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Gothic Identity and the 'Othering' of Jews in Seventh-Century Spain

Erica Buchberger
The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley, erica.buchberger@utrgv.edu

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GOTHIC IDENTITY AND THE 'OTHERING' OF JEWS IN SEVENTH-CENTURY SPAIN

Erica Buchberger*

Erica Buchberger is Assistant Professor at the University of Texas-Rio Grande Valley. She researches ethnicity and religion in the early medieval West.

In 589, Reccared, king of the Visigoths in Spain, converted from Arian to Catholic Christianity. Arianism was banned, and after a brief period which saw the repression of rebellions, eliminated from the kingdom. All Goths were required to become Catholic. This watershed in Visigothic history both necessitated and facilitated a renegotiation of the parameters of Gothic identity. The entire kingdom was affected: the ruling Visigoths, the small population of recently conquered Sueves, and the Hispano-Romans who were left under the rule of the Goths when the Western Roman Empire fell apart.[1] This Roman population also included some Jews. While the Catholic Romans—the majority—now shared a common faith with their rulers and could therefore better assimilate with them, the Jewish Romans did not, and *could* not.

In this paper, I will trace the process by which the Catholic Romans came to be identified as Goths after 589 and show how the rise of anti-Jewish legislation paralleled this phenomenon. While this observation is neither new nor particularly surprising—or perhaps because it is not—the precise dynamics of this process have been relatively unexplored. As a result, the process has been misunderstood as a shift from ethnic to religious identification or as the beginning of virulent anti-Semitism that foreshadows later persecution in the Inquisition and the expulsion of Jews in 1492.[2]

[1] See Buchberger, *Shifting Ethnic Identities*, for a thorough exploration of this negotiation of identity.
[2] For example, Blumenkranz, *Juifs et chrétiens*, p. 105. See Stocking, 'Early Medieval Christian Identity', pp. 647–49, for historiography. Classic works that discuss Jews in Visigothic Spain include Bachrach, *Early Medieval Jewish*

Interpretations of the 'othering' of Jews can be shaped by contemporary concerns as much as—if not more than—by a balanced assessment of the early medieval period. For example, in the nineteenth century, Marcelino Menéndez Pelayo wrote a history that depicted an unbroken inheritance from the Visigoths to contemporary Spaniards. He equated modern Spanish identity with Gothic Catholic identity and used it to justify the exclusion of Jews and Muslims from the country in his own day.[3] In this vein, I suggest that a careful look at the language in which Gothicness was expressed throughout the pivotal seventh century and the consequences of this language for Jewish identity reveals a shift in political, ethnic, and religious meanings that seems in many ways to not really be about the Jews at all.[4]

Before 589

Few sources survive from sixth-century Spain, so it is hard to analyse contemporary language for this period. We do, however, know the basic narrative of events.[5] This was a period of disunity on many levels. Politically, some regions were semi-autonomous, nominally ruled by the Visigoths but in reality controlled by locals. Others were independent kingdoms, like that of the Sueves in the northwest of the peninsula. There was also a division between two major population groups: those of Gothic ancestry who were probably mostly Arian Christians and those of Roman descent who were probably mostly Catholic Christians.

A binary division into Arian Goths and Catholic Romans is, of course, a generalization, and there were significant exceptions to this rule. One is John of Biclar, a Catholic monk and

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Policy; Gil Fernández, 'Judíos y cristianos'; Juster, 'Legal Condition'; Katz, *Jews in the Visigothic and Frankish Kingdoms*.

[3] Grieve, *Eve of Spain*, p. 28; Menéndez Pelayo, *Historia de los heterodoxos españoles*, vol. 3, pp. 832–35.

[4] Stocking, 'Early Medieval Christian Identity', pp. 649–52, has also stressed the need for an approach that considers issues of identity construction, though particularly the making and remaking of boundaries between Christian and non-Christian.

