



## **Towards a Review of the “Visigothic Symptoms”: Formal Writing in Visigothic Hispania**

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### ABSTRACT

In a set of essays (*Visigothic Symposium 4*) intended to present a review of literary production in Visigothic Hispania, from the perspective of historical contextualization, it is of course fundamental to be able to date the sources we have with some certainty. As is usual, to trace the outlines of this basic corpus we begin from two premises: on the one hand, there is the surviving production, which permits a direct approach to the subject treated in the source and to its context; on the other, there is what has not survived but which, since it is mentioned in other works or its subject is a constant of the period in question, we must assume to have existed. By addressing both cases together, we should be able to begin to understand what was produced in the peninsula, who produced it, and to which specific interests it responded – the point of departure that makes it possible to carry out a study of cultural contextualization. What is missing will be as revealing as what is available or what we can suppose once was, reflecting the interests of elites and institutions both secular and ecclesiastical who, after all, guided the production. Therefore, in this essay, after some brief notes on what could have been in this vast set of literary documents, preserved or lost, I focus on a survey of the criteria that have traditionally been used to identify codices produced in Hispanic

centers. That is to say, I propose here a review of the so-called “Visigothic symptoms,” paleographic aspects that have served to categorize certain codices copied in book hand, Uncial, and Half-uncial scripts as Hispanic production in centers within the Visigothic kingdom.

## ESSAY

### 1. The Books

Manuel C. Díaz y Díaz lists in his *Index Scriptorum Latinorum Medii Aevi Hispanorum*<sup>1</sup> a total of 442 works produced or available in the peninsula between the sixth and eighth centuries, encompassing a wide variety of subjects, from those of a scientific nature to many others of ecclesiastical content. The excellent monograph *La Hispania visigótica y mozárabe. Dos épocas en su literatura*,<sup>2</sup> which is also a compilation but focused on authors rather than works, gathers Hispanic writers’ production of books and other minor genres from the fifth to the ninth century, complementing the brief biography of each author with a detailed study of their works within their contexts. Both of these publications provide us a first approach to what could have been manuscript (codices) production in the peninsula and, beyond that, to the cultural scene. This was a scene that was dynamic and flourishing, although it was very clearly organized around only a few key figures, and all of them from an ecclesiastical environment. Books and authors, moreover, circled around the libraries of diverse patrons, whether public (institutions of the church – schools and archives – and the royal court) or private (personal libraries of the nobility and scholars), which

<sup>1</sup> Manuel C. Díaz y Díaz, *Index scriptorum latinorum Medii Aevi Hispanorum* (Salamanca: Universidad de Salamanca, 1958), pars prior, 1-115.

<sup>2</sup> María A. Andrés Sanz, Carmen Codoñer, Salvador Iranzo Abellán, José Carlos Martín, David Paniagua, *La Hispania visigótica y mozárabe. Dos épocas en su literatura* (Salamanca: Fundación Ignacio Larramendi, 2011). [www.larramendi.es/visig/es/consulta/registro.do?control=FIL20120000322](http://www.larramendi.es/visig/es/consulta/registro.do?control=FIL20120000322)

we have been able to reconstruct thanks to analysis of the books' content,<sup>3</sup> archaeological remains,<sup>4</sup> and catalogues. These libraries would have held works that were widely read by Hispanic scholars produced both in the peninsula and outside, whose existence we can assume thanks to the works preserved, but also to references made in later works or to the fact that the latter come from an Hispanic exemplar.<sup>5</sup> Altogether, we can identify a considerable collection of books from Visigothic Hispania: legal books, medical texts (Oribasius, Rufus), ecclesiastical authors (Origen, Cyprian, Ambrose of Alexandria, Jerome, John Chrysostom, Augustine, John Cassian, Sulpicius Severus, Pope Leo I, Gennadius of Massilia, St. Gregory, Isidore of Seville)

<sup>3</sup> Ana Belén Sánchez Prieto, "Bibliotheca Wisigothica," in *VIII Jornadas científicas sobre documentación en la Hispania altomedieval (VI-X c.)*, ed. Juan Carlos Galende Díaz and Javier de Santiago Fernández (Madrid: Universidad Complutense de Madrid, 1996), 263-90.

