

Hispania Motives and their Function in the Chronicle of Gregory of Tours

Václav Drška

Jan Evangelista Purkyně University in Ústí nad Labem

Abstract

The study analyses the importance of the Hispania discourse in the Ten Books of Histories (*Historia Francorum*) by Gregory of Tours on the “Frank state ideology”. The Frank chronicler uses the topics of the Visigoth Kingdom and the Iberian Peninsula on three interpretational levels (antique, heretic, and orthodox) and in several contexts – the most important being the dynastical, state, and religious. In all cases, Hispania, or rather the Visigoth Kingdom, plays the role of an “unconquered” foreign area or an area under Frank dominance. The function of such an approach and the creation of tradition is clear: to affirm that the Franks were the chosen ones in God’s Plan of Salvation and to affirm their superiority. However, it is important to state that this focus was common among chroniclers in the Middle Ages; the chronicle does not deviate from the characteristics of a “state chronicle.”

Key words: Middle Ages, Franks, Visigoths, Arianism, Gregory of Tours, Clovis I, Chilperic I, Alaric I, Reccared I, Liuvigild, Amalarich, Athanagild, Isidore of Seville, Leander of Seville, *imperium romanum*, Maurikios.

Introduction

The Frankish Empire, which was founded in Gaul based on Ancient Roman heritage, quickly became the dominating force in western Europe. However, it was not the only political force; the Visigoth Kingdom in Hispania was an important neighbour, despite the defeat it suffered. It is therefore interesting and important to investigate how this area was viewed by the Frankish elite, since it was an area with different or even opposing political and religious ideals. Nevertheless, it was imperative to keep in contact with this area for a number of reasons. These reasons are investigated below.

Materials and methods

From this perspective, the Ten Books of Histories by Bishop Gregory¹ of Tours, are amongst the most valuable narrative sources that capture the events in Gaul in the fifth century. They make it possible for us to better understand and discover what strategies medieval rulers chose in certain situations in their environs, and how they dealt with the ethnic, legal, cultural, and ideological conditions of the time. The author himself contributes to the publication's importance the most. He was not only one of the leading diplomats of the Merovingian Frankish state, but also a high-ranking church hierarch that profited from a classical education at the end of Late Antiquity. Although he perceived himself more as Roman than Frank², *Historia* is a publication with clear Frankish tendencies. This dual relationship appears to form the core of a significant problem. Although his contemporary biographer Jean Verdon characterized *Historia* as a "history of the world", he added that "L'Histoire des Francs is the fundamental source for the Merovingian era."³ In his opinion, *Historia* is a state chronicle imbued with the spirit of Merovingian legitimism due to the fact that it incorporates strongly moralizing elements⁴. This, one might say, classical view of Gregory's work, has been behind research undertaken over the last few decades. Wood's and Goffart's analyses focus not on the Frankish dimension, but on the religious and historical dimensions, on the intentions of the Bishop of Tours, as well as on his didactic plan, which dictated his selection of materials and presentation style⁵. Heinzelmann also confirmed this, although his analysis is more in favour of the educational concept⁶.

If the extreme positions in this debate are taken out of consideration, then its conclusions can be accepted. However, we have to take into consideration that such an approach to history and its selective usage in didactical discourse is not only a characterization

¹ Critical edition Gregorius ep. Turonensis, *Libri historiarum X*, MGH SS rer. Mer.1.1, ed. Bruno Krusch et Wilhelm Levison, Hannover 1956.

² Alheydis Plassmann: *Origo gentis. Identitäts- und Legitimitätsstiftung in früh- und hochmittelalterlichen Herkunftserzählungen*. Berlin: Akademie Verlag 2006 (= *Orbis mediaevalis. Vorstellungswelten des Mittelalters*, Bd. 7), p. 120.

³ J. Verdon, p. 77.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 115 an.

