri, ed., *Dalle origini alla caduta della signoria viscontea (1426)*, (Brescia, 1963-64) p. 403.

⁵⁰ The example of Cunincpert (688-700) being removed temporarily from power was discussed earlier, see chapter 4, p. 228.

evidence stretching into the eighth century suggests.⁵¹ However, it is difficult to trace any cultural identity to those members of society who were responsible for this agricultural work taking place within Brescia. As was the case in Merida there existed patronage for the construction of new buildings and urban structures pertaining to the local clergy, such as masonry, aqueducts, hypocausts and baths,⁵² although it should be noted that this was taking place during the seventh and eighth centuries at Brescia, rather than the sixth and seventh centuries as we saw in Merida.

If the example of Lombard Brescia serves as an example of relative continuity and urban settlement taking place over the sixth to eighth centuries, one with strong political ties to the crown and to some degree a mixed population of Lombard and Roman inhabitants, Cividale del Friuli represents a more direct impact of the new elite upon the previous urban network along the lines of Reccopolis, albeit without such audacious political aspirations. The elevation of Cividale to the regional centre of focus at the expense of Aquileia, which had experienced some level of devastation in both 452 and 590 at the hands of the Huns and Lombards respectively,⁵³ was an example of the Lombards reassessing the strategic situation and context in northern Italy and altering the urban network to meet the new demands placed upon them.

While the relative autonomy and hereditary duchy that developed in Cividale by the eighth century have been discussed earlier as examples of the Lombard aristocracy

⁵¹ G.P. Brogiolo, 'Towns, Forts and the Countryside: Archaeological Models for Northern Italy in the Early Lombard Period (AD 568-650),' *Towns and their Territories Between Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages* (Leiden, 2000) p. 316.

⁵² R. Balzaretto, 'Cities and Markets in the Early Middle Ages,' pp. 122-23.

⁵³ Paul the Deacon, *Storia dei Longobardi*, II. 14.

and *duces* asserting themselves within the urban sphere of activity,⁵⁴ it should be remembered that it maintained a strong tie with the court at Pavia and, like Brescia during the seventh century, several kings during the eighth century had served as the *duces* of Cividale prior to their elevation to the position of kingship. Although the ethnic composition of Cividale remains problematic, the willingness of its aristocracy to side with the papacy or exarchate when it was in their interests suggests that there was some pro-Roman element within the administration of the region,⁵⁵ but such political dealings could have been pursued with more pragmatic and strategic agendas in mind. Whether or not the Lombard elite lacked the federate traditions of the Visigoths in Spain, and the cultural exchanges with Late Roman groups this imperial employment may have facilitated, it is clear that they were able to serve as urban administrators with a degree of continuity, at least in the socio-economic sphere, as was the case in Brescia, but they were also capable of making adjustments to the urban network of *civitates* and *castra* when it proved necessary to do so.

The final part of this section will now present the cases of Merovingian Tours and Metz in comparison and contrast to the Visigothic and Lombard cities, yet it should first be acknowledged that the position of the latter as capital of Austrasia following the fall of Rheims to the Avars,⁵⁶ distinguishes it from the other non-royal cases. However, the position of Cividale as the first capital of the Lombards in the latter sixth century and the intended usage for Reccopolis to serve in such a capacity also represent *civitates* with a

⁵⁴ C. Wickham, *Early Medieval Italy: Central Power and Local Society 400-1000* (London, 1981) p. 42.

⁵⁵ W. Pohl, 'The Empire and the Lombards: treaties and negotiations in the sixth century,' in W. Pohl, ed., *Kingdoms of the Empire: The Integration of Barbarians in Late Antiquity* (Leiden, 1997) p. 99.

⁵⁶ See chapter 5, p. 300.

royal pedigree. Returning to the first case of early medieval Tours, the ability of Gregory to perceive the Syrian and Hebrew languages being spoken while at Orleans as we saw earlier, suggests more than his high level of education;⁵⁷ the ability to overhear the spoken vernacular and identify the language by the process of listening implies that he was exposed to these languages on a fairly regular basis, which is a potential sign towards a mixed population residing within Tours during the sixth century. Tours, like Merida and Brescia, was an ecclesiastical and economic centre within its kingdom, and was governed over at least nominally by the *comes* with the local bishop playing a major socio-political role as well.