<sup>4</sup> Sánchez Prieto, "Bibliotheca Wisigothica," 282 comments on the physical description of a library in Isidore's *Etymologies*.

<sup>5</sup> Agustín Millares Carlo, in his *Tratado de Paleografía Española* (Madrid: Espasa-Calpe, 1983), I, 29 n. 36 refers to the many books which have not been preserved but were seen by the humanist Ambrosio de Morales in the sixteenth century during his trips across the peninsula (Ambrosio de Morales, *Viage de Ambrosio de Morales por orden del rey D. Felipe II a los reynos de León, y Galicia, y Principado de Asturias*, ed. Enrique Flórez [Madrid: Antonio Marin, 1765], 93-98). For instance, he notes a canon volume and a bible in Oviedo copied in a "muy cuidadosa escritura mayúscula" (see also Roger Collins, "Ambrosio de Morales, Bishop Pelayo of Oviedo and the Lost Manuscripts of Visigothic Spain," in *Wisigothica. After M. C. Díaz y Díaz*, ed. Carmen Codoñer and Paulo Farmhouse Alberto [Florence: Sismel Edizioni del Galluzzo, 2014], 609-32). Further, there are references to ecclesiastical texts (bibles, missals, and breviaries) that should have been consulted when copying the ninth- and tenth-century manuscript codices, and which, by themselves, "suponen la existencia de buen número de códices de la Sagrada Escritura." Díaz y Díaz, in the same way, mentions a missing codex probably copied in Toledo circa 730 in cursive script (that would have contained the *Liber quaestionum, Contra V haereses* by Augustine, the *Expositio in Matthaeum* by Jerome, the *Allegoriae quaedam sanctae scripturae* by Isidore, the *De correctione rusticorum* as well as grammar and *computus* treatises by Martin of Braga), which the humanist Jaime de Villanueva (Jaime de Villanueva, *Viage literario a las iglesias de España. Tomo 8. Viage á las Iglesias de Vique y de Solsona, 1806 y 1807* [Valencia: Oliveres, 1821], 45) saw in the Ripoll monastery, a loss that likely happened in the nineteenth century (Manuel C. Díaz y Díaz, "La cultura literaria en la España visigótica," in Manuel C. Díaz y Díaz, *De Isidoro al siglo XI. Ocho estudios sobre la vida literaria peninsular* [Barcelona: El Albir, 1976], 57-86 [69-77]). In the same work and following Bernhard Bischoff (*Scriptoria e manoscritti mediatori di civiltà dal sesto secolo alla riforma di Carlo Magno* [Spoleto, 1964], 479-504 [482]), Díaz y Díaz suggests that those codices in Uncial and Half-uncial scripts, including others of Hispanic archetype and on law, could be the product of a compilation made in Toledo during the codification or updating of the Visigothic law: "Si esto es así, hemos de retener como dato importante para nuestra reconstrucción de la cultura visigótica esta actividad escriptoria que nos atestigua, además, el método de trabajo del equipo que, según las directrices del rey, se ocupó de elaborar la *Lex Visigothorum*. Bien copiados en Toledo, bien simplemente allegados de otros puntos, estos manuscritos son fehaciente testimonio de una capacidad y técnica bibliográfica muy dignas de ser tenidas en cuenta y positivamente valoradas" (Díaz y Díaz, "La cultura literaria," 63).

and other texts of the same sphere (synodal acts and liturgical books), pagan authors (Lucretius, Virgil, Seneca, Pliny the Elder, Quintilian, Martianus Capella, and Fulgentius among others, as well as the *Disticha Catonis*), geography books (the Antonine Itinerary), history (Hegesippus, Eusebius, Eutropius, Orosius, and Hydatius), poetry (Petronius, Juvenecus, Prudentius, Ausonius, Sedulius, Boethius, Cassiodorus, and Venantius Fortunatus), grammar (Aelius Donatus, Servius, Priscian), glossaries, and letters. These books would have formed part of peninsular libraries, whose existence has been indicated in the episcopal capitals (by information preserved regarding those of Seville, Zaragoza, and Cartagena), in important monasteries (the Agaliense, on the outskirts of Toledo; the Servitano, near Ercavica; and Dumio, on the outskirts of Braga), in private milieux (such as the library of Consencio, in the Balearics), as well as, of course, in the political, cultural, and ecclesiastical Visigothic capital, Toledo. These libraries were undoubtedly interconnected, since the books, like people, would have traveled to fill the gaps in collections when required.<sup>6</sup> The wide range of material shows us an apparent cultural link, perhaps even a continuation, from Antiquity into the Middle Ages. There appears to be a clear indication of an abiding interest in Classical works among peninsular scholars, who continued to consider them important to their society.