⁵ It is important to note that it was Giselle de Nie, *Roses in January: discontinuity and coherence in the 'Histories'*, in: *Views From a Many-Windowed Tower. Studies of Imagination in the Works of Gregory of Tours*, Amsterdam: Rodopi 1987 (*Studies in classical Antiquity*, Bd. 7), p. 27-70, who suggested such reflection trend being possible. Also Walter Goffart, *From to Historiae to Historia Francorum and Back Again: Aspect of the Textual History of Gregory of Tours*, in: *Religion, Culture and Society in the Early Middle Age: Studies in Honor of R.E. Sullivan*, eds. Thomas F.X. Noble and John J. Contreni, Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications 1987 (= *Studies in Medieval Culture* 23), p. 55-76 as well as, *The Narrators of Barbarian History (A.D. 550-800). Jordanes, Gregory of Tours, Bede and Paul the Deacon*, Princeton: Princeton University Press 1988; Ian Wood, *Gregory of Tours, Bangor Gwynedd*, UK: Headstart History 1994; Adriaan H.B. Breukelaar, *Historiography and Episcopal Authority in Sixth-Century Gaul. The Histories of Gregory of Tours interpreted in their historical context*, Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht 1994 (*Forschungen zur Kirchen- und Dogmengeschichte*, Bd. 57); Kathleen Mitchell, Ian Wood (ed.), *The World of Gregory of Tours*, Leiden/Boston/Köln: Brill 2002.

⁶ Martin Heinzelmann *Gregor von Tours (538-594). „Zehn Bücher Geschichte“*. Historiographie und Gesellschaftskonzept im 6. Jahrhundert, Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft 1994, primarily p. 32 an.

connected to Gregory. This, for the simple reason that he wrote in a norm typical for the majority of writers at the time. Gregory definitely intended to write “world history” by combining religious and worldly histories into one whole; he saw the Franks as the successors of the Romans with regards to ruling the future, which is why he assigned them the central role. He also understood the educational function of his work, achieving this goal through the easiest method possible, by comparing the Franks to their neighbours. The Visigoth Hispania and its Merovingian kings maintained frequent and diverse contacts, which is why it played such an important role in Gregory’s concept.

Results and Discussion

The objective of this paper is therefore not only to define more precisely what the position of the Hispania area was in the various value hierarchies of the Frankish writer, but also to contribute to a more detailed characterization and understanding of the function of his narrative. The primary methodology is text analysis of his work, or rather excerpts in which the Hispania issue is discussed, as well as semantic interpretation of various forms of the Hispania discourse, thereby taking into consideration and creating political and cultural contexts with their potential pro-Frankish functions.

The Visigoth Kingdom was in a complicated and ambiguous situation in the second half, and towards the end of the sixth century. After decades of complications and uncertainty, the reign of King Liuvigild finally brought stability and the unification of the Iberian Peninsula. Unlike the Frankish setting, this significant parallel process was taking place on the basis of an intensifying Romanization of the state. The Romanization was not only reflected in the administrative model of the kingdom, but also in the cultural and political self-identification of Goths⁷, who still held onto the principles of the heresy of Arianism. It is only in the final decades, and after the ascension of Reccared to the throne, that the sought after turn in church policy finally took place⁸. Gregory, who was a Gaul-Roman, could on the one hand, admire the Hispania Kingdom, but on the other, could not have tolerated a heretic king.

Gregory writes in his work about the Iberian Peninsula on three interpretational levels. The shortest is ancient Hispania. Gregory naturally perceives it to be a part of the empire, as one of the provinces⁹, which became the homeland of the barbaric Vandals and Suebis. Gregory presents both tribes as wild hordes who, during the rule of King Guntherich, plundered Gaul¹⁰ and then moved onto Hispania in order to destroy it further with their

⁷ An older study is interesting: Dietrich Claude, *Gentile und territoriale Staatsideen im Westgotenreich*, in: *Frühmittelalterliche Studien* 6 (1972), p. 1an., newer than Alexander Pierre Bronisch, *Die westgotische Reichsideologie und ihre Weiterentwicklung im Reich von Asturien*, in: *Das frühmittelalterliche Königtum*, hg. Franz-Reiner Erkens, Berlin: de Gruyter 2005, p. 161 an.

⁸ In detail described in: Roger Collins, *Visigothic Spain 409-711*. Oxford 2004: Blackwell, p. 38 an. From the Spanish point of view: *Historia de España*, ed. Manuel Torres López et al., Tomo 3, *España visigoda : 414-711 de J.C*, Madrid: Espasa-Calpe 1963, p. 322 an., further E. A. Thompson, *Los godos en España*, Madrid: Alianza Editorial 2011, p. 43 an.

⁹ *Gregorius ep. Turonensis*, I.46, p 30 or II.9, p. 56.

