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Gothus: Konstruktion und Rezeption von Gotenbildern in narrativen Schriften des merowingischen Gallien by Christian Stadermann (review)

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Scholarship on the construction of early medieval identities has grown tremendously in recent years, with a number of edited collections, monographs, and articles examining ethnicity, religion, and the strategies of identification used by contemporary authors to situate themselves in a changing post-Roman landscape. The majority of these, though, focus on self-reflection – Franks concerned with Frankish identity, or Goths concerned with Gothic identity. Christian Stadermann's *Gothus* is a particularly interesting and useful book precisely because it breaks out of this mold by investigating Gallic and Frankish views of their Gothic neighbors. As Stadermann illustrates, an outsider's perspective is just as much about constructing one's own identity as that of an insider, and therefore his examination of Merovingian views of the Goths provides unique insights into the Merovingians themselves.

Gothus is the monograph form of the author's 2014 Tübingen dissertation and, as the author admits in the forward, little modified. As a result, it is a large and impressively thorough work. Stadermann proceeds chronologically through narrative works written in Gaul from the fourth century through the eighth century, beginning each chapter with a detailed review of the sources used and the goals of their authors before turning to the evidence of those sources. In the process, he draws clear connections between later authors and their earlier sources of information, highlighting the rewriting that occurred to bring stories about the Goths up-to-date for a new context.

In chapter one, the introduction, Stadermann lays out the theoretical framework for his monograph. He addresses ethnicity as a social construct, ethnogenesis theory, and scholarship on perception, interpretation, and narrative. He finishes with the questions he will ask of his sources throughout this work: what characteristics authors perceived as distinctive for Goths; on which expectations, knowledge, and wishes these perceptions were based; to what extent these perceptions changed over time; what of these came from collective memory of ethnic, social, or religious groups in the Merovingian kingdom; and whether it is possible to speak of a collective memory among the people of the Merovingian kingdom that is manifested in their historiography.

Chapter two covers the way Goths were described by authors of the Western Roman Empire in the fourth and fifth centuries. In turn, Stadermann discusses Ambrose of Milan, Christian apologetic and homilies (Orosius, Augustine, Jerome, and Salvian), Paulinus of Pella, Sidonius Apollinaris, and the chroniclers Hydatius and Prosper of Aquitaine. Although not all were based in Gaul, their works were highly influential on later Gallic authors, both in terms of the events they witnessed which later authors retold and in terms of their portrayals of the Goths. Among their most important influences, Stadermann highlights Ambrose's focus on the Goths' Arianism and Salvian's equation of Roman and barbarian with Catholic and heathen or heretic. It is with these earlier authors that Stadermann sees the activation of barbarian and heretic stereotypes that will be repeated and developed by later Gallic authors.

Chapter three, the longest chapter, explores the narrative sources of Merovingian Gaul in the sixth century. It begins with an introduction to Gregory of Tours, Venantius Fortunatus, Marius of Avenches, and hagiographers then explores particular themes across all these sources, such as the cultural connotations of barbarian identity, the Arians as a *gens*, and the role of Goths in Toulouse as enemies of Frankish kings. Stadermann notes one key change that distinguishes sixth-century authors from their fifth-century counterparts: a concern with religion. While fifth-century authors like Sidonius Apollinaris emphasized the social and economic disruption that came from conflict with and rule by the Goths, Gregory of Tours and other sixth-century authors chose to highlight the Goths' Arian religious identity, depicting them as persecutors and a threat to Catholics. By the late sixth century, Stadermann also sees Merovingian historians identifying more with Frankish kings and kingdoms than with Rome and being more likely to see the Goths as sent by God as his divine judgment to defeat the Franks when they had sinned.

Chapter four follows the same pattern of investigation for the seventh century. Its main sources are Fredegar, the appendix to Marius of Avenches' chronicle, Jonas of Bobbio, Audoin of Rouen, and anonymous hagiographers. Stadermann skillfully illustrates how these seventh-century authors wrote about Goths in ways that reflected the different concerns of their time. While Gregory of Tours used "Roman" to mean "Catholic," Fredegar used it as an ethnic descriptor; while Gregory wrote of the Gothic kingdom, Fredegar wrote of the Goths. Seventh-century authors no longer saw Arianism as intimately tied to Gothic identity and were more likely to view their world and their past in terms of diverse ethnic groups than as mired in conflict between Arians and Catholics.

Chapter five covers the *Liber historiae Francorum*, *Historia vel gesta Francorum*, and hagiographical sources of the eighth century. By this point, the depiction of Goths had begun to solidify for the past, and by 711 would no longer be relevant for the present. The chapter finishes with an epilogue on the Battle of Guadalete in Spain in 711 which ended Visigothic rule in the Iberian peninsula. Eighth-century authors discussed this event less than we might expect, but Stadermann notes that this is explainable by their greater focus on northern Gaul; southern Gaul and its immediate neighbors merit less mention overall. As text production shifted from south to north, so did authors' concerns and perspectives. Chapter six is Stadermann's conclusion, followed by an appendix that briefly discusses each hagiographical source, which is an excellent reference.

Overall, Stadermann demonstrates his mastery of a large number of sources across multiple centuries and sets forth a well-grounded argument for the importance of studying a group's perceptions of others to understanding the group itself. The biggest shortcoming of this work is bibliographic. Stadermann announces in his forward that he was unable to consider scholarship after 2014 when he finished the dissertation, and while one would not expect a complete reconsideration that takes every publication between 2014 and 2017 into account, a

few essential works that were published during this period should have been considered. Foremost among these is Helmut Reimitz's *History, Frankish Identity, and the Framing of Western Ethnicity*, which presents a new evaluation of redaction and reuse of histories in Stadermann's period. It is a work that will be highly influential, and its absence marks Stadermann's monograph as dated as soon as it appeared. Despite this, Stadermann provides an exhaustive treatment that will be a useful resource for future scholars seeking to explore any part of this period.