



Indigenous Peoples in Sardinia and the Iberian Peninsula in the Early Middle Ages: A Comparative Historiography

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ABSTRACT

The essay presents some parallelisms on the concept of “border” and the relations among Vandals, Byzantines and Sardinians on the one hand, and among Byzantines, Goths and Hispano-Romans, on the other, in the former Roman provinces of Sardinia and Hispania (the Iberian Peninsula) during the early Middle Ages. To do so, I analyze the modern identitarian and nationalistic uses of that historical period within the context of its historiography. In parts of both Sardinian and Iberian historiography there is the tendency to highlight the imagined ‘originative’ role of indigenous peoples, complemented by the relatively small influence, in some areas of northern Iberia and the mountainous center of Sardinia, of Roman colonization. In these areas, the role of *Barbaricini* (the inhabitants of the *Civitates Barbariae* of the interior of Sardinia mentioned by the Byzantine Emperor Justinian [r. 527-565]), Hispano-Romans, proud opponents of the Empire, and “true” Sardinians and Iberians have been exalted. Employing Maurice Halbwachs’s theoretical rubric, I show how these specific stereotypes, historical and historiographical myths, confirmed memory and identity and were the result of continuous choices – conscious or not – of what people wanted to remember, wanted to be, and wanted to be represented as, and what that means for historical reconstruction.



ESSAY

INTRODUCTION

In this work, I present several historiographical reflections on Sardinia and the Iberian Peninsula in the early Middle Ages. I propose examples of issues that are closely interconnected and common to the two regions: 1) the relationship between indigenous peoples and external rulers; 2) the existence of borders between the imperial world and the Others: whether ‘Germanic’ or indigenous; 3) the relationship between archaeology, *limes* and historiographical updates in Sardinia and the Iberian Peninsula; 4) and, concepts of isolation, remoteness and unassimilated, ethnic ‘purity’ or ‘authenticity’.

The medieval history of Sardinia – especially that between the sixth and eleventh centuries – is characterized by a noticeable paucity of written sources produced on the island. This, on the one hand, prevents the overemphasis of written-source narratives in historical reconstruction, and, on the other hand, presents both a methodological challenge and a contrast to the Iberian situation with its relative abundance of historical sources.¹

CIVITATES BARBARIAE / BARBARICAE GENTES / BARBARICINI / MAUROUSIOI

In AD 554, Justinian’s *Pragmatica Sanctio* included Sardinia in the Prefecture of Africa: the island’s civil administration was entrusted to a *Praeses*, perhaps allocated to Carales, capital of the island (Κάραλλος μητρόπολις),² while the military administration was submitted to a *Dux*.³ In the absence of external dangers, Justinian

¹ On the methodological problems see Paul Veyne (*Comment on écrit l'histoire. Texte integral* [Paris: Seuil, 1996], 31).

² Georgii Cyprii, *Descriptio Orbis romani, accedit Leonis imperatoris diatyprosis genuina adhuc inedita*, ed. Heinrich Gelzer (Leipzig, 1890): 33-35.

³ Despite the simultaneity of the imperial “reconquest,” an important difference in the administrative structure of Sardinia and Hispania stands out: Iberia seems to have been submitted to one supreme

decided that the military commander of the island should reside near the mountainous areas, those places where *barbaricae gentes* dwelt. This was perhaps at the *Forum Traiani* (today Fordongianus), a city of Roman foundation in the centre of the island surrounded by new fortifications.⁴ Despite its Justinianic fortifications, the city remained exposed to attacks by the island's Moors (*Mauroúsioi*) who were, says Procopius of Caesarea (c. 500-554), referred to by locals as the *Barbaricini*.⁵ According to Procopius, a contingent of soldiers-settler *Mauroúsioi*, with their families, had previously been sent from North Africa to Sardinia by the Vandals.⁶ They would have been settled in tax lands granted to them a few dozen miles northeast of Carales. These *barbaricae gentes* recalled the ancient name of the *Civitates Barbariae*, given by the Romans to the inhabited centres of an area much larger than the current *Barbagie*.⁷

official, a *magister militum* with the rank of *Patrikios*, perhaps as a consequence of the presence of Visigoths and Hispano-Romans who made military activities more relevant than civilian ones.