There are also indications of a local identity centred around the *civitas* itself emerging as early as the sixth century similar to Merida and Cividale, for example, in the perception of Gregory as an outsider in the eyes of the *dux* Berulf and *comes* Eunomius as well as members of his own clergy, due simply to his place of origin being that of Clermont-Ferrand.⁵⁸ With respect to the Roman heritage of the city, the declaration of its exemption from certain taxes based upon a Late Roman precedent not only reflects the way the local aristocracy perceived its role within the kingdom, but also that the Merovingian monarch and Frankish nobility were willing to maintain the status quo rather than interfere with the urban network and its political structures.

The above point regarding the passive approach of the Merovingian rulers when it came to the urban administration, while certainly true in contrast to the Visigothic rulers in Spain, nevertheless shares a common exception along with the example of the Lombards in northern Italy. As was the case in Cividale being used as a new urban base

⁵⁷ Gregory of Tours, *Libri Historiarum X*, VIII. 1. p. 326.

⁵⁸ I. Wood, *The Merovingian Kingdoms 450-751* (London, 1994) p. 87.

of power against eastern invasion by the Lombard kings and their officials, the shift from Rheims to Metz following the fall of the former to the Avars represents the ability of the Frankish aristocracy to alter the urban framework and landscape when pressed by immediate strategic or pragmatic concerns. By the 560's Metz was recovering under Merovingian rule, and like Merida and Brescia the local aristocracy was investing in the construction of urban structures and patronage of the clergy.⁵⁹ In the same manner that Brescia acted as an alternative base of authority to the court at Pavia, Metz served as the Austrasian counter to Neustrian Paris, and it would provide the main urban centre of support for the rise of the Pippinid and Carolingian dynasties during the seventh and eighth centuries as we saw during the fifth chapter.

The comparison and contrast of these secondary *civitates* across our three regions in question has demonstrated that while the ruling elite were often content to leave the Late Roman urban network largely untouched, when occasion demanded they were equally capable of adapting the system to meet their needs, with the Visigoths representing the strongest case for such alterations in the founding of Reccopolis as an entirely new city, and the Merovingians showing the highest level of alteration to pre-existing Late Roman framework at sites such as Paris and Tours. Local identities centred around the urban environment seem to have been established in all three regions, while at the same time its relationship with the crown and royal prerogative largely differed according to the city in question and also the kingdom within which it was situated.

⁵⁹ G. Halsall, 'Towns, Societies and Ideas: The Not-so-strange Case of Late Roman and Early Merovingian Metz,' *Towns in Transition: Urban Evolution in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages*, p. 253.

A comparison of the *sedes regiae*

In keeping with the methodological approach used thus far, we will begin with a brief review of the main points concerning Visigothic Toledo and will then proceed to compare and contrast them with its two counterparts. Toledo was selected to serve as the *sedes regia* in 580 AD during the reign of Leovigild (569-86) and prior to this it had a Roman heritage as *Toletanum*, a centre of secondary importance within Hispania Carthaginensis to the capital of Carthago Nova.⁶⁰ While it was not the predominant urban centre within the region under Late Roman rule, by the late sixth century Toledo was becoming established as the political and ecclesiastical heart of Visigothic kingdom. Although the Third Council of Toledo in 589 saw the conversion of the Visigothic element of society to Catholicism, at least within the aristocratic sphere, and has been emphasized as a key example of such importance due to the number of signatories,⁶¹ it should be noted that it was of central importance during the Arian period of Visigothic rule as well. For example, in the Arian synod held at Toledo in 580 and also its crucial role as a base of operations during the campaigns of Leovigild across southern Iberia.⁶² As we saw with our examination of the Visigothic literary evidence in the third chapter, this central socio-political importance of Toledo continued into the seventh and eighth centuries; Julian of Toledo in his *Historia Wambae Regis* emphasized the need for Wamba (672-80) to be crowned at Toledo and its portrayal as a valued prize of the

⁶⁰ Chapter 3, pp. 127.

⁶¹ J. Vives et al., *Concilios Visigóticos e Hispano-Romanos*, pp. 30-32.