[5] Collins, *Visigothic Spain*; Sayas Abengochea and García Moreno, *Romanismo y germanismo*; and the older, but still useful Claude, *Adel, Kirche, und Königtum*, and Thompson, *Goths in Spain*.

bishop who wrote a chronicle *c*. 590. Isidore of Seville described John as 'natione Gotus' ('Goth by nation').[6] Masona, bishop of Mérida in the 580s, was likewise Catholic but of Gothic ancestry. His *vita* states, 'although of the Gothic "genus", his mind [or heart] was completely devoted to God'.[7] The author was clearly surprised that a man born a 'Goth' was also a good Catholic; Goths, it seems, were supposed to be Arians. A Gothic identity, then, did not necessarily imply an Arian or Catholic faith. Nonetheless, it was assumed at the time was that there *was* a direct correlation between being a Goth and being Arian, and religion and descent were discussed in a language that reflected this assumption. It is this mindset, rather than the reality, with which I am primarily concerned here.

The sixth-century Visigothic kingdom also included some individuals whom sources label as Greeks, Syrians, and Jews. Many of these were merchants or priests. Two prominent bishops of Mérida in the 570s—Paul and Fidel—were 'Greeks' according to the *Lives of the Fathers of Mérida*, as were the merchants who brought Fidel to Spain.[8] The author of this text seems to use the term 'Greek' to refer to someone from the east who spoke the Greek language rather than as a specific sign of their ancestry or homeland; what the merchants and bishops considered themselves is lost to history. In 589, Greeks appear again in records of the Council of Narbonne. This council is addressed to all inhabitants of the region, 'Goths, Romans, Syrians, Greeks, and Jews'.[9]

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[6] Isidore of Seville, *De Viris Illustribus* 31, p. 151; John of Biclar, *Chronica*, pp. 211–20.

[7] *Vitas sanctorum patrum emeretensium* [*VSPE*] V. 2, p. 48: 'genere quidem Gothus, sed mente promtissima erga Deum devotus'. For other examples of Goths converting to Catholicism, though misinterpreted as proof that contemporaries did not see religion and ancestry as linked, see Koch, 'Arianism and Ethnic Identity'. Compare Hymnemodus, *natione barbarus*, in *Vita abbatum Acaunensium* 1, p. 330; Diem, 'Who is Allowed to Pray for the King?', pp. 64–68.

[8] *VSPE* IV. 1, p. 25; IV. 3, p. 31. The presence of these Greeks in Mérida has been the subject of much speculation, some of it rather far-fetched. See Séjourné, *Le dernier père de l'église*, pp. 223–24; Collins, 'Mérida and Toledo', p. 202; Wood, 'Social Relations', p. 194; Javier Arce, 'The City of Mérida (Emerita)', pp. 12–13.

[9] Council of Narbonne 4 and 14, in *Concilios Visigóticos e Hispano-Romanos*, pp. 147, 149; Orlandis and Ramos-Lissón, *Historia de los concilios*, p. 232.

Official campaigns for unity in the kingdom began in the 580s. It was at this time that Reccared's father, King Leovigild, embarked on military conquests to unite the peninsula under his rule. He enforced tighter central control over regions that had been left to manage themselves under weaker kings, seized some Byzantine-held lands along the Mediterranean coast, and conquered the Suevic kingdom in Galicia. On a religious level, Leovigild pursued unity by modifying Arian doctrine to make it more palatable to Catholics. John of Biclar's *Chronicle* records an Arian synod held in Toledo in 580 that removed the need for re-baptism—undoubtedly to encourage conversion to the 'Gothic' religion and thus make it easier for Catholic Romans to shift into political or ethnic categories of Gothic identity.[10] Moreover, on a legal level, Leovigild seems to have lifted an existing ban on intermarriage between Goths and Romans.[11] In converting to Catholicism, Reccared was following in his father's footsteps toward greater unity, just not in the way that Leovigild would have hoped. Both kings actively sought to strengthen their hold over the Iberian peninsula by bringing the fairly separate populations they ruled into union.

Later sources that describe this period depict the Goths in a few different ways: politically, by ancestry, and by religion. Politically, one could be a Goth as a subject living in the Visigothic kingdom or a soldier serving in the army of the Goths. That one could be Gothic by descent is evident from the example of Masona of Mérida, who was considered a Goth despite being Catholic. Here we can also see religious Gothicness in the implication that Masona, being a Goth, *should* have been Arian. John of Biclar makes the connection more explicit when he writes about the Goths as heretical, practicing the Arian heresy; he cannot mean people of Gothic ancestry, because that would include him.