⁴ *Codex Justinianus* 1.27.2.3 in *Corpus Iuris Civilis*, ed. Paul Krueger (Dublin-Zürich: Weidmann, 1963-1967), 79.

⁵ Procopius of Caesarea, *De Bello Vandalico* 2.13.2. The Byzantine historian reported that the *Mauroúsioi* soon began to plunder nearby towns, becoming a source of concern for the Roman authorities. See Paolo Benito Serra, "I Barbaricini di Gregorio Magno," in *Per longa maris intervalla. Gregorio Magno e l'Occidente mediterraneo fra tardo antico e altomedioevo* (Cagliari: Pontificia Facoltà Teologica della Sardegna, 2006), 306-07; Raimondo Zucca, "Il decoro urbano delle civitates Sardiniae et Corsicae: il contributo delle fonti letterarie ed epigrafiche," *L'Africa romana*, ed. Attilio Mastino and Paola Ruggeri (Sassari: Editrice Archvio fotografico Sardo, 1994), 915; and, Mauro Perra, "L'organizzazione della difesa territoriale," in *L'Africa romana. Ai Confini dell'impero: contatti, scambi, conflitti*, ed. Mustapha Khanoussi, Paola Ruggeri and Cinzia Vismara (Rome: Carocci, 2004), 132.

⁶ Christian Courtois (*Les Vandales et l'Afrique* [Paris: Arts et Métier, 1955], 189) believes that the initiative would have been an experiment of military colonization with an agreement between Vandals and Mauretani, analogous to those of the Roman Empire with the barbarians over the Rhine.

⁷ An inscription discovered in 1920 at Fordongianus attests to the existence of the *civitates Barbariae* at the time of Augustus or Tiberius. Another one found in Preneste (Lazio) mentions Sextus Iulius Rufus, *praefectus I Cohortis Corsorum et civitatum Barbariae in Sardinia*. See Raimondo Zucca, *Neoneli-Leunelli, dalla Civitas Barbariae all'età contemporanea* (Neoneli: Comune di Neoneli, 2003), 27 ff. The use of the term "Civitates" in relation to the *Barbaricae gentes*' inhabited centres could make one think of the *peregrinae civitates*, existing also in the northwest of the Iberian Peninsula without a real urban center, confirming that the link between the inhabitants did not have a physical-geographical nature. See Almudena Orejas, "Paisajes/y/territorios/urbes/y/civitates en la Hispania romana," in *2nd Seminari Internacional Ciutats mediterrànies: l'espai i el territori* (Barcelona, 22-25 de novembre de 2016) (Barcelona: Institut d'Estudis Catalans, forthcoming).

The Barbaricini and Gregory the Great

At the end of the sixth century, the *Civitates Barbariae* were still at the centre of political life in Sardinia. They were also of significant concern for Pope Gregory the Great (c. 540-604), as is evident from thirty-nine of his letters dedicated to the island.⁸ In fact, there are extant four times as many letters of Gregory on Sardinia than there are those on Iberia, and, overall, the island is the recipient of about 5% of the entire corpus of Gregory's correspondence.⁹ From some of the Sardinian letters of May 594 – addressed to Ianuario, Archbishop of Carales, to Zabardas, *Dux Sardiniae*, as well as to the island's *nobiles ac possessores* – it is possible to deduce that some Byzantines had recently finished a victorious military campaign against the *Barbaricini*. Another letter was addressed to a special person: Hospiton, called *dux Barbaricinorum*, the only Christian among the otherwise pagan confederation.¹⁰

Apart from the different hypotheses about their origin and territorial location in Sardinia,¹¹ the *Barbaricae gentes*, after having been defeated, disappear quickly from the sources, and their role in the island is more historiographical than historical.¹² In fact, they are closely intertwined with the controversial hypothesis on the Byzantine

⁸ Raimondo Turtas, *Storia della Chiesa in Sardegna. Dalle origini al Duemila* (Rome: Città Nuova, 1999), 105-06.