⁶² John of Biclaro, *Juan de Biclaro, Obispo de Gerona: su vida y su obra/introducción, texto crítico y comentarios por Julios Campos* (Madrid, 1960) pp. 89-90. 234-235.

Umayyads serve as indicators of this continued role.⁶³ It is quite apparent that Toledo was intended to be used as more than a regional or background city during the early medieval period, its centrality to the *regnum Visigothorum* continued as the kingdom gradually became more settled and unified up until the Umayyad conquest in the early eighth century.

The specific impact of the Visigothic aristocracy in the spheres of urban administration and settlement remains a more difficult issue to resolve. As we have seen the archaeological evidence for everyday Visigothic life within Toledo is scarce,⁶⁴ but if we look at the earliest years of Toledo being selected as the new capital of the emerging kingdom we can further understand the question of ‘Gothic’ impact. The strategic position of Toledo within the centre of the Iberian peninsula has already been put forth as one reason for Leovigild having chosen it as the capital, although when we take into account the conditions and environment of the late sixth century in the region there emerges a potential example for Visigothic impact upon the urban network. If we are to follow the view that Leovigild partially chose Roman *Toletum* due to the lack of pro-Roman sentiment in the area along with the available *agri deserti* as Gisela Ripoll López has suggested,⁶⁵ a notion that is quite reasonable given the dynamic and confrontational political situation at the time, this implies that there was a substantial non-Roman

⁶³ For the events surrounding the coronation of Wamba see Julian of Toledo, *Historia Wambae Regis*, W. Levison, ed., *MGH, SRM*, V (Hanover and Leipzig, 1910) *Liber de historia Galliae*, II, and for the Umayyad conquest of Toledo see R. Collins, *The Arab Conquest of Spain: 710-97* (Oxford, 1989) p. 43.

⁶⁴ Chapter 3, p. 126.

⁶⁵ G. Ripoll López, ‘Changes in the topography of power: from *civitates* to *sedes regiae* in *Hispania*’ in *The Transformation of the Roman World*, Vol. 12 (Leiden, 2003) p. 145.

element, and more importantly, one that could Leovigild felt he could identify with and bring over to his cause.

Unfortunately to what extent the above sector of society came from a long standing Visigothic background is harder to judge, but the shifting of political focus to what had previously been a secondary Late Roman city by a Visigothic king in an environment which was largely populated by non-Romans or those disillusioned with Late Roman government represents a significant impact upon the urban network and administrative structures of sixth century Spain. When one takes into account the situation surrounding the founding of Reccopolis as well, a clearer picture emerges, one that points towards a relatively high degree of Visigothic willingness to make significant and long lasting changes to the socio-political framework.

While the Visigothic capital served as a strong political centre to the kingdom from the sixth to eighth centuries, in the *regnum Langobardorum* of northern Italy the situation was largely different, yet several of the same functions and conditions for the rise of Pavia resemble those of its counterpart in Visigothic Spain. Although we previously emphasized the relatively late development of *Ticinum* as a *municipium* in the early fifth century,⁶⁶ it should be noted that by the mid-sixth century the importance of this urban centre to the political and strategic landscape of northern Italy had become paramount. An example of this can be seen in not only the Byzantine resistance and ensuing Lombard siege that lasted until 572 at *Ticinum* under Alboin (560-72), but also in the inability of the former to mount anything resembling a major counteroffensive following the fall of the city to the Lombards. In the same manner of choosing a *sedes*

⁶⁶ Chapter 4, pp. 219.

regia as the Visigoths, the Lombard rulers chose a Late Roman urban centre of secondary economic and political importance from the previous era, and adapted it to the shifting strategic environment of the sixth to eighth centuries. At some point during the seventh century the *municipium* was renamed *Papia*, and later to the modern Pavia, and this rebranding of a Late Roman centre with a different name, alongside its promotion as the primary *civitas* in the changing landscape of northern Italy, represents a direct impact of the newly established Lombard elite on the urban network in the region.