The contextualization of literary production within the general interests of the people of the time, either as members of institutions or individuals, clearly highlights two

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<sup>6</sup> On book circulation, see: Manuel C. Díaz y Díaz, “La circulation des manuscrits dans la Péninsule Ibérique du VIII<sup>e</sup> au XI<sup>e</sup> siècle,” *Cahiers de civilisation médiévale* 12 (1969): 219-41; Sánchez Prieto, “Bibliotheca Wisigothica,” 276, 289; Manuel C. Díaz y Díaz, “La penetración cultural latina en Hispania en los siglos VI-VII,” in *De Isidoro al siglo XI*, 9-20 [20, n. 29]; Manuel C. Díaz y Díaz, “La cultura de la España visigótica del siglo VII,” in *De Isidoro al siglo XI*, 21-55 [24, 29].

things. First, the influence of religion.<sup>7</sup> Almost all of the active writers of the Visigothic period were churchmen (Martin of Braga, John of Biclar, Isidore of Seville, Ildefonsus, Julian of Toledo, and Valerius of Bierzo, to name but the best known), and book production was largely religious too (hagiographies, texts on ascetic-moral themes, catechetical or theological doctrinal works, treatises of biblical exegesis, monastic rules, liturgical compositions such as sermons and hymns, the *Collectio Canonica Hispana*), although it is true that other particularly appreciated genres could well have developed, such as historiography (universal chronicles and histories), literary autobiographies, letters, didactic works on grammar, natural history, astronomy, and geography, among others (recall especially Isidore's *Etymologies*), poetry (*Anthologia Hispana*), and, due to their practical use in government, legal texts (*Lex Visigothorum*).<sup>8</sup> Religion was key in manuscript development. The swift evolution from a more democratic Roman society to one fundamentally shaped by the Church was reflected in changes in education, which saw public schools give way to episcopal and monastic schools whose only aim<sup>9</sup> was to provide the novice with the resources necessary to nourish a Christian soul, besides some basic skills in reading and writing.

<sup>7</sup> José Carlos Martín, "La cultura literaria latina en Hispania en el 700," in *711. Arqueología e historia entre dos mundos*, I (Alcalá de Henares: Museo Arqueológico de la comunidad de Madrid, 2011), 51-78.

<sup>8</sup> See note 5.

<sup>9</sup> The decrees arranged during the councils of Toledo look to these new types of schools fashioned according to the need to improve the clergy's cultural level, particularly that of the presbyters. The Eighth Council, held in 653, provided in its eighth canon the basic requirements for the presbyters' ordination, including knowledge of the psalter, the songs, the hymns and the memory ritual. On the lay schools, only a little is known. They certainly should have existed, but rather as private educational systems centered around the figure of a master and, quite possibly, by personal interest (see Pierre Riché, *Education and Culture in the Barbarian West: Sixth through Eighth Centuries* [Columbia: University of South Carolina, 1976]). Given the legal weight of diplomatic manuscript production, as observed in the second and fifth books of the *Lex Visigothorum*, a not so limited group of people, apart from scholars, may have had some basic training in handwriting, as suggested by *las pizarras* coeval with book production (see Díaz y Díaz, *La penetración cultural latina*, 19: "Producto de una política sistemática o no, la reacción procultural que había tenido lugar a fines del siglo VI parece en el siglo VII dar frutos"; Isabel Velázquez Soriano, *El latín de las pizarras visigóticas (edición y estudio)* (PhD thesis: Universidad Complutense de Madrid, 1988), 571; Martín, *La cultura literaria latina*, 70; Chris Wickham, *Una historia nueva de la alta Edad Media. Europa y el mundo mediterráneo, 400-800* (Barcelona: Editorial Crítica, 2008), 330-33; Isabel