⁹ Pablo C. Díaz ("Gregorio Magno y el reino visigodo. Un conflicto de poderes," in *Gregorio Magno, L'Impero e i "Regna"* [Florence: Sismel – Edizioni del Galluzzo, 2008], 60) recalls that Gregory the Great dedicated to the Iberian Peninsula "Apenas un capítulo hagiográfico y propagandístico de sus *Dialogi*, [...] y 10 cartas [...]."

¹⁰ Sancti Gregorii Magni, *Registrum epistularum* I-II, in *Corpus Christianorum series latina*, ed. Dag Norberg (Turnhout: Brepols, 1982), Ep. 4.27. On Hospiton, we know only what Pope Gregory the Great says in three of his letters. Raimondo Turtas (*Storia della Chiesa in Sardegna*, 126-28) supposes that he could be an exponent of the "aristocracy" of his *gens* held hostage and educated by the Romans in Carales or Carthage, and then baptized and placed at the head of the *Barbaricini* by the exarch Gennadios.

¹¹ According to Sandro Petrucci ("Al centro della Sardegna. Barbagia e Barbaricini nella prima metà del XIV secolo. Lo spazio. Gli uomini. La politica," in *Sardegna, Mediterraneo e Atlantico tra Medioevo ed Età Moderna. Studi storici in memoria di Alberto Boscolo*, ed. Luisa D'Arienzo [Rome: Bulzoni, 1993], I, 301-02) the *Barbaricini* were the ancient *Ilienses*, settled in the central-northern area of the island who had opposed Roman penetration.

¹² Paolo Benito Serra ("I Barbaricini di Gregorio Magno," 302) highlights the absolute silence in the sources from the middle and late Roman imperial age on *the civitates Barbariae* and on the *Barbari* of the interior areas.

limes, to contain them,¹³ and with a historiographical interpretation of great success in Sardinia, formulated over half a century ago: the perpetual Sardinian resistance, that is, the capacity of the native Sardinians of the mountains to oppose the invasions of the different conquerors of the island.¹⁴ Its success is based on a concept of ‘pure’ ethnic identity, characterized by the non-fusion, non-assimilation with the Other, and by the maintenance of some absolutely original and special characteristics.¹⁵

As a result of this supposed resistance, two types of islanders were formed: those of the coasts and plains, whose Sardinian identity was ‘mixed’ with those of external rulers, and the others, who remained ‘uncontaminated’ or ‘unassimilated’ in the mountains.¹⁶ Although recently reconceptualized, this interpretation continues to reappear, highlighting a sort of resistance (it is appropriate to say) even by those who discovered the same archaeological finds demonstrating extensive Romanization also within the interior of Sardinia.¹⁷

Barbaritas

The Iberian version of this historiographical scenario is much more articulated than the Sardinian one, thanks to the presence of a number of sources and to the existence of several ethnic and political subjects in the Peninsula, which mutually defined each other as *barbari*. While Gregory the Great defined the *barbaricae gentes* of the

¹³ Yves Le Bohec, *La Sardaigne et l'armée romaine sous le Haut-Empire* (Sassari: C. Delfino, 1990), 66: “Rien ne prouve, en effet, l'existence d'un système de défense articulé; [...] nous dirons que nous n'avons pas trouvé de limes en Sardaigne.”

¹⁴ Giovanni Lilliu and Antonello Mattone, *La costante resistenziale sarda* (Nuoro: Ilisso, 2002).

¹⁵ According to Benedetto Caltagirone (“Note preliminari ad un ‘rilevamento sull’identità in Sardegna,” in *Sardegna, Seminario sull’identità*, ed. Giulio Angioni, 29-35 [Cagliari: CUEC, 2007], 188-89) “the image of identity depicted by Lilliu is [...] decidedly unbalanced on the side of an inward-looking identity, myopically proud of its closure: in fact as opposed to otherness.”