Regarding the level of interaction between Roman and Lombard inhabitants of Pavia the settlement of the earliest Lombard settlers around the North and Northeast sections of the walls reflects their initial caution for residing within the city gradually decreasing by the time of Authari (584-90) as was earlier suggested.⁶⁷ However, it could also be a more simple repercussion of the long siege that had taken place; the Lombard *exercitus* had already established communities and preliminary settlements outside Ticinum while waiting for the siege to be concluded. Unfortunately as was the case at Visigothic Toledo, trying to pinpoint any such interactions in the lower levels of the social hierarchy lacks evidence, so it is to the ruling elite and administrative impact that we must now shift our attention.

In the areas of urban administration and royal prerogative we find the strongest contrast between the two early medieval kingdoms and their respective impacts on the Late Roman framework. While we discussed the importance of the Third Council of Toledo in 589 to the continued growth of the *civitas* afterwards in the third chapter of this thesis, the case of Lombard Pavia and the proclamation of the *Edictum Rothari* in 643 can

⁶⁷ Chapter 4, p. 215.

be viewed as having made a similar contribution to the rise of Pavia with an emphasis upon the kingship, lawmaking and secular administration, rather than the largely ecclesiastical foundations behind the policies of Reccared at Toledo. Indeed the predominant royal mint was located in Pavia until c. 680,⁶⁸ yet it is in the area of local administration and the attempts to bind the subjects and the relatively autonomous *duces* within the *regnum Langobardorum* to the royal capital that the Lombard impact differs most from its counterpart in early medieval Spain.

While the Visigothic administration relied largely upon the *comes* and bishop to govern over the urban sector, the Lombard kings employed a wider range of secular officials to balance the sometimes hostile *duces* such as the *gastaldus* or *gasindus*, as well as the *decanus* or *saltirius* with their support staff, although the exact roles and functions of these various offices seem to overlap and are sometimes ambiguous in their definitions.⁶⁹ Despite these complex problems of terminology, a clear picture of the importance of Pavia to the *regnum Langobardorum* does emerge when the examples listed above are taken into account. Like the example of Toledo in the *regnum Visigothorum* the site was based upon a Late Roman centre of secondary political significance, and selected partially due to its strategic location following the events of the sixth century. Unlike the Visigoths at Toledo, the Lombard rulers and elite made more alteration to the micromanagement and local administration of the cities which were bound to the court at Pavia.

⁶⁸ R. Balzaretti, 'Cities and Markets in the Early Middle Ages,' p. 125.

⁶⁹ P. Delogu, 'Lombard and Carolingian Italy,' *The New Cambridge Medieval History*, Vol. 2 (Cambridge, 1995) p. 291.

The discussion and conditions surrounding the Merovingian capital of Paris will obviously differ greatly from those of the former two cases due to the very nature of the *Teilreiche* system itself, and the ways in which it functioned as a political framework. Although the examples of Toledo or Pavia did take some time to emerge as the *sedes regiae* in their respective realms, once they had done so they largely continued to serve as the singular urban centre associated with royal government at the highest levels of administration, whereas the fragmentation of the Merovingian territories into constituent kingdoms led to the establishment of several coinciding and competing capitals. Paris from the sixth to eighth centuries gradually reinforced its primacy in relation to the other centres of Rheims, Soissons, Orléans and later Metz, both by use of ecclesiastical and secular means of bolstering its overall authority and prestige throughout the *regnum Francorum* as a whole. Much of the initial basis for its relative power lies in the events surrounding the reign and death of Clovis I (481-511), in his selection of Paris to serve as his royal seat in 508 following the victory of the Franks over the Visigoths at Vouillé, or his later burial beneath the basilica of St. Denis in 511;⁷⁰ the former laid the secular foundations for the growth of Paris while the latter added a high degree of piety to both the city itself and the Merovingian successors.

Proximity to the capital at Paris was crucial to the degree of royal authority exercised, as was the case in both Visigothic Spain and Lombard Italy as well, but in the case of Paris this becomes more complex as the recurring division of the realm meant that it could not always directly assert authority over territories that were outside of Neustria. Visigothic authority by the eighth century was largely established throughout the

⁷⁰ Chapter 5, p. 283.

kingdom from Toledo, but the situation in Merovingian *Francia* resembled that of Lombard Pavia more closely with respect to the question of central administration. That is to say, like the political dynamic between the relatively powerful *duces* and the court at Pavia, a similar relationship between the Merovingian rulers and the primary *sedes regia* at Paris can be argued.