Second, a critical approach to this alleged connection with Classical Antiquity is necessary, and not only from a thematic point of view. The image of a seemingly thriving production of works, and contemporary interest in them, is undercut by their actual use and consumption, leaving aside the fact that perhaps many codices were collected as precious objects rather than as books to be read. Díaz y Díaz<sup>10</sup> proposes that the presumed rebirth of Classical culture once the Visigothic kingdom had come to center on the Iberian Peninsula after the loss of Gallic territory, around the seventh century, is not what it seems: intellectuals showed an undeniable respect for the Classical authors, but this reflects not a continuation of a tradition, only an interest in achieving Classical erudition. Díaz y Díaz highlights the fact that Visigothic authors included in their works citations and second-hand citations (borrowed from intermediaries) of the classics, without making direct reference to them. Many of the books mentioned above, therefore, might not have existed as such, but been preserved only in extracts. From a moralistic point of view, the classics represented an ideal which the Visigoths aimed to emulate; with few exceptions (e.g. Isidore), they thus focused on perpetuating the basic ideas of Classical texts rather than producing new works. In summary, Díaz y Díaz's vision of the cultural scene in the Visigothic period, which appears to be endorsed by the sources, is rich, although nuanced, and more or less consistent with what we find for the early medieval period, which suggests that the arrival of Muslims had little impact in practice.

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Velázquez Soriano, "Las pizarras visigodas: escritura y cultura," in *Fortificaciones, poblados y pizarras: La Raya en los inicios del Medievo, catálogo de exposición (Ciudad Rodrigo, 2018-2019)* (Ciudad Rodrigo, 2018), 48-67 [48, 50, 60, 62]).

<sup>10</sup> Díaz y Díaz, *De Isidoro al siglo XI*. See especially, "La cultura de la España visigótica del siglo VII," 21-55 and "La cultura literaria en la España visigótica," 57-86 [69-77].

## 2. The Script

Regardless of the intentions behind the conservation and actual consumption of books, it is certain that the book production of Visigothic Hispania was extensive, leaving aside diplomatics (charters) for the moment.<sup>11</sup> It is therefore rather surprising, even bearing in mind the passage of the centuries and the accidents that affect the preservation of manuscripts, that only about twenty codices of that period have survived. In fact, a thorough review of the available catalogues,<sup>12</sup> for want of direct access to the archives, looking especially at the guard sheets for possible conservation of earlier texts in more modern manuscripts, reveals that the examples are limited to the following.

### 2.1. Uncial script

Uncial script, a bilinear (majuscule) graphic system used between the fourth and the seventh century in post-Roman Europe, replaced the continental majuscule book hand script and was from the sixth century the preferred style for copies of biblical texts, in particular, as it was considered aesthetically more solemn. It is easily recognizable as a continuous writing of rounded letters, with an alphabet characterized by the particular forms of certain letters (*a, d, e, m*), mixed with some (*h, p, q, u*) typical of Cursive minuscule (New Roman cursive, informal and in development from the third century),

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<sup>11</sup> On writing in an informal environment, I am presently working on a study focused on analyzing graphic development in the peninsula from the fifth to the eighth centuries. Meanwhile, and in order to avoid over citation, I refer the reader to the fundamental and excellent studies by Isabel Velázquez on the Visigothic *pizarras* (Isabel Velázquez Soriano, *Las pizarras visigodas: Entre el latín y su disgregación. La lengua hablada en Hispania, siglos VI-VIII* [Madrid: Real Academia Española, 2004]) and by Anscari M. Mundó on the original Visigothic diplomas on parchment (Anscari M. Mundó, *Los diplomas visigodos originales en pergamino* [PhD diss., Universidad de Barcelona, 1970]).