¹⁶ Alfonso Stiglitz, “Confini e frontiere nella Sardegna fenicia, punica e romana: critica all'immaginario geografico,” in *L'Africa romana*, 805.

¹⁷ Paolo Benito Serra (“I Barbaricini di Gregorio Magno,” 342) first tries to attribute to other populations the numerous objects of imperial workmanship found in the tombs of the soldiers-settlers of the areas of Maurousioi/Barbaricini, and then he has to admit “that also this people [...] has participated in that process of Byzantine acculturation.”

Sardinian mountains as wild and idolatrous, the inscription of the *magister militum Spaniae* Comentiolus of 589-590 defined the Visigothic neighbors as the *hostes barbaros*, against whom he had been sent by Emperor Maurice (r. 582-602).¹⁸ On the Visigothic side, Isidore of Seville considered *barbari* all the enemies of the Goths – except the Byzantines – while describing the Basques and Franks as ferocious (*feritas*), the *Barbaricini* as nonsensical animals (“ut insensata animalia vivant”).¹⁹ The Council of Seville of 619, chaired by Isidore, then turned the concept of *barbarica feritas* to the Byzantines, in relation to the destruction brought to the territory of Malaga, recently conquered by Visigothic armies.²⁰

On a different conceptual and terminological level, Gregory the Great spoke about other dangers for Sardinia at the end of the sixth century, for example, the Lombards, who showed interest in Sardinia and perhaps also in Corsica. In his letters, the Pontiff acted as a *de facto* substitute for the Empire, speaking of the necessary initiatives to defend the major island from the attacks of the “*hostes nostri [...] inimici*” and *nequissima gens*,²¹ without however directly accusing them of *barbaritas* or *feritas*. The Pope’s deep concern was also caused by some clues suggesting the presence in Sardinia of activities favorable to the Lombards, perhaps because of the conduct of Byzantine officials.²²

¹⁸ *Inscripciones de la España romana y visigoda*, ed. José Vives (Barcelona: CSIC, 1969), 125-26, no. 362. According to Gisela Ripoll López (“Acerca de la supuesta frontera entre el *Regnum Visigothorum* y la Hispania bizantina,” *Pyrenae* 27 [1996]: 247), they were defined “*barbari* en el sentido de que son gentes extrañas a la comunidad ideológica del imperio bizantino.” This is perhaps also because they had not yet converted to the Nicene Creed in the 589 Council of Toledo.

¹⁹ Federico-Mario Beltrán Torreira, “El concepto de barbarie en la Hispania visigoda,” *Antigüedad y Cristianismo* Los visigodos. Historia y civilización 3 (1986): 57-58.

²⁰ Pablo C. Díaz, “En tierra de nadie: visigodos frente a bizantinos. Reflexionando sobre la frontera,” in *Bizancio y la Península Ibérica. De la Antigüedad tardía a la Edad Moderna*, ed. Inmaculada Pérez Martín and Pedro Bádenas de la Peña (Madrid: CSIC, 2004), 46-47 and note 32.

²¹ Sancti Gregorii Magni, *Registrum epistularum, Epistulae* IX, 11.

²² Marco Tangheroni, “Pisa, i Longobardi e la Sardegna,” in *Dal mondo antico all’età contemporanea. Studi in onore di Manlio Brigaglia offerti dal Dipartimento di Storia dell’Università di Sassari* (Rome: Carocci, 2001), 181-83.