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[10] John of Biclar, *Chronica*, p. 216. But see Robin Whelan's chapter in this volume on the possibility that the *ecclesia legis Gothorum* was neutral legal terminology.
[11] *Lex Visigothorum* [*LV*], III. 1. 1, p. 122.

In this period, and in the century to follow, there were multiple ways of identifying as a Goth. Some of these were open to people who might also be called Romans, Jews, or Syrians and some of these were not. In the sixth century, a Jew could be considered a Goth politically as a subject of the Visigothic king, though not by descent or by religion. The same was true of a Catholic Roman. It was in this context that King Reccared converted from Arian to Catholic Christianity.

Conversion and its Effects

Records of the Third Council of Toledo at which Reccared's conversion was made official are replete with the rhetoric of unity. Reccared, it is written, called the council to thank the Lord for his conversion and for that of the Goths.[12] The effect is to bundle all the Goths together, converting *en masse*. Thus, Goth is a synonym for Arian, for someone able to convert to Catholicism. Similarly, the *Lives of the Fathers of Mérida* tells that when Reccared converted from the Arian heresy, he led 'the whole people of the Visigoths' to Catholicism with him.[13]

Conversion was intended to open up the whole range of Gothic identity; in theory, there would be no reason to continue identifying a part of the population as Roman when the obvious religious division had vanished. Most of the focus of Toledo III is on the newly Catholic Goths and on the rules that would now be followed by all churches in the kingdom, Goths and Romans alike. Framing the canons in the text are a preface and a concluding sermon that praise the new unity, reinforcing its importance to both king and bishops.[14] Unlike Roman identity, which Jews had historically held without serious difficulty, the new Catholic Gothic identity that Toledo III had begun to encourage was not open to the Jews. At this point, however, Jews did not attract

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[12] Toledo III, in *La Colección Canónica Hispana* [*CCH*], vol. 5, p. 50: 'ut tam de eius conversione quam de gentis Gotorum'.
[13] *VSPE* V. 4, p. 55; V. 9, p. 79: 'totusque Wisegotorum gens'.
[14] Toledo III, in *CCH*, vol. 5, pp. 74, 159; Drews, *The Unknown Neighbour*, pp. 28–30.

particular focus as outsiders. Most of the laws that do restrict Jews (from Toledo III and Reccared's secular laws) are restatements of Roman laws already in effect, not a sign of a new anti-Jewish policy.[15]

The Early Seventh Century and Isidore of Seville

We can detect a growing emphasis on unity under the Catholic Gothic banner throughout the sources of the early- and mid-seventh century, particularly in the form of phrases like 'kingdom of the Goths' and 'people of the Goths' that appear in both political and religious contexts. The phrase 'patria et gens Gothorum' ('the country and people of the Goths') occurs repeatedly in the records of the Fourth Council of Toledo from 633.[16] In its linkage of country with people, the phrase shows that the term 'Goth' was intended to be inclusive for all living in the Visigothic kingdom, as an ensemble like the army under the king's command would be. Toledo IV ends with a statement that King Sisenand's devotion to Christ had strengthened his kingdom and the Gothic people in the Catholic faith. Here, we see a conscious connection of the political aspect of Gothicness (subjects of the king) with the religious aspect (the good Catholic) and also possibly the ethnic (people/gens) one.

Presiding over this council, and therefore exerting significant influence over it, was Isidore, bishop of Seville. Isidore had served as tutor to King Sisebut (r. 612-620/1) and was also a prolific author most famous for his *History of the Goths* and *Etymologies*. Like Toledo IV, Isidore's *History* was meant to serve the specific purpose of promoting and legitimizing Gothic dominance in the Iberian peninsula. In the work, Isidore furthered his aim through the treatment of other

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[15] The one exception is the new decree forcing children born to one Jewish and one Christian parent to be baptized: Drews, *Unknown Neighbour*, p. 16; Juster, 'Legal Condition', p. 583; Romano, 'Judíos hispánicos en los ss. IV-IX', p. 261. For an example of the idea that Reccared represents the beginning of Spanish persecution of Jews, see Blumenkranz, pp. 105–06. Generally, see *LV* XII. 2. 12, pp. 418–23; Toledo III, 14, in *CCH*, vol. 5, pp. 120–21; Orlandis, 'Hacia una mejor comprensión, p. 156; Bachrach, 'Reassessment', pp. 14–15; Drews, *Unknown Neighbour*, pp. 14–17.
[16] Toledo IV, 75, in *CCH*, vol. 5, pp. 252–54.