<sup>12</sup> Mainly *Codices Latini Antiquiores. A Palaeographical Guide to Latin Manuscripts Prior to the Ninth Century*, 12 vols., ed. Elias Avery Lowe (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1934-1971). Digital format: <https://elmss.nuigalway.ie/> Cited as CLA. See also, as a general reference, Millares Carlo, *Tratado de Paleografía*.



and others (especially *g*, *t*) from the earlier majuscule Roman book hand.<sup>13</sup> According to the most recent research,<sup>14</sup> nine surviving Uncial manuscripts were very likely produced in Hispania:

- Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, CLM 6436, fols. 2–18, 22–23, 25–30 + Munich, Universitätsbibliothek, 4° 928 + Götting, Stiftsbibliothek, sn. (*Epistulae Pauli versionis antehieronymianae* – fragment) / second half of the 6<sup>th</sup> c.<sup>15</sup>
- Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, CLM 6436, fols. 24, 33–35 + CLM 6230 (offsets) + Götting, Stiftsbibliothek, sn. (*Epistulae Pauli et Epistulae Catholicae versionis antehieronymianae* – fragment) / first half of the 7<sup>th</sup> c.<sup>16</sup>
- El Escorial, Real Biblioteca del Monasterio, R.II.18, fols. 1–8, 25–34, 59, 66, 83–91, (95) (palimpsest) (*Octateucus*) – fragment – “Codex Ovetense” / 7<sup>th</sup> c.<sup>17</sup>

<sup>13</sup> On the origin of Uncial script, see Bernhard Bischoff, *Latin Palaeography: Antiquity and the Middle Ages*, trans. Dáibhi Ó Cróinín and David Ganz (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 66–70, at 66: “This may have been due to spontaneous individualistic writing, but it may also be suspected that the script was created by a calligrapher, and in suitable circumstances was then received as a reformed script.” On the different schools, Bischoff, *Latin Palaeography*, 70–72.

<sup>14</sup> As a general reference, see Millares, *Tratado de Paleografía*, I, 24–29. For specific references to the manuscripts, see below. On coeval manuscripts on hard surfaces, in majuscule, Uncial, Half-uncial and minuscule, see María L. Pardo Rodríguez and Elena E. Rodríguez Díaz, “La escritura de la España Romana,” in *Paleografía I. La escritura en España hasta 1250. Actas de las IV Jornadas de la Sociedad Española de Ciencias y Técnicas Historiográficas*, ed. José Antonio Fernández Flórez and Sonia Serna Serna (Burgos: Universidad de Burgos, 2008), 15–60, notes also in Agustín Millares Carlo, *Consideraciones sobre la escritura visigótica cursiva* (León: Centro de Estudios e Investigación San Isidro, Archivo Histórico Diocesano, 1973), 15, for examples between the first and fifth centuries; Marta Herrero de la Fuente and José Antonio Fernández Flórez, “Sobre la escritura visigótica en León y Castilla durante su etapa primitiva (siglos VII–X): algunas reflexiones,” in *La escritura visigótica en la península Ibérica: nuevas aportaciones*, ed. Jesús Alturo, Miquel Torras, Ainoa Castro (Bellaterra: Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, 2012), 55–104 [69–81], for those from the last part of sixth to tenth centuries; for the medieval period see *Corpus Inscriptionum Hispaniae Mediaevalium* (<http://epigrafiamedieval.unileon.es/>).

<sup>15</sup> CLA, IX, n° 1286a; Millares, *Tratado de Paleografía*, I, 27; Díaz y Díaz, *La cultura literaria*, 61. Online: <http://daten.digital-samm.lungen.de/~db/0011/bsb00110737/images/>

<sup>16</sup> CLA, IX, n° 1286b; Millares, *Tratado de Paleografía*, I, 27. Online: <http://daten.digital-samm.lungen.de/~db/0011/bsb00110737/images/>

<sup>17</sup> CLA, XI, n° 1632; Millares, *Tratado de Paleografía*, I, 27; Díaz y Díaz, *La cultura literaria*, 67.



- Worcester, Cathedral Chapter Library, Add. Ms. 2 (4 fols.) (Hieronymus, *Commentarii in Matthaeum* – fragment) / 7<sup>th</sup> c.<sup>18</sup>
- Vercelli, Biblioteca Capitolare, 158 (Clements, *Recognitiones; Acta Petri cum Simone*) / 7<sup>th</sup> c.<sup>19</sup>
- Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, NAL 10233 (280 fols.) + Berne, Burgerbibliothek, F. 219.3 (18 fols.) (Oribasius, *Synopsis*; Rufus, *De Podagra; varia medica*) / second half of the 7<sup>th</sup> c.<sup>20</sup>
- El Escorial, Real Biblioteca del Monasterio, R.II.18, fols. 9–24, 35–58, 60–65, 67–82 (Isidore, *De natura rerum*; Rufus Festus, *Breviarium*; Antoninus, *Itinerarium* etc. – “Codex Ovetense”) / second half of the 7<sup>th</sup> c.<sup>21</sup>
- León, Archivo Catedralicio, 15, fols. 15, 16, 19, etc. (palimpsest) (*Lex romana visigothorum* – “Ley de Teudis”) / end of the 7<sup>th</sup> c.<sup>22</sup>
- Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, NAL 641 (Paterius) / 8<sup>th</sup> c.<sup>23</sup>