¹⁰ Časově lze zařadit někam na počátek rodu 407 viz Helmut Castritius, *Die Vandalen. Etappen einer Spurensuche*. Stuttgart: Kohlhammer 2007, s. 49 an.

rivalry. However, the matter of faith is much more significant. The Bishop of Tours primarily points to the Arianism of the Vandals, stating that “a Virgin devoted to God, who was honoured by all the people because she came from a well-known and respected Roman family” fell victim to Arianism. King Thrasimund tried to make her give up her one true faith by all means possible – including violence – but she chose the death of a martyr¹¹. As a result, Hispania fell into second place: a country robbed of its one true Christian faith, an area that due to this fact was located outside the validated civilization and church culture recognized by Gregory.

This image came to full fruition with the introduction of the Visigoths. King Euric, who ruled Toulouse and seized part of Hispania, attacked entire Gaul to “annihilate all places that did not agree with his perverted faith, to cast clerics into prison, and to send bishops into exile or execute them.”¹² Even Gregory does not hide the fact that his description was inspired by the famous letter written by Sidonius Apollinaris to Bishop Basil¹³, which means that the description is more of a recited story than authentic information. However, it is important to point out that to the Frankish-Roman elite, Goth Hispania represented an area from which danger could originate not only on the basis of faith, but also from the relationship between church authorities and worldly powers. This is supported by the story of Bishop Perpetuus of Tours, who was dragged off to Hispania as a hostage¹⁴.

It is therefore indisputable – historical research has repeatedly confirmed this¹⁵ – that the focus of the efforts of the elite in the Gaul church to convert the Frankish king Clovis I to the one true faith, marked a fundamental shift in the political and religious conditions of the Germanic West. The tradition captured in Gregory’s chronicle also supports this statement. Although the reality differed from how it was described¹⁶, the Bishop of Tours adamantly depicted the order of the conversion as “logical”: the christening of the

¹¹ Gregorius ep. Turonensis, II.2, p. 39–40.

¹² Gregorius ep. Turonensis, II. 25, p. 70–71.

¹³ Gai Solii Apollinaris Sidonii Epistolae et carmina, ed. Christian Lütjohann, Berlin: Weidmann 1887, VII.No.6, p. 108–110

¹⁴ Gregorius ep. Turonensis, II.26, p. 71.

¹⁵ See about topic: Georges Tessier, *Le Baptême de Clovis. 25 décembre ...* Paris: Gallimard 1964; Rolf Weiss, *Chlodwigs Taufe: Reims 508. Versuch einer neuen Chronologie für Regierungszeit de ersten christlichen Frankenkönigs unter Berücksichtigung der politischen und kirchlich- dogmatischen Probleme seiner Zeit*, Bern/Frankfurt am Main: Lang 1971; Pierre Chaunu, *Baptême de Clovis, baptême de la France*, Paris: Fayard 1996; Michel Rouche, *Clovis. Suivi de vingt et un documents traduits et commentés*. Paris: Hachette 1996; Bertrand Fauvarque, *Le baptême de Clovis, ouverture du millénaire des saints*, in: *Clovis. Histoire et mémoire I. Le baptême de Clovis, l'événement*, sous la dir. M. Rouche. Paris: Presses de l'Université de Paris-Sorbonne 1997, p. 272–286; Danuta Shanzer, Ian Wood, *Avitus of Vienne: Letters and Selected Prose*. Translated with an Introduction and Notes. Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2002 Further, at least fundamental analyses, although in other or broader contexts: Ferdinand Lot, *Naissance de la France*, Paris: Fayard 1970, p. 21–26; Justin Favrod, *Histoire politique de royaume Burgonde (443-534)*. Lausanne: Bibliothèque historique vaudoise 1997, p. 323–360; Reinhold Kaiser, *Die Burgunder*, Stuttgart: Kolhammer 2004, p. 60–64 Eugen Ewig, *Die Merowinger und das Frankenreich*. Stuttgart/Berlin/Köln: Kolhammer 1992, p. 23; Reinhold Kasiser, *Das römische Erbe und das Merowingerreich*, (=Enzyklopadie Deutscher Geschichte, Band 26), München: Oldenbourg 2004, p. 89 an. Summarizing: Václav Drška, *Le Baptême de Clovis: imitatio imperii? La stratégie politique des élites ecclésiastiques gauloises au tournant de l'Antiquité et du Moyen Âge*, in: *Prague Papers on History of International Relations*, 13 (2009), p. 9–28.