peoples in Iberia as less important than the Goths, his depiction of the Romans losing God's favour and the Goths subsequently gaining it, and his praise of the Goths as destined to rule the peninsula. He borrowed all of these strategies from classical and Christian models of history writing.[17] Subsequent councils led by other bishops continued the trend. For example, Toledo VII (646), under the reign of Chindaswinth, legislated against those who sought to harm 'the people of the Goths, the country, or the king' and thus cause difficulty for the 'army of the Goths'.[18] By mid-century, the concept of a 'gens Gothorum' ('Gothic people') defined by political loyalty and religious conformity had become commonplace.

The vulnerability of those not aligned with this vision grew in direct relation to the solidification of this Gothic Catholic identity. Jews were marginalized to an extent they had not before experienced in the Iberian peninsula. The first evidence of forced conversion in Spain comes from precisely this era, as Catholic leaders began to perceive Jewish residents as obstacles to their ideology of unity – and not just in terms of theology, as is often supposed, but also in terms of political control and ethnicity. New visions of community beginning with Toledo III marked Jews as 'other' and added an exclusionary discourse to the repertoire of identifications upon which contemporaries and future generations could draw. By the mid-seventh century, the social landscape would differ significantly from that of Reccared's day thanks to the assimilation of Romans and others into the ranks of religious and political Goths.

In 613, King Sisebut enacted legislation meant to control the Jewish population. Many of his decrees pertained to Christian slaves who were owned by Jewish masters and whom Sisebut declared freed on the principle that no Christian should be ruled by a Jew.[19] Sisebut also authored

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[17] Wood, *Politics of Identity*; Merrills, *History and Geography*; Fontaine, *Isidore de Séville et la culture classique*; Fontaine, *Isidore de Séville: genèse et originalité*; Collins, 'Isidore, Maximus, and the Historia Gothorum'.
[18] Toledo VII, 1, in *CCH*, vol. 5, pp. 340–43.
[19] *LV* XII. 2. 13-14, pp. 418–23.

Spain's first-ever law requiring Jews to convert to Catholicism or leave the kingdom. We know of this law only by the references made to it in Isidore's *History of the Goths* and in council records; it does not survive in the later *Visigothic Code*, presumably because it was resoundingly rejected by the bishops of Toledo IV.[20] It did, however, have a significant impact on Jews and their status in the intervening years. A number of Jews fled the kingdom for Merovingian Gaul, as attested by tales of refugees in a continuation of Marius of Avenches' *Chronicle*.[21] Many also endured forced conversion, and thus a new category of individuals within the kingdom was produced: converts or 'baptized Jews'. Often, these individuals were considered suspect by Christian leaders, who presumed they would practice Judaism behind closed doors after baptism.[22]

Suspicion turned to condemnation at the Third Council of Seville, held *c*. 624 under Isidore. Canon 10 accuses baptized Jews of secreting their own children away from baptism by presenting a neighbour's child as their own for the sacrament. The bishops' solution was to increase oversight of converts' activities. They charged priests with the task of monitoring converts' attendance at church services and their adherence to Christian rather than Jewish dietary practices. Neighbours were expected to attend now-public baptisms of converts' children and attest that the correct children had been presented.[23]

No more of this council survives, undoubtedly because it was overturned at Toledo IV and would only be an embarrassment for the bishops who had let themselves be pressured into approving Sisebut's forced conversions.[24] Historically, bishops had followed the theology of Augustine of Hippo, who taught that Jews should not be forcibly converted but instead serve as a

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[20] Isidore of Seville, *Historia Gothroum*, p. 291; Toledo IV, 57, in *CCH*, vol. 5, pp. 235–36.

[21] Marius of Avenches, *Chronicle*, col. 801.

[22] On the consequences of forced conversion, Stocking, *Bishops, Councils, and Consensus*, pp. 136–38. For comparison with treatment of pagans and heretics, see Freidenreich, 'Jews, Pagans, and Heretics', esp. p. 84.

[23] This canon survives as an appendix to Toledo VIII, in *CCH*, vol. 5, pp. 476–77; Stocking, 'Forced Converts', pp. 248–54; Drews, 'Jews as Pagans?', pp. 190–91.