<sup>18</sup> CLA, II, n° 263; Millares, *Tratado de Paleografía*, I, 28-29.

<sup>19</sup> CLA, IV, n° 468a and 468b; Millares, *Tratado de Paleografía*, I, 28; Díaz y Díaz, *La cultura literaria*, 61; Agustín Millares Carlo, *Corpus de códices visigóticos*, 3 vols. (Las Palmas de Gran Canaria: Gobierno de Canarias, 1999), n° 343; Sánchez Prieto, “Bibliotheca Wisigothica,” 267 (list).

<sup>20</sup> Uncial and Half-uncial. CLA, V, n° 592; Millares, *Tratado de Paleografía*, I, 28, 31, n. 45; Díaz y Díaz, *La cultura literaria*, 63-64; Millares, *Corpus*, n° 251; Sánchez Prieto, “Bibliotheca Wisigothica,” 267 (list). Online: Paris: <http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b105154587>; Berne: <http://www.e-codices.ch/fr/list/one/bbb/F0219-III>

<sup>21</sup> CLA, XI, n° 1631; Millares, *Consideraciones*, 29; Millares, *Tratado de Paleografía*, I, 27; Díaz y Díaz, *La cultura literaria*, 67-68; Millares, *Corpus*, n° 60; Sánchez Prieto, “Bibliotheca Wisigothica,” 269-270 (list). Manuel C. Díaz y Díaz, *Códices visigóticos de la monarquía leonesa* (León: Centro de Estudios e Investigación San Isidoro, 1983), 17-53; Manuel C. Díaz y Díaz, *Manuscritos visigóticos del Sur de la Península. Ensayo de distribución regional* (Seville: Secretariado de Publicaciones de la Universidad de Sevilla, 1995), 64-69.

<sup>22</sup> CLA, XI, n° 1637; Millares, *Tratado de Paleografía*, I, 27; Díaz y Díaz, *La cultura literaria*, 62; Sánchez Prieto, “Bibliotheca Wisigothica,” 267 (list).

<sup>23</sup> CLA, V, n° 678; Millares, *Tratado de Paleografía*, I, 28; Díaz y Díaz, *La cultura literaria*, 66; Sánchez Prieto, “Bibliotheca Wisigothica,” (list). Online: <http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b10033197v/f1.item>

To these we must add five others, concerning which there are certain doubts:

- El Escorial, Camarín de las Reliquias, sn, fols. I–III (Eutropius, *De vera circumcissione*) / 5<sup>th</sup>–6<sup>th</sup> c.<sup>24</sup>
- Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, lat. 12161, pp. 83–86, 91–94, 103–106, 139–144 (palimpsest) (*Codex Euricianus* – fragment) / 6<sup>th</sup> c.<sup>25</sup>
- Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, NAL 2334 (the “Ashburnham Pentateuch”) / 7<sup>th</sup> c.<sup>26</sup>
- El Escorial, Camarín de las Reliquias, sn (Augustine, *De baptismo parvulorum*) / first half of 7<sup>th</sup> c.<sup>27</sup>
- Barcelona, Biblioteca Capítular, sn (1 fol.) (Gregory, *Homiliae in evangelia*) / 7<sup>th</sup>–8<sup>th</sup> c. (ca. 700)<sup>28</sup>

The surviving peninsular manuscripts written in Uncial script seem, then, to span the period from the second half of the sixth century to the beginning of the eighth, thus coinciding with the periods of grandeur (between the fourth and the sixth centuries) and decadence (eighth century) of this script.