Limes

Hospiton and his *dignitas* of *dux Barbaricinorum* can help to understand whether there was a *limes*, intended as a fortified line between the Byzantines and *Barbaricini*.²³ Over the past couple of decades, Sardinian archaeology has shown that the meaning of the term *limes* is suggested by the presence of at least two important elements in that area:²⁴ a) a military road (the *aliud iter ab Ulbia Caralis* mentioned in the *Itinerarium Antonini*) perhaps restored in the sixth century to consolidate the conquest of enemy territories through the movement and connection between the imperial garrisons;²⁵ b) and, a frontier district characterized by numerous fortifications, built or refurbished in the Justinianic period around the areas of the *ducatum* of Hospiton.²⁶

Similar historiographical considerations can be made for the Iberian Peninsula: in fact, there were those who conceived the *limes* from *Gallaecia* to *Vasconia* as a line with contingents of *limitanei* for the containment of Cantabrian and Basque peoples hardly Romanized and perceived as hotbeds of conflict.²⁷ Another element that *Civitates Barbariae* have in common with *Vasconia* is that, depending on whether

²³ Piergiorgio Spanu, *La Sardegna bizantina tra VI e VII secolo* (Oristano: S'Alvure, 1988).

²⁴ According to Mauro Perra ("Nuove scoperte peigrafiche dal territorio di Samugheo," in *L'Africa Romana* 10.2, 1018-20) the archaeological finds show that the *Barbaria*'s communities had been deeply Romanized since the first centuries of the Empire, and that the *limes* must be understood as different degrees of participation in the economic and cultural processes of rural interior areas.

²⁵ Paolo Benito Serra ("I Barbaricini di Gregorio Magno," 301) recalls the construction, perhaps in the Augustan age, of this important road from Olbia to Carales, crossing "the mountainous centre touching almost all the major human settlements [...] of the *Barbaria*."

²⁶ Benjamin Isaac, "The meaning of the terms *Limes* and *Limitanei*," *The Journal of Roman Studies* 78 (1988): 125-26 & 140. Paolo Benito Serra ("I Barbaricini di Gregorio Magno," 316) highlights how the archaeological finds deny previous interpretations of the *Limes* as a precise dividing line.

²⁷ Pablo Poveda Arias, "El concepto de frontera en la Hispania Tardoantigua: de limes a confinium," in *Los lugares de la Historia*, ed. José Manuel Aldea Celada, Carmen López San Segundo, Paula Ortega Martínez, María de los Reyes de Soto García, Francisco José Vicente Santos (Salamanca: Asociación de Jóvenes Historiadores, 2013), 1161 and 1165. Also, for the Visigothic period see Jorge López Quiroga and Mónica Rodríguez Lovelle, "El problema del Limes de época visigoda en Galicia. Nuevas consideraciones a partir de una relectura de las fuentes escritas y arqueológicas," *Revista de Guimarães* 104 (1994): 88 and 97. In that article they show that there are no written records or sources to prove "la idea de un *limes* o de una 'Marca Galaica' visigoda desde el siglo V," and later even, since that region became part of the *Regnum Visigothorum*.

scholars use Roman sources from the first century or late-ancient ones, these ethnonyms were used to define populations that changed over the centuries and that lived in certain geographical areas with variable borders.²⁸ However, in the Iberian Peninsula as well, archaeology in recent decades has shown that areas and populations considered fundamentally alien to Romanization were actually immersed in the imperial world.²⁹ This debunks some historiographical theories with strong nationalistic connotations, also widespread in Sardinia, which serve as ideological support for other, contemporary political discourses.³⁰

In the south of the Iberian Peninsula, the identification of the *Limes* between the Visigoths and Byzantines is made even more complicated, if not nearly impossible, by the brief duration of Imperial dominion (555-625) which makes the contribution of archaeological data more limited and controversial. Although, unlike in the case of Sardinia, there is at least an explicit mention of the *limes* and two references to a network of fortifications.³¹ These sources are almost contemporaneous with the events and yet they do not help to locate settlements and defensive structures since in most cases they do not specify whether the Visigothic conquests were to the detriment of Byzantines or Hispano-Romans, still independent in some areas of *Hispania Betica*

²⁸ On Vasconia see Esteban Moreno Resano, “Vascones, francos y visigodos entre los siglos VI y VII: dinámicas de delimitación y división del solar vascón,” *Príncipe de Viana* 261 (2015): 347, 350, and 368, here 350: “Tanto el gentilicio Vascones como el topónimo Vasconia eran voces clásicas empleadas ocasionalmente por los autores tardíos para designar a la población local, organizada en comunidades aristocráticas, que no estaban sujetas a la autoridad real, visigoda o franca.”