[24] Drews, 'Jews as Pagans', pp. 205–07.

negative example to Christians.[25] Isidore himself, in his *On the Catholic Faith Against the Jews*, expressed a belief that Jews had a role to play as a convenient 'other' against which Christians could unite. However, he was happy to convert as many as possible through persuasion and teaching rather than by force.[26] In Toledo IV, he and his fellow bishops outlawed forced baptism but declared that those who had already been baptised could not return to Judaism because they had sacramentally joined the Christian community—a permanent dedication of the soul. The Christian ideological framework provided no room for negotiation of this identity.[27]

These individuals were now part of the Catholic Gothic community, and the cohesion of that society depended upon the practices of its new members being brought into line with the norms of the majority. Otherwise, the good could be contaminated by the unorthodox. Hence, the baptized Jews of Toledo were made to swear an oath promising to live as faithful Christians and to avoid the unbaptized, while other canons of this council set out rules that would actively separate the recently converted from those still practicing Judaism.[28] To prevent apostasy, converts were prohibited from having contact with 'infidels', and anyone aiding converts in returning to Judaism would be excommunicated. Suspect converts were barred from serving as legal witnesses and 'Iudei et qui ex Iudeis sunt' ('Jews and those who are from the Jews') could not hold an office with any power over Christians. Thus, the official vision of a Catholic Gothic community expanded to exclude anyone of Jewish background—converted or not. At what point a descendant of converts was considered sufficiently Catholic to be safe for association is unclear, as it undoubtedly was to contemporaries themselves.

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[25] Stocking, 'Early Medieval Christian Identity', p. 643.
[26] Drews, *Unknown Neighbour*, pp. 256, 308; Hen, 'A Visigothic King in Search of an Identity', pp. 95–98.
[27] Toledo IV, 57-66, in *CCH*, vol. 5, pp. 234–43. Capucine Nemo-Pekelman delves deeper into the theological concepts underlying Toledo IV's attitude to Jews in 'Liberty and Divine Justice'.
[28] For the oath (*placitum*), see *Patrologia Latina Supplementum*, 4, cols. 1664–1669; Drews, *Unknown Neighbour*, p. 31.

Sisebut's forced conversions had created a problem which would plague the Visigothic kingdom until its end in 711: how to identify a 'real' Jew once the lines between practicing Christian and practicing Jew had been so blurred. The bishops at Toledo IV were compelled to address the repercussions, and the measures they took indicate that they were particularly concerned about pollution of the Christian community by people who were not genuine adherents. It was better that Jews remain unconverted and regulated than that they be introduced like a poison into the community of true believers.[29] However, their efforts did not prevent King Chintila (r. 636-640) from enacting and Toledo VI from affirming a new law forbidding non-Catholics from remaining in the kingdom. The council, in fact, asserts that these decrees shall be defended by all the forces of the 'kingdom of the Goths', implying agreement not just with conversion but also with the idea that the Jews were not part of this Gothic kingdom.[30] We find evidence that Jews were indeed forced to convert, at least in the city of Toledo, in an oath taken by Toledo's Jews in the 650s.[31] In a statement presented to King Recceswinth, these Jews informed him that under Chintila they had been forced against their will and belief to become Catholic. They promised, nevertheless, to observe no Jewish rites or customs henceforth, to refrain from associating with 'unbaptized Jews', and otherwise to abide by all the laws herein.

That there could be 'baptized' and 'unbaptized' Jews shows that, in the contemporary mindset, Jewishness held not only religious overtones but also elements of inheritance through ancestry. They, like others whom the law traditionally classed as Romans, might become good Goths religiously through conversion or politically through loyal service, but increasingly the perception

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[29] Orlandis and Ramos-Lissón, *Historia de los concilios*, p. 289; Drews, *The Unknown Neighbour*, pp. 7–32.
[30] Toledo VI, 3 and 18, in *CCH*, vol. 5, pp. 304–07, 328; González-Salinero, 'Catholic Anti-Judaism', p. 124; Jorge, 'Church and Culture', p. 110. On forced conversion as a continued concern, see Stocking, *Bishops, Councils, and Consensus*, pp. 138, 153–56; Stocking, 'Forced Converts'; González-Salinero, 'Catholic Anti-Judaism', pp. 146–47. At this time, Jews were probably the only non-Catholics present.
[31] *LV* XII. 2. 17, pp. 425–26.