¹⁶ Václav Drška, *Dějiny Burgundska. Nomen Burgundiae ve středověku*, České Budějovice: Veduta 2011, p. 30–36.

Frankish king was followed by an unsuccessful attempt to convert the Burgundy Arian ruler Gundwald¹⁷ through pressure brought to bear by the Franks on the Visigoths. Gregory transformed this moment of historical memory into an originally allied pledge made in Amboise between Clovis I and the Visigoth Alaric I. The dominance of the Franks however leaves few doubts: the Arian ruler asked for the pledge “when he saw that king Clovis I constantly conquered the tribes”. Even though the contract with the Goths was sealed with a traditional feast, the last sentence written by the chronicler speaks volumes: “Many back then already wished with all their hearts to have Franks as rulers in Gaul.¹⁸” Gaul had to be rid of heresy, as confirmed by Clovis’ motivations for the subsequent war with the Goths.¹⁹ Their defeat and expulsion were the result of a perfect military campaign accompanied by miracles, and was characterized by the model discipline of the fighters, who were not allowed to plunder anything except for water and horse fodder. The battle of Vouillé²⁰ brought about the destruction and death of Alaric, but not that of Goth Arianism. It left Gaul and moved together with its believers to Hispania.

The former Roman province had definitely become a country that was sinking into heresy. The first four volumes of Gregory’s *Historia* were written during Liuvigild’s rule²¹, at which point in time it was hardly imaginable that his successor would instigate a radical shift in church policy. We might therefore expect Gregory to have significantly focused on this topic. However, his rhetoric is softer and with more varied contours. There are two fundamental reasons for this. Firstly, it was the aforementioned Romanized approach to the ruling Visigoth that prevented its people, or rather its elite, from completely moving away from members of the Gaul-Roman nobility. Secondly, it needs to be taken into consideration that the noble Visigoth royal family could have been an important partner to the Merovingian family in dynastic politics. The first chapter of volume III of *Historia* confirms this, the contents of which are once again structured to comply with Frankish interests. The Visigoth king Amalaric took the initiative by asking for the hand in marriage of Clotilde, the sister of Clovis’ sons, because he was well aware of their skills and military power²².

The Frankish *virtus* and *robur* are a sign of at least equality to the older Visigoth Kingdom, which is thoroughly transformed in Gregory’s diction into the kingdom of Hispania²³. Although it cannot be definitely proven, it is reasonable to theorize that the subtext of the

¹⁷ Gregorius ep. Turonensis, II.31–34, p. 76–84. Kaiser, *Die Burgunder*, p. 152 an.

¹⁸ There, II.35, p. 84.

¹⁹ There, II.39, p. 85: „Valde molestum ferro, quod hi Arriani partem teneant Galliarum!”

²⁰ There, II.39, p. 86–88. K bitvě u Vouillé nejnověji Ralph W. Mathisen, Danuta Shanzer (Eds.): *The Battle of Vouillé, 507 CE. Where France Began* (=Millenium-Studien. Band 37), Berlin: De Gruyter 2012.

²¹ Wood, Gregory, p. 1–4.

²² Gregorius ep. Turonensis, III.1, p. 97–98.

²³ Gregory did not call Amalaric the king of the Visigoths but gave him the title of *rex Hispanie* (*ibid.*). It is therefore not a personal view of the government that was still valid for the Franks (see Václav Drška, *Divisiones regni Francorum. Královská moc a říšské elity franské říše do vzniku císařství, Ústí nad Labem: Acta Universitatis Purkynianae* (= *Studia Historica* 11) 2010, p. 15 an.) but a romanticized view of regum as a territory connected to royal power. It is in accordance with the fact that King Miro was not called *rex Suevorum* by Gregory but *rex Galliciensis* (Gregorius ep. Turonensis, V.41, p. 248). See also Claude, p. 25–35.

information suggests the Goths were an example of an accomplished unified state. The events date back to the first decade of the sixth century, shortly after Clovis' death. The Frankish border in southern Gaul had not been stabilized yet and the Goths had not yet been completely forced out²⁴. Despite, or maybe because of this, the Merovingian princess was generously endowed and sent to her groom. This serves as evidence of the fact that despite their defeat at Vouillé, the prestige of the Visigoths in the Franks' eyes remained at a high level.