²⁹ Pablo C. Díaz and Luis R. Menéndez Bueyes (“Romanos, visigodos e indígenas: las comunidades del norte de Hispania en los inicios de la Edad Media [cuarenta años después],” *Anejos de NAILOS* 3 [2016]: 172) insist repeatedly on the concept that in the northeast of the Iberian Peninsula “la presencia romana [...] es muy grande, y este hecho se hace cada día más evidente según avanza nuestro conocimiento arqueológico. El alcance de las formas urbanas y de la colonización del campo [...] está mostrando igualmente un nivel de implantación muy por encima de las expectativas más optimistas.”

³⁰ Jorge López Quiroga and Mónica Rodríguez Lovelle (“El problema del Limes de época visigoda en Galicia,” 102, n. 73) state clearly that “Esta idea de una Galicia occidental independiente y al margen del poder visigodo, sirve de base [...] para justificar que esta zona es el núcleo originario de la ‘nación’ gallega. [...] y se inscribe en una corriente que promueve un retorno al discurso ‘nacionalista’ [...] influenciado por el actual contexto socio-político de tendencia nacional-regionalista en España.”

³¹ Paul the Deacon (*Historia Langobardorum* 3.21) speaks of soldiers “qui in limite adversum Hispanos Gothos residebant.”

and the wider Levant. Only in one of the aforementioned sources, Isidore of Seville, is there reference to Suintila's conquest of Byzantine cities.³²

Some scholars are convinced that the *limes* between Visigothic *Hispania* and the Byzantine Empire must be understood as an elastic zone with respect to the imperial settlement, developed in depth, where one lives in contact with the 'enemy' ("in confinio externis gentibus").³³ This interpretation corresponds with that of the border between *Barbaricini* and Byzantines. These elements, the scarce extension of the Byzantine dominion and the reduced presence of *Hispania* in the imperial sources, has led to the claim that a new Byzantine province was not created, but rather that the Empire controlled some coastal cities and their hinterlands, above all, to protect North Africa from possible Visigothic attacks.³⁴

***Limes* = isolation?**

Another stimulating issue is the isolation and closure of the Visigothic Kingdom, a concept that is also present in the scholarship on early medieval Sardinia, even in recent publications that propose outdated historical images via outdated models which cast the island as remote, poor and alien to the so-called "flow" of history.³⁵

³² Isidore of Seville, *Historia de regibus Gothorum, Vandalorum et Suevorum* 49 and 62. In the case of Chapter 49, it has been thought from the term *milites* that the *quaedam castra* conquered were Byzantines, although they may have been Hispano-Romans. Chapter 62, on the other hand, is explicit in speaking of "*Romana castra [...] urbes residuas quas in Hispaniis Romana manus agebat.*" See Pablo C. Díaz, "En tierra de nadie," 44-48; David Montanero Vico, "La problemática sobre el limes bizantino en la península ibérica: ¿Realidad histórica o construcción historiográfica?," *Ex novo. Revista d'història i humanitats* 2 (2005): 48-49.

³³ Céline Martin, "'In confinio externis gentibus': La percepción de la frontera en el reino visigodo," *Studia Historica. Historia Antigua* 16 (1998): 271.

³⁴ David Montanero Vico, "La problemática sobre el limes bizantino en la península ibérica," 48-49, 60; Céline Martin, "'In confinio externis gentibus'," 261.

³⁵ Vivien Prigent, "L'usage du sceau de plomb dans les régions italiennes de tradition byzantine au Haut Moyen-Âge," in *L'héritage Byzantin en Italie (VIIIe-XIIe siècle). I La fabrique documentaire* (Rome: Ecole Française de Rome, 2011), 223-24. Laura Galoppini ("Overview of Sardinian History [500-1500]," in *A Companion to Sardinian History*, ed. Michelle Hobart [Boston-Leiden: Brill, 2017], 90) says of the Byzantine period: "But the island was still not completely excluded from maritime traffic and Mediterranean events."