developed that they could never be so by descent. This view, and concerns about Judaizing Christians and these peoples' 'true' identities, only existed because earlier leaders had attempted forced conversion. An ecclesiastical preference in Iberia for persuasion over force can still be seen, though, in the letter written by Braulio of Saragossa to Pope Honorius on behalf of this council. In an earlier letter, now lost, Honorius chastised Spanish bishops for being less than zealous in their management of lapsed converts. Braulio replies that the bishops preferred calculated restraint and discretion to force, because such an approach would be more effective at leading Jews to repentance and true conversion.[32]

653-655

In the mid-650s, Kings Chindaswinth and Recceswinth began the compilation of a new code of laws, the *Visigothic Code*, which would supersede the multiple legal documents that had heretofore been in force. The new text incorporated laws both kings had made with older laws still in use and revisions to old laws that no longer suited the state of Visigothic society.[33] Issued in 654, the code can be connected with two, contemporaneous church councils: Toledo VIII (653) and Toledo IX (655). An officially promoted Gothic identity remains evident in all of these sources. Toledo VIII targeted anyone who sought to subvert the 'country and people of the Goths'.[34] A law attributed to Chindaswinth laments the domestic strife which had been afflicting the 'country of the Goths' and declares that anyone who deserted to the enemy or otherwise acted with criminal intent against 'the country or people of the Goths' shall be harshly punished.[35] This

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[32] Braulio of Saragossa, *Epistolario*, 21; Barlow, *Iberian Fathers*, v. 63, pp. 51–56; Ferreiro, 'St. Braulio of Zaragoza's Letter 21'. On the possibility that Honorius' zeal was connected to efforts by the Byzantine emperor Heraclius, see the chapter by Thomas J. MacMaster in this volume.

[33] *LV*; King, *Law and Society*; King, 'King Chindasvind'; Lynch, 'Saint Braulio', pp. 135–40; Braulio of Saragossa, *Epistolario*, 37–38.

[34] Toledo VIII, in *CCH*, vol. 5, p. 375: 'Gothorum gens ac patria'. For the possibility that this was related to Chindaswinth's treatment of his and his predecessors' *fideles*, see Collins, *Visigothic Spain*, pp. 81–83.

[35] *LV* II. 1. 8, pp. 53–54: 'Gotorum patria' and 'gens Gotorum vel patria'. See also *LV* III. 1. 5, p. 127.

language matches that of church councils earlier in the century and continues the association of loyalty, country, and peoplehood with Gothicness.

Importantly, the new legislation did introduce a significant change. Until this point, multiple codes of law were in use simultaneously, including laws set out by Visigothic kings and a compilation of Roman law known as the *Breviary of Alaric*. Because these laws dated to the sixth century or earlier, they reflected a mixed society that needed to accommodate the customs of both Goths and Romans.[36] The *Visigothic Code* expressly banned the use of older codes and any further borrowing from 'Roman law or foreign institutions', proclaiming one law for one now-Gothic people.[37] The Ninth Council of Toledo in 655 similarly emphasized the application of regulations within the kingdom to 'Romans and Goths alike'.[38] Both secular and church law eliminated any distinction that may yet have led subjects to divide themselves into these two groups, presenting one law for one community. Given that intermarriage had been officially allowed and a common Catholic faith ordained for more than sixty years, it is likely that this united vision was already becoming a reality.

Jews' status, however, was patently more precarious in Recceswinth's Iberia than it had been under the old Roman laws. A number of new laws restricting both Jews and converts appear in the *Visigothic Code* along with the three borrowed from previous kings. Again, concern seems to have been particularly about practice, which suggests that converts sliding toward apostasy were the primary target. 'Jews' were no longer to celebrate Passover or other Jewish feasts, to practice their customary contractual marriage, to circumcise their sons or their Christian slaves, or to make distinctions among foods in accordance with their dietary rules.[39] Jews who had been baptized