On the other hand, Clotilde's suffering, in a marriage that was not harmonious, finally ended with an intervention by her brother, Childebert I; the death of the Arian Amalaric on the threshold of a church of the one true faith²⁵ clearly shows the downside of the Hispania-Gaul discourse: in matters of faith, the Frankish kingdom served as its model and future. Childebert's military pressure on the Visigoths therefore continued, but never became as successful as before. It is well known that the Frankish ruler collected a lot of loot; Zaragoza, which he laid siege to, was however saved due to the piety of its inhabitants. The Franks fled the wrath of St. Vincent and divine retribution. In this passage, Gregory very openly chooses the parallel between the endangered town and Nineveh that Jonas rendered doomed and which was spared by the Lord because its ruler and its citizens showed true remorse²⁶. His opinion thereby reflects the ambiguous perception of the Hispania-Goth presence in comparison with the Gaul-Frankish presence. On the one hand, there is critique of the conditions under the Visigoths: "the Goths had the despicable habit of decapitating kings who they no longer liked with a sword and proclaiming a new king who they did."²⁷ On the other hand, he understood that there were still a lot of orthodox Christians living there, who were suffering under Arian dominance and that did not deserve having their troubles intensified by the Franks.

The text has an evident didactic function because it depicts Childebert's failure as a punishment for the previous sinful plan of baseless attack. On the contrary, the imperial (Greek) army celebrated by punishing King Agila for his excessive style of rule. Not even the Greek success is absolute and has one relative value: the moment Agila was eliminated and replaced with Athangild, the situation changed and "the king waged a lot of wars against the Greek army and usually won, tearing the cities that they conquered out of their hands."²⁸

It is generally assumed that Athangild's rule differed from that of previous rulers by being more Catholic friendly; even Isidore from Seville understood it to be the end of past

²⁴ Eugen Ewig, *Die fränkischen Teilungen und Teilreiche (511-613)*, in: *Spätantikes und fränkisches Gallien. Gesammelte Schriften (1952-1973), Beihefte der Francia Bd. 3/1*, hg. Hartmut Atsma, München 1976, p. 121-125.

²⁵ Gregorius ep. Turonensis, III.10, p. 106-107.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, III.29, p. 125-126; Jon 3,1-10.

²⁷ Gregorius ep. Turonensis, III.30, p. 126.

²⁸ Gregorius ep. Turonensis, IV.8, p. 140.

tyranny²⁹. Gregory appreciated this, but also noted that Hispania remained punished for its separation of the people in faith and also by worldly separation: it differed from Gaul dominated by the Franks in the fact that the Greeks and Goths contested its rule. Similarly, it is necessary to observe the theological discussion between Gregory and one of the bishops from Hispania, who visited the court of King Chilperic I in Gaul in 580 as an emissary of King Liuvigild. The dispute between our writer and Agila does not only prove the brilliance and the superiority of the Tours hierarch over the heretic, but primarily demonstrates the instrumentarium of the line of reasoning of the one true faith and its perceived superiority over the Arianism line of reasoning. The story quite characteristically ends with the conversion of this man. The dispute about the Holy Ghost between our chronicler and an emissary from Hispania, most probably an Arian cleric named Oppila, four years later, serves a similar function³⁰.

If the space set aside for *stirps regia* is discussed, then some of its female representatives can be seen as a sort of moral model for the third generation of Merovingian kings – Gregory’s contemporaries – who the writer had a very critical opinion of, in particular of Chilperic³¹. The equality of both royal families was upheld by the marriages of the daughters of both Frankish kings to Visigoth princes. Gregory once again creates an intentional concept when he writes that King Liuvigild left the kingdom to be divided between both of his freshly married children³², even though we know that in reality these were merely promotions to create joint rule, motivated by the political situation on the Iberian Peninsula³³. The Frankish tradition was to become a model for the previously unified Goth reign.