While both Pavia and Paris were centrally important to their respective kingdoms with regards to lawmaking, financial and political structures, the latter had the advantage of the piety and association with Clovis I and his burial which could be used alongside more secular considerations to exert royal influence outside of the Neustrian territories. The amalgamation of the Kingdom of Soissons into Neustria in 614 demonstrates the growing influence of Paris as a Merovingian centre,⁷¹ and the swift movement of Dagobert I (623-39) to Paris after becoming the *regnum Francorum* while leaving Austrasia under the nominal rule of his son Sigibert III (634-56) provides another example of its emergence in the seventh century as the primary seat of royal authority in the *Teilreiche* and arguably the early medieval West overall.⁷² Another manner in which the Merovingian system centred upon Paris differed from its Lombard counterpart lies in the events surrounding the monarchs themselves; whereas in the first half of the eighth century the Lombard kings continued to expand their authority and consolidate power, by this time the Merovingian dynasty had become largely bereft of any tangible authority at the expense of the majordomo and local aristocracy. The situation is mirrored in Visigothic Spain during the last quarter of the seventh century, when usurpations and

⁷¹ M. Innes, *Introduction to Early Medieval Western Europe, 300-900: The Sword, the Plough and the Book* (London and NY, 2007) p. 285.

⁷² Fredegar, *Fredegarii et aliorum chronica*, IV. 75, and I. Wood, *The Merovingian Kingdoms, 450-751*, p. 145.

civil wars were rampant in the kingdom. Unlike the more unified kingdoms centred around Toledo or Pavia, the *Teilreiche* and its division, whether Paris was perceived as the heart of this system or not, inherently fostered competition between the regional aristocracies as the political opportunities and overall framework was more dynamic and complex in such a fragmentary structure.

The difficulty in constructing a comparative approach or model for the study of ethnicity is exacerbated by the general lack of literary or archaeological evidence for the period in question. This allows for a wide range of interpretations and viewpoints within the scholarly community, and while this is often a welcome stimulus to any academic field, it can simultaneously have the negative impact of polarizing individuals in their views on the matter of identity formation. Prominent scholars such as G.P. Brogiolo, Walter Goffart, Peter Heather, Walter Pohl, Gisela Ripoll López and Bryan Ward-Perkins, to name but a few, have dedicated entire careers and decades to the pursuit of a clearer understanding of the processes behind early medieval social interaction, and the ways in which they shaped local identities from the sixth to eighth centuries. It is the hope of the author that this approach will prove a useful tool to future studies of ethnicity and urban administration, if not in the specifics regarding the cases then at least in the methodological and analytical approach regarding the broader subject of cultural exchange and the ways in which scholars tackle such questions.

Conclusion: A comparative approach to early medieval settlement

Essentially the approach has been constructed based upon the comparisons and contrasts undertaken in the above sections and consists of six points, or rather five specific views

that are incorporated in the sixth and final one. First, although broad ethnic labels were applied by the aristocracy in military situations to provide a sense of common belonging in all three cases, our understanding of the composition and levels of interaction between these groups is hindered by a general lack of urban archaeology, keeping in mind that the city served as the main focal point for such activities taking place. Second, whether or not the case lacks a detailed chronicle or has chronological gaps, these sources generally were not concerned with questions of ethnicity or identity to begin with, but occasional glimpses can be gained from them as we saw with the examples of Droctulf, Gundulf and Claudius. Third, the legal texts of the Merovingians differ from their Visigothic and Lombard counterparts in their clear, explicit promotion of an incentive towards adopting a Frankish identity, due to the legal benefits such association would bring. Fourth, the study of non-royal cities showed a degree of local identity formation in all three cases, with those in power willing to alter the urban network for strategic considerations, yet their impact on local administration and inner workings of the city widely varied. Fifth, the capitals of Toledo, Pavia and Paris were to a certain extent selected for strategic reasons, and were then developed to bind the periphery to the centre, yet the nature of and approach to this process represent significant differences between the three early medieval kingdoms.⁷³ Finally, taking into all of the above points, it seems that while ethnicity was not a primary concern for contemporary authors of the sixth to eighth centuries, with the exception of the *pactus legis salicae* and to a lesser extent the *lex ribuarica*, the three cases showed the most similarities in their application of ethnic labels