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[36] See my discussion on personality and territoriality of law in Buchberger, *Shifting Ethnic Identities*, pp. 93–96.
[37] *LV* II. 1. 10, p. 58: 'sive Romanis legibus seu alienis institutionibus amodo amplius convexari'.
[38] Toledo IX, 13-14, in *CCH*, vol. 5, pp. 507–08. See also notes in *Concilios*, ed. by Vives, p. 304.
[39] For all the laws on Jews, see *LV* XII. 2. 3-11 and 15-17, pp. 413–17, 423–26.

could not renounce or blaspheme the Christian faith, and no Jew, 'whether baptized or unbaptized' was allowed to testify against a Christian, though their descendants may if they could be shown to be of moral character.[40] Furthermore, Christians were forbidden from aiding and defending Jews, and any Christian who practiced Jewish rites was to be executed. Clearly, Recceswinth and Chindaswinth feared for the integrity of Christian faith and practice in the Visigothic kingdom—to the point of constraining the rights of those born and raised Christian because they descended from Jews.[41] In the previous year, Toledo VIII had also focused on practice, confirming the rules that had been set out by Toledo IV and reiterating the need for preaching rather than force in the conversion of those never baptized, even to the point of calling Recceswinth's promotion of force 'shameful'.[42]

The Later Seventh Century

The reference in Toledo IX to 'Goths and Romans alike' is the last we see of the Romans in anything but formulaic references. After 654, not a single 'Roman' appears in any Visigothic source, and even the term 'Goth' virtually disappears soon after; clearly, the assimilation of these two populations was thought to be complete. The Council of Mérida (666), for example, refers to the 'rex, gens, et patria' ('king, people, and country') without the usual qualifier 'Gothorum' ('of the Goths').[43] In 681, the Twelfth Council of Toledo simply uses 'our kingdom', as if all residents were assumed to be Goths and it therefore did not bear mentioning.[44] The various ways a person

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[40] *LV* XII. 2. 10, pp. 416–17: 'seu baptizati, sive non extiterint baptizati'.

[41] Stocking, 'Forced Converts', p. 244, on the developing idea of baptized Jews as inauthentic Christians due to an inherited Jewish *perfidia*. See also Ihnat, 'Liturgy Against Apostasy'.

[42] Toledo VIII, in *CCH*, vol. 5, pp. 433–34.

[43] Council of Mérida, in *Concilios*, ed. by Vives, p. 327. Generally on Jews during this period, see King, *Law and Society*, pp. 131–44; duQuesnay Adams, 'Ideology and the Requirements of Citizenship'.

[44] This appears in some manuscripts, though others omit this paragraph entirely. Toledo XII, in *CCH*, vol. 6, p. 148; and in *Concilios*, ed. by Vives, p. 384.

could identify as a Goth—political, descent-based, and religious—had become thoroughly intertwined.

It is surely not a coincidence that Toledo XII and the concurrent laws of King Erwig added to the *Visigothic Code* also exhibit the greatest level of anti-Jewish rhetoric yet seen in Spain. With legislators no longer fixating on the integration of Goths and Romans, they were free to turn their attention to the main remaining hurdle to kingdom-wide unity: the Jews. Previous laws circumscribing Jewish behaviour were re-enacted, with Jewish 'evasions' cited as support for this move.[45] Passover, circumcision, the observance of the Jewish Sabbath, working on Sundays or Christian holidays, keeping their dietary customs, and reading books rejected by the Catholic Church all merited punishment. Erwig further proclaimed that Jews had one year to leave in exile or be baptized. A Jew found in non-compliance of this order was to receive one hundred lashes, have his head shaved, be driven from the kingdom, and lose his property to the royal fisc.[46] Some judges must have pushed back against Erwig's attempts to enforce the punitive legislation, however, because one finds further laws outlining the punishment a judge should receive if he refuses to enforce laws against Jews and stipulating the supervision of cases regarding Jews.[47] Nonetheless, on the religious front, Erwig enjoyed unprecedented support. Unlike their predecessors who bristled against forced conversion, the bishops assembled in council at Toledo XII agreed to endorse all of Erwig's legislation.[48] It is around this same time that the Juliana recension of the *Hispana* compilation of church councils begun by Isidore was assembled, not just updating the collection with recent councils but also adding the one surviving canon from Seville III into record. As Stocking suggests, this is unlikely to be a coincidence; contemporary bishops

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[45] *LV* XII. 3. 1-28, pp. 427–56.
[46] *LV* XII. 3. 3, p. 432–33.
[47] *LV* XII. 3. 24-25, pp. 452–53.
[48] Toledo XII, in *CCH*, vol. 6, pp. 175–79.