Even the regulatory behaviour of the Visigoth elite had its limits, or rather was bound to the cultivation of the Frank-Gaul environment. Although Goth princesses were able to mirror their husbands, the initiation of such abilities was left to the Gaul prelates. The situation was different in Hispania. The story of the persecution of believers in the one true faith dating back to 580 was instrumental here. Everything was allegedly organized by Queen Gunsvinthe, the wife of Liuvigild, who was punished by God with partial blindness for her Arian eagerness. Her opposite was Sigebert’s daughter Ingunda, the wife of the Visigoth prince, Hermenegild, who not only managed to withstand all the pressure

²⁹ Luis A. García Moreno: *The Creation of Byzantium’s Spanish Province. Causes and Propaganda*, in: *Byzantion* 66 (1996), p. 101–119. *Isidori Iunioris episcopi Hispalensis historia Gothorum Wandaloeum Sueborum ad a. DCXXIV*, in: *MGH AA 11 Chronica minora saec. IV. V. VI. VII*, ed. Theodor Mommsen, Berlin: Weidmann 1894, p. 286.

³⁰ *Gregorius ep. Turonensis*, V.43, p. 249 an. and VI.40, p. 312–313. The argument that this actually discusses the failure of King Chilperich because he was not able to convert Oppila to the one true faith – defended by Heinzelmänn p. 48–49 - does not seem very convincing to me. The dispute was not lead against the king but in front of the king, who was a mere observant, and it can also not be assumed that such a thing could even be possible. I think that Heinzelmänn’s argument depends too much on the presumption that Chilperich, in contrast to Emperor Tiberius, is seen in Gregory’s eyes as an inferior ruler.

³¹ Heinzelmänn, p. 42–46.

³² *Gregorius ep. Turonensis*, IV.38, p. 170: „Ille quoque inter eos regnum aequaliter divisit...” More precisely *aequaliter divider*, was clearly the most visible principle of the first Frankish divisions. Drška, *Divisiones*, p. 15 an.

³³ More in Collins, p. 50–63.

to convert to Arianism, but also managed to convince her husband to convert to Catholicism³⁴. We know that Bishop Leander of Seville also played a significant role in Hermenegild's conversion³⁵, through his cooperation with the Frankish princess, and that the entire situation resulted in the son rising up against his father. The story partially resembles that of Clotilde, who successfully converted her husband Clovis and targeted the first aggressive moves by her sons towards her native Burgundy. Once the female representatives of the Burgundy royal court had brought the one true faith to the Franks, the mission was entrusted to the daughters of the Merovingian kings, and although the story is certainly rationally based, its didactic discourse cannot be doubted. It also corresponds with the fact that Gregory tried to assert that his kings were protecting the believers of the one true faith in Hispania. The topic is interconnected with building dynastic alliances and the provision of the Frankish kings with the opportunity of being mirrors for their future Visigoth relatives. It is for this reason that Chilperic I, whilst negotiating the wedding gift for his daughter Rigunth, who was to become, but never became, the wife of Prince Reccared, showed an interest in the position of the believers in the one true faith in Hispania and asked for details about them from his messengers. They answered that the Spanish Catholics remained strong and true to their faith, but that "the king tries to make them uncertain thanks to his new fabrications because he thinks cunningly about the graves of our martyrs and the churches of our faith."³⁶ The contrast between a king as the protector of the faith and a king as the pursuer of the faith is very clear and appropriate here; Chilperic I was however also the protector of his relatives: for example Liuvigild sent him presents because he feared that the Merovingians could attack Hispania and take revenge due to the injustice committed on his niece Ingund, who quickly fell into his hands during Hermenegild's uprising³⁷.

Until the defeat of the Goths, the theme of a potential attack on Hispania was always latently present. This was openly presented in 584 when Childebert II, after defeating the Lombards, thought about crossing the Pyrenees, but ultimately did not do so. Gregory does not state the exact reason; he only suggests that Emperor Maurice asked the Franks to primarily focus on Italy³⁸. From this, it can be deduced that the Bishop of Tours needed to convince his readers that the superiority of his people was not only spiritual, but also present in the worldly sphere. In addition to this, it is indisputable that there was a second motive also present – the contrast between the Frankish-Greek alliance and the emperor's military presence in the Iberian Peninsula. For our chronicler, the Empire was an institution that symbolized the highest form of universalism, and at the same time just a sovereign reign³⁹. This statement is even more enhanced by the text that follows a few paragraphs later in which the grim conditions in the Visigoth Kingdom are depicted. He

³⁴ Gregorius ep. Turonensis, V.38, p. 243–244.

³⁵ Helmut Castritius, Hermenegild, in: *Reallexikon der Germanischen Altertumskunde*, Bd. 14 (1999), p. 423–425.

³⁶ Gregorius ep. Turonensis, VI.18, p. 287.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, VI.40, p. 310.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, VI.42, p. 314. Ewig, *Die Merowinger*, p. 46.