⁷³ The emphasis of martial and political reasons behind the choosing of capital cities is by no means a new development, and has been demonstrated alongside financial reasons for decades. See E. Ewig, 'Résidence et capitale pendant le haut Moyen Age,' *Revue Historique*, No. 230 (Paris, 1963) pp. 31-50.

within a military context, while they demonstrated the greatest degree of differentiation in the processes of cultural exchange taking place within cities that did not serve as their capitals.

This thesis has demonstrated that it is not simply a matter of examining the impact of the new elite upon the Late Roman cities, but rather a question of how early medieval peoples influenced an array of different Roman centres that varied in their level of urban development. On top of this, the process was not one way and we must also acknowledge the strategies employed by the Roman inhabitants in adapting to the pressures imposed upon them by the new regional administrative powers. The Visigoths, Lombards and Franks established themselves by utilizing various strategies of settlement, some of which overlapped between the cases while others were distinctive, both in terms of identity formation and urban administration. The expression 'processes of cultural exchange across the early medieval range of cities' might be the best way to encompass the overarching point. This is to emphasize the distinct conditions each of the three cases faced at the urban level, and that the cities themselves played a role in such developments, not only as the focal points for such exchange, but also their specific level of urban development and importance to the Roman population contributed to how these groups interacted with the new aristocracy.

What does all of this tell us about the question of cultural exchanges, local identity formation, and the role of the *civitas* in early medieval Western Europe? The necessity for the newly established aristocracy in their respective territories to create a sense of common identity in their subjects, whether it be *Gothi*, *Langobardi* or *Franci*, reflects the fragmentary society and high level of localized groups over which they

assumed authority following the fall of the Western Roman Empire. The variations in how they governed the cities within these areas show the differences between the three kingdoms and their ruling elite were much more than a matter of nomenclature or terminology. With respect to the use of the term 'Germanic' as a broad label covering the three different peoples, at least when we are speaking in terms of post-Roman government and in the context of the sixth to eighth centuries, the fact that the wide range of local administrative changes put in place by the new rulers undermines such a notion. While the elite of each kingdom was willing to employ ethnic labels when it was useful to do so, the socio-political conditions which each faced differed, from the relatively unified Visigothic Spain of the early eighth century to the more fragmentary systems seen in Lombard Italy or the Merovingian *Teilreiche*; these different environments had a reciprocal impact on the new ruling classes and presumably the lower strata of society as well, which provides another reason why we should avoid using broad terminology as an umbrella for the three groups of peoples.

Perhaps the single most original contribution of this study to the field of early medieval history, particularly in the areas of identity formation and city life, lies in the period which it covers from the sixth to eighth centuries. When examining the settlement of non-Roman peoples within the former Western Empire historians have focused on the fifth century migrations as the defining period for cultural exchange, while the development of regional identities and national formation has traditionally been studied from the eighth century onward. Early medieval archaeologists have largely focused on a select few cases within a given region if not a single site, while historians have tended to become insular in their coverage of one particular region. This thesis takes the middle

ground, in that it has examined several micro-regions and cases in order to gain a broader understanding of the region itself, prior to then comparing and contrasting it with other regions which have undergone the same methodological approach. After having defined how this study is unique in its approach to early medieval cultural exchange, let us summarize some of the key points for each case as succinctly as possible.