viewed converted Jews in much the same way, and adding this canon gave historical precedent to their restrictions on Jews, both baptized and not.[49]

Worse was to come in the 690s under King Egica. At Toledo XVII in 694, Egica delivered a speech accusing the whole 'plebs iudaeorum' ('people of the Jews') of being enemies of the state. Convinced of a Jewish conspiracy and widespread return of the baptized to their ancestral Jewish 'perfidy', he ordered that all Jews living in Spain (though interestingly, not in Gallia Narbonensis) have their property confiscated and be reduced to slavery. The bishops, again, confirmed the king's decree.[50] There is little evidence, however, that it was actually enforced outside of Toledo itself. While ideologically Jews were a problem and many among the elite encouraged their othering as a strategy to solidify their Gothic Christian community's unity, in practice, it seems Jews were more likely to be tolerated as long-time neighbours and fellow subjects.[51]

Conclusion

We can see in the seventh-century sources an expansion in the use of the term 'Goth' in a political sense to apply to all subjects of the Visigothic kingdom, in a religious sense for all Catholics in the kingdom, and sometimes in phrases like 'gens Gothorum' ('Gothic people') that show they were perceived as a single ethnic unit. The effect was to link the Catholic faith and the Gothic monarchy, opening up Gothicness to all loyal Catholic subjects. Isidore of Seville consciously worked to construct this identity, but it is not his creation alone. This shift, which he both drew on and developed, began before him and continued after him. However, this was not an identity that Jews could ever adopt. The increasing association of Gothicness with Catholic faith

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[49] Stocking, 'Forced Converts', pp. 264–65.

[50] *LV* XII. 2. 18, pp. 426–27; Toledo XVII, in *Concilios*, ed. by Vives, pp. 523–27, 534–36; González Salinero, 'Catholic Anti-Judaism', p. 137; Stocking, 'Forced Converts,' pp. 243–44, 264–65; Martin, 'Statut des juifs'.

[51] King, *Law and Society*, p. 138; Elukin, *Living Together, Living Apart*. Sivan, 'Invisible Jews', notes evidence of intermarriage in particular.

marginalized the Jews to an extent they had not before experienced in the Iberian peninsula. By late in the century, the majority of Iberians could be classed as Goths and Catholics. It was mainly the Jews who marred the idealized image of a unified Christian people.

It is often noted—and correctly so—that the regular repetition of anti-Jewish legislation indicates that forced conversion and exile was probably ineffective in practice.[52] Jews continued to be around for the next king to restrict or ban in order to gain credence as a good Catholic leader. This does not mean, though, as some scholars have argued, that the Visigoths were weak kings, unable to enforce their own laws or to forge a unified Gothic people.[53] Whether the Jews stayed or left was beside the point. We scholars like to see a logical uniformity between people's thoughts and actions, but often ideological frameworks and everyday realities do not align. This posed no problem for contemporaries, because it was the language of unity, not a completely Jew-free reality, which enabled Christians to perceive themselves as Goths. The 'country and people of the Goths', unified by their loyalty to their king and their Catholic faith, was far from a fiction to the authors of those words. It was a new imagined community, one which would continually reassert itself against any convenient other. And the most convenient other at this time and in this place was the Jews.

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[52] Drews, *Unknown Neighbour*, p. 32; Bachrach, 'Reassessment,' p. 24; Bachrach, *Early Medieval Jewish Policy*, p. 16. We should not discount the possibility that repetition only reflects a reaffirming of legal principles or identity constructions with no Jews actually remaining in Spain, though this does not explain the addition of new restrictions and justifications given for them: Stocking, 'Early Medieval Christian Identity', pp. 649–50; Albert, 'Les communautés juives'.

[53] For example, Bachrach, 'Reassessment,' pp. 12–14; King, *Law and Society*, pp. 137–39. Nor does it mean that Jews were really less persecuted than we think; incomplete and irregular persecution is still persecution. On this argument, see Drews, *Unknown Neighbour*, p. 32; Sivan, 'Invisible Jews'; Elukin, *Living Together, Living Apart*; and a scathing review of Elukin by David Nirenberg in 'Hope's Mistakes'.

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