³⁹ Heinzmann, p.48, Breukelaar, p. 226 an.

describes how Hermenegild, in alliance with the Emperor and the Suebi king, thought about killing his own father without “considering bringing about the judgement of God, if he thinks like that about his own father, even though the father was a heretic.”⁴⁰

Gregory then laconically states that Liuvigild let his son Hermenegild be killed, which led Chilperic’s brother, Guntram, to think about taking action in Hispania⁴¹; the Merovingian were definitely not devoted supporters of the murdered prince⁴², which is why his motivation lay in pragmatic politics, namely the use of the chaos in Hispania and the takeover of Septimania. The theme of Frankish success is still connected with the theme of danger originating in Hispania. Gregory claims that Liuvigild sent an urgent letter to Queen Fredegund, Chilperic’s wife, informing her about the alliance between Guntram, his nephew Childebert II, and his mother Brunhilde. Fredegund, who had become a widow shortly before, then really tried to get rid of Childebert⁴³. The military campaign was therefore an answer to such deadly wickedness, but not only to it; Guntram declared in front of the troops: “Let us first subject Septimania to our rule, it is close to Gaul and it is undignified that the power of the horrible Goths should spread all the way to Gaul.”⁴⁴ The campaign was primarily supposed to bring about security; the way Gregory describes it, it was successful, but accompanied by cruelty and excess against Christians and church objects, which was criticized by clerics, and which in the discourse of our writer is also the cause of only relative success. While Guntram’s army was conquering Septimania, Reccared invaded the area around Toulouse and caused severe damage there. In Gregory’s eyes, it was supposed to be revenge for the anti-Christian actions of Guntram’s army. Unfortunately, peace with the Goths could not be established because the damage they had caused was too great and demanded atonement⁴⁵.

Gregory wrote the ninth book in 587-590⁴⁶, after Reccared’s conversion to the one true faith. The book is more open to the topic of Hispania, whose position changes for the third and last time. Firstly, in the worldly sphere. The new king reconciled with his stepmother Gunsvinthe for a very pragmatic reason: the widow-queen was the mother of Brunhilde, with whose son, Childebert II, and his uncle Guntram wanted to have a friendly relationship. The dynastic topic is therefore closely connected to Hispania-Frankish relations, but completely differently than before. It is no longer the source of an ambivalent discourse that is the cause of tensions, but one that should help to establish friendship and peace between the two kingdoms⁴⁷. The last echo of the previously held position that helps to intensify this contrast is the memory of a false trader with holy remains arriving from Hispania. However, Gregory does point out that this event

⁴⁰ Gregorius ep. Turonensis, VI.43, p. 314–315.

⁴¹ Ibid., VIII.28, p. 391.

⁴² Ewig, *Die Merowinger*, p. 46.

⁴³ Gregorius ep. Turonensis, VIII.28-29, p. 391–392.

⁴⁴ Ibid., VIII.30, p. 393.

⁴⁵ Ibid., s. 395–396 a VIII.35, p. 404 and VIII.38, p. 405.

⁴⁶ Wood, *Gregory*, p. 3–4.

⁴⁷ Gregorius ep. Turonensis, IX.1, p. 414–415. „Pacem habete nobiscum, et ineamus foedus, ut adiutus praesidio vestro, cum necessitas poposcerit, simile nos condicione, intercedente caritate, muniamus,“ The messengers were saying this at the courts of Guntram and Childebert.

happened seven years earlier; he characterizes this man as being proud and speaking an uneducated tongue with “a disgusting and broad pronunciation” and being unable to say something reasonable, a fraudster demanding Chilperic’s support⁴⁸.

The shift in emphasis culminates in the fifteenth and sixteenth chapters. He first describes Reccared’s decision to convert to the one true faith. Gregory highlights two moments in this process. The first is the unification of the people previously divided by faith and the establishment of the desired political state from the theological point of view. The second is the fact that not only the king converted, but also the entire kingdom, which was achieved on the basis of joint negotiations between the bishops of both parties. Both sides were able to present their arguments, whereby the king supported the side that he deemed most trustworthy. The most important issue that weighed in this decision was the fact that the Arian church was unable to give evidence of performing miracles⁴⁹. The Bishop of Tours therefore not only viewed Reccared’s conversion as a victory for the one true faith, but also as the fulfillment of God’s Plan, which at that point had brought the people of Hispania under God’s protection and mercy.