In terms of the capital cities, the Merovingians demonstrated the greatest degree of differentiation from their Visigothic or Lombard counterparts, due to the partitioning of the Frankish realm into constituent kingdoms with their own respective capitals; the polarization of Paris and Tours into two main urban spheres represents an urban development that was not prevalent in the Visigothic or Lombard cases. However, we have also seen that Paris was ‘first among equals’ due to its association with the burial of Clovis I and the treasury being located there. The Visigoths in their construction of Reccopolis showed a short-lived desire to shift the capital from Toledo, and a Lombard shift from Pavia to Ravenna under Aistulf may have been desired however unlikely. Concerning the secondary urban centres in each region, the Merovingians showed the least amount of interference with the Late Roman administration, with the Lombards demonstrated the highest level of alteration, due to the relative strength of the *duces* and the unique circumstances of sixth-century Lombard settlement. The Visigoths likely fell somewhere in between the other two cases, but scarcity of literary and archaeological records make their case the most difficult to judge. It was a combination of strong Lombard royal presence in the capital alongside significant alterations to the urban environment, while maintaining the overall Late Roman framework, that served as the foundations for the strong Lombard identity that emerged in the eighth century. The

Franks were able to produce a strong overarching identity due to their royal presence at Paris, while in contrast to the Lombards, their general lack of alteration to the secondary cities and urban network allowed for a greater degree of Late Roman culture to persist into the eighth century. In the case of the Visigoths, the *sedes regia* at Toledo exercised control by the eighth century over a relatively unified kingdom, and in the military sphere at least a strong Gothic identity emerged. The role of Visigothic secondary centres in the area of cultural exchange is most difficult to tell, but the case of Merida demonstrated that a significant Hispano-Roman senatorial elite persisted into the sixth-century and that it maintained a relatively high level of autonomy.

One of the most crucial elements for the development of urban centres in the Visigothic and Lombard kingdoms was the need for political stability in the capitals of Toledo and Pavia respectively. Due to their geographic positions as major hubs for trade and commercial activity with the rest of the urban sites in the region, and following the sixth century in Spain and the eighth century in northern Italy, their roles as centralized administration points for the kingdom as a whole, the fortunes of the local aristocracy and their ability to support the local urban landscape was intrinsically tied to the prosperity of the capital. This is also true to an extent in the Merovingian kingdoms, but due to the fragmentary nature of the Frankish political system and the existence of several competing capitals for different regions, the effects of political instability or economic decline were felt more locally.

The urban archaeology at sites such as Merida and Brescia demonstrated that in the seventh and eighth centuries a degree of emulation of Byzantine and Late Roman architectural styles still continued in the construction of ecclesiastical buildings in

Visigothic Spain and Lombard Italy, with the overall Late Roman urban framework being left intact unless it prevented residential expansion or the urban planning of the ruling elite. However, the situation in Merovingian *Francia* does not reflect the same degree of *imitatio imperii* in its early medieval construction. At Paris and Tours, there was a clear breaking from the Late Roman urban infrastructure and a reorganization of the urban area both internally and in relation to its *suburbium* and *territorium* as well. This coincides with an increased sense of royal prestige during the seventh century, when Merovingian coins ceased featuring the Byzantine emperors in favour of the Frankish kings and stamps of the local moneyers. It could be argued based on the case studies presented, that the Visigothic elite were the ones clinging most to their Late Roman heritage in the administrative and urban spheres of activity, the Lombards were by the eighth century much more comfortable with such customs after having attained a level of urban experience, and the Frankish aristocracy was by the seventh century beginning to shed the trappings of Late Roman identity. This of course excludes the the Gallo-Roman populace engaged within ecclesiastical spheres, as well as those Hispano-Romans or Romans in northern Italy who had joined the clergy; the above point was referring specifically to the developments of the secular elite, both at the royal and local levels.

These points are to an extent generalizations based on the approach, and we have looked already at numerous exceptions during the case studies themselves, but this seems to be the overall image that emerges for the sixth to eighth centuries. Ethnogenesis within the early medieval cities was not only a matter of the new administration impacting previous Late Roman values and identities, it was also a matter of different types of urban centres influencing the decision-making of the ruling elite and how they

perceived themselves in relation to their subjects. The identities that emerged by the eighth century depended on a wide range of factors, including the conditions each faced during the period of settlement and integration, the specific approaches and strategies employed by those in power, and the different types of cities that constituted the urban network of each region.

Abbreviations

HL Historia Langobardorum

LHF Liber Historiae Francorum

LS Legum Sectio

MGH Monumenta Germaniae historica

SRG Scriptores rerum Germanicum

SRL Scriptores rerum Langobardicarum et Italicarum

SRM Scriptores rerum Merovingicarum

VSPE Vitae Sanctorum Patrum Emeritensium

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