If it can be almost ‘natural’ to interpret the history of an island in the light of isolation, I find it very intriguing that this has been done recently even for the Iberian Peninsula, united to the rest of the European continent and almost surrounded by the sea which, even in the early Middle Ages was a very important communication route between peoples and cultures.³⁶ A chapter from Isidore of Seville’s *Etymologies*, “De Europa et partibus eius,” is used to affirm this supposed isolation: “[Hispania] Sita est autem inter Africam et Galliam, a septentrione Pyrenaeis montibus clausa, a reliquis partibus undique mare conclusa [...]”³⁷ Some scholars even differentiate between late Roman and Visigothic Hispania. The former is considered to have been open to the outside world while the latter singularly is attributed an *aislamiento* that denies the Visigothic *regnum* any points in common with the other *estados romano-germánicos*, since this would deny *su especificidad*. These are historiographical concepts which recall those used for Sardinia.³⁸

The first explanation for such interpretations that comes to my mind is that of the so-called ‘values’ that are intended to be conveyed through Byzantine Sardinia (and its supposed institutional heirs, the four *Giudicati*) – and the Visigothic Kingdom (and its imagined descendants: from the Asturian monarchy to that of Castile from 1037 onwards). Both have been and in ways continue to be interpreted in light of the contemporary needs and values of scholars, demonstrating both the problems in the

³⁶ The Kingdom of Asturias was located in an area of political, cultural and religious frontier of the utmost importance between the Caliphate of Cordoba and the Frankish Kingdom/Carolingian Empire, the two superpowers of the western Euro-Mediterranean of the time. Why maintain that it was or was not isolated from the rest of the Iberian Peninsula and Europe? On this see Alberto González García, “La proyección europea del reino de Asturias: política, cultura y economía (718-910),” *El Futuro del Pasado* 5 (2014): 237-41 and 272.

³⁷ Isidore of Seville, *Etymologies* 14.4.28. For discussion see Céline Martin, ““In confinio externis gentibus,”” 269-70 and Pablo C. Díaz, “En tierra de nadie,” 55. Pablo Poveda Arias (“El concepto de frontera en la Hispania Tardoantigua,” 1173), while stressing that Isidore mentions the natural borders of the Peninsula, attributes to him the intention to underline “la idea de una Hispania encerrada (clausa), como una unidad en sí misma que dotaba de identidad al regnum.”

³⁸ Francisco Javier Guzmán Armario, “La política exterior de los visigodos en Hispania. Un ensayo sobre la debilidad del reino de Toledo,” *Estudios sobre Patrimonio, Cultura y Ciencias Medievales* 15 (2013): 218-20.

historiography and generally how memory is the result of continuous choices of what we want to remember, consciously or not, of what we want to be or to have been, rather than what we really are (or were).

PARTIAL CONCLUSIONS

The considerations presented above represent only a few examples of the stimuli that I have drawn from the comparison between the history of Sardinia and Hispania in the early Middle Ages: many others, especially at the historiographical level have not found space in this text. I deliberately did not deal with the Balearic Archipelago, as the parallelisms would have been too much... among them, the role of archaeology that denies the silences of historiography, and the use of a few presumed Visigothic finds to suggest a Visigothic phase of the Archipelago that recalls recent hypotheses on a stable Muslim presence in Sardinia based on very few findings and posterior sources.³⁹ Nevertheless, I hope that this essay has shown a few of, and elicits further research into, the shared historiographical problems of the early medieval western Mediterranean, and especially between Sardinia and the Iberian Peninsula.

³⁹ Josep Amengual i Batle, "Vbi pars graecorum est: medio milenio de historia relegada de las Baleares y las Pitiusas," *PYRENAE* 36.2 (2005): passim.

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