The following chapter is a classic example. Reccared’s messengers come to Guntram to inform him about the decision of the Visigoth king. They also offer a peace treaty because the king “is bound to them in friendship and love and now also in faith.”⁵⁰ However, Guntram declined because he would not get gratification for his niece Ingund. The messengers therefore had to return to the court of Childebert II, where they had to apologize for the injustice that his sister had suffered, but also to seek pledges for high financial compensation and other forms of compensation according to the Frankish ruler’s wishes. At the same time, they also asked him if their lord would wed his other sister, Chlodinde. Childebert is much nicer although his final decision is based on him consulting his uncle⁵¹. The information about the current hierarchy in the Merovingian house is important but not fundamental; the presentation of the dynastic hierarchy between the Visigoths and the Franks is much more important. The classic theme of family alliances shows that the period of tension and ambiguity might be over, but that the period of equality had also come to an end: if the church triumphed in the fifteenth chapter, then in this chapter, the Frankish state and the most senior member of the reigning family, won.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, IX.6, 418.

⁴⁹ Tamtéž, IX.15, s. 429. Podobné téma rozvíjí i Leander ze Sevilly v homilii a sjednocení ve víře na 3. toledském koncilu roku 589 viz *Concilios Visigóticos e Hispano-Romanos* ed. J. Vives, T.M. Martinez, G.M. Diez, Barcelona/Madrid 1963 (*España Cristiana Textos 1*), s. 140–144.

⁵⁰ *Gregorius ep. Turonensis*, IX.16, s. 430: „...sicut in fide se adserebat unum, ita et caritate se praeseret unitum.“ K termínu *caritas* klasicky Reinhard Schneider, *Brüdergemeine und Schwurfreundschaft. Der Auflösungsprozeß des Karlingerreiches im Spiegel der caritas-Terminologie in den Verträgen der karlingischen Teilkönige des 9. Jahrhunderts*, Lübeck/Hamburg: Matthiesen 1964 (*Historische Studien*, H. 388)

⁵¹ *Gregorius ep. Turonensis*, IX.16, s. 430–431.

Conclusion

The Hispania-Goth theme might not be one of the key topics in Gregory's *Historia*, but it is also not a marginal one. The discourse across three spheres, which in its second and third parts splits into other nuances, proves the opposite. The Bishop of Tours focused quite a lot, but also selectively on the Iberian Peninsula. His stance on the topic was based on the concept recent research refers to as fulfilling God's Plan, and which W. Goffart transformed, with a certain amount of careful skepticism, into a thesis claiming that this fellowship of saints and martyrs was not dominated by the institutionalized church, but by the imperium.⁵² It is therefore the fellowship of Christ that ascribes the Franks with the role of fulfilling this higher intention.

The circumstances in Hispania therefore serve the author in several ways. They are a warning about how far dynastic conflicts can go; they highlight the value of unity that can overcome even worldly division. The unity of faith is such an absolute imperative to the Bishop of Tours that it ultimately equates to the importance of Visigoth political unity. Gregory of course sees it, but does not understand it as relevant in an Arian environment. An appreciation of this potential is only possible after Reccared's conversion; the most important function of the Hispania-Gaul confrontation does not cease to be valid, namely the repeated confirmation of the superiority of the Franks: dynastic, political, and faith. Reccared's conversion and the conquering of the Iberian Peninsula by the one true faith is not only the fulfillment of God's Plan, but also the triumph of the Franks at the time of their biggest crises and a promise of a better future. In this sense, Gregory's work remains a "state" chronicle.

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⁵² Walter Goffart, *Conspicuously Absent: Martial Heroism in the Histories of Gregory of Tours and its Likes*, in: Kathleen Mitchell, Ian Wood (ed.), *The World of Gregory of Tours*, Leiden/Boston/Köln: Brill 2002 s. 365-393 a sr. v. Thomas F.X. Noble, *Gregory of Tours and the Roman Church*, in: Tamtéž, s. 145-161.

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Contact address of the author:

Doc. PhDr. Václav Drška, Ph.D., Department of History, Faculty of Arts, Jan Evangelista Purkyně University in Ústí nad Labem, Pasteurova 13, 400 96 Ústí nad Labem, Czech Republic, vaclav.drška@gmail.com

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