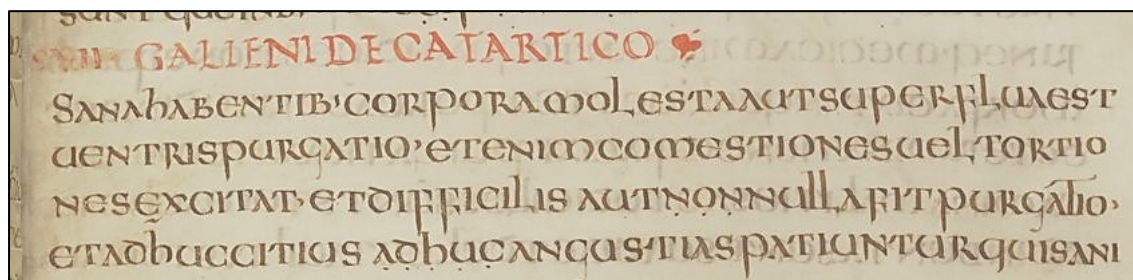
<sup>24</sup> CLA, XI, n° 1628a; Millares, *Tratado de Paleografía*, I, 26.

<sup>25</sup> CLA, V, n° 626; Díaz y Díaz, *La cultura literaria*, 62; Sánchez Prieto, “Bibliotheca Wisigothica,” 267 (list). Online: <http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b52506880r>

<sup>26</sup> CLA, V, n° 693a; Millares, *Tratado de Paleografía*, I, 27–28; Díaz y Díaz, *La cultura literaria*, 60–61. Online: <http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b53019392c>

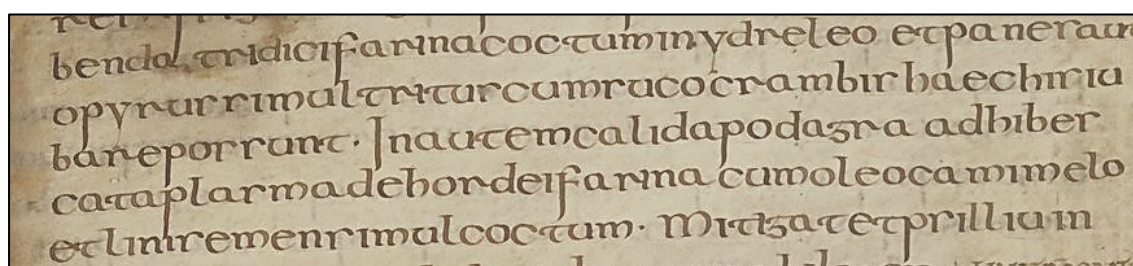
<sup>27</sup> CLA, XI, n° 1629; Millares, *Tratado de Paleografía*, I, 26; Díaz y Díaz, *La cultura literaria*, 65; Sánchez Prieto, “Bibliotheca Wisigothica,” 268.

<sup>28</sup> CLA, XI, n° 1626 and n° 1627; Millares, *Tratado de Paleografía*, I, 25–26; Díaz y Díaz, *La cultura literaria*, 66–67; Sánchez Prieto, “Bibliotheca Wisigothica,” 269.



ΑΒCDEFGHIΛMNOPQRSTUXY

Uncial alphabet. Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, NAL 10233, fol. 8<sup>r</sup>



abcdefghilmnopqr r r t u y x

Half-uncial alphabet. Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, NAL 10233, fol. 279<sup>r</sup>

## 2.2. Half-uncial script

The Half-uncial or antique minuscule book hand is a quadrilinear script used to copy scholarly books or textbooks for personal use (the Church Fathers and other Christian authors, biblical commentaries, canonical collections) in post-Roman Europe,<sup>29</sup> at least between the fifth century and the beginning of the eighth. It is not genetically linked to Uncial, but it is a calligraphic version of the minuscule script used for copying books from the third century on (the ancient or early minuscule that would evolve into Cursive

<sup>29</sup> The Half-uncial script records a formation phase beginning around the third century, called the “early” period or “rustic” Half-uncial. See Bischoff, *Latin Palaeography*, 72-75.

minuscule);<sup>30</sup> as the production of books increased, going beyond private use to reach ecclesiastical centers, Half-uncial evolved into a more formal script suitable for book format. Half-uncial is characterized, especially in comparison with Uncial, by the design of certain letters such as *a*, *g*, and *m* (*b*, *d*, *e*, *r*, *s*, and *t* are also worth noting) and by a more vertical general aspect. This script was coeval with Uncial in the peninsula between the sixth and the eighth<sup>31</sup> centuries. According to the most recent research, there are eight preserved Half-uncial codices that were very probably produced in Hispania:

- Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Latin 9533 (Augustine, *Enarrationes in Psalmos XXIX-XXXVI* / 6<sup>th</sup> c.<sup>32</sup>
- Autun, Bibliothèque municipale, 107 (S 129) + Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, NAL 1629, fols. 15–16 (Augustine, *Enarrationes in Psalmos CXLI–CXLIX*) / 6<sup>th</sup>–8<sup>th</sup> c.<sup>33</sup>
- Rome, Vallicelliana, B.38II, fol. 113 (Augustine, *Enarrationes in Psalmos* – fragment Ps. LXVIII) / 6<sup>th</sup>–7<sup>th</sup> c.<sup>34</sup>
- León, Archivo Catedralicio, 15, fols. 1–14, 17, etc. (palimpsest) (Bible) / 7<sup>th</sup> c.<sup>35</sup>

<sup>30</sup> On the origin of Half-uncial script, see Bischoff, *Latin Palaeography*, 72–73, 76.

<sup>31</sup> As a general reference, see Millares, *Tratado de Paleografía*, I, 24–29. For specific references to the manuscripts, see below.

<sup>32</sup> CLA, V, n° 587; Millares, *Tratado de Paleografía*, I, 31; Díaz y Díaz, *La cultura literaria*, 65–66; Sánchez Prieto, “Bibliotheca Wisigothica,” 268. Online: <http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b10515480w.r=lat.%209533?rk=64378;0>

<sup>33</sup> CLA, VI, n° 729; Millares, *Corpus*, n° 3; Millares, *Tratado de Paleografía*, I, 30–31 fn. 42; Díaz y Díaz, *La cultura literaria*, 65; Sánchez Prieto, “Bibliotheca Wisigothica,” 268 (list). Online: Autun <https://bvmc.irht.cnrs.fr/sommaire/sommaire.php?reproductionId=22207>; Paris <https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b8490080k>

<sup>34</sup> CLA, IV, n° 432.

<sup>35</sup> CLA, XI, n° 1636.

- Città del Vaticano, Bibliotheca Apostolica Vaticana, Reg. Lat. 1024 (*Lex romana visigothorum*) / second half of the 7<sup>th</sup> c.<sup>36</sup>
- Autun, Bibliothèque municipale, 27 (S 29), fols. 16–62 + Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, NAL 1629, fols. 21–22 (Isidore, *Quaestiones in Vetus Testamentum*) / second half of the 7<sup>th</sup> c. (ca. 650)<sup>37</sup>
- Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, NAL 10233, fols. 273–279 (Oribasius, *Synopsis*; Rufus, *De Podagra*; *varia medica*) / second half of the 7<sup>th</sup> c.<sup>38</sup>
- St. Gallen, Stiftsbibliothek, Cod. Sang. 194, pp. 1–221 (palimpsest) (*Liber Salomonis*; *Laterculus notarum* – fragment) / 7<sup>th</sup>–8<sup>th</sup> c.<sup>39</sup>

To these we must add one more about which there are some doubts:

- Reims, Bibliothèque municipale, 132 (E354) (*Fragmentum gromaticum*) / 6<sup>th</sup>–7<sup>th</sup> c.<sup>40</sup>

The obvious graphic differences between hands in these Half-uncial codices have been explained as possible signs of geographically diverse schools – a hypothesis that should be investigated further.<sup>41</sup>

<sup>36</sup> CLA, I, n° 111; Millares, *Tratado de Paleografía*, I, 31, n. 44; Millares, *Corpus*, n° 279; Díaz y Díaz, *La cultura literaria*, 62; Sánchez Prieto, “Bibliotheca Wisigothica,” 267 (list). Online: [http://digi.vatlib.it/view/MSS\\_Reg.lat.1024](http://digi.vatlib.it/view/MSS_Reg.lat.1024)

<sup>37</sup> CLA, VI, n° 727a; Rodney Potter Robinson, *Manuscripts 27 (S. 29) and 107 (S. 129) of the Municipal Library of Autun* (Rome: the American Academy of Rome, 1939), 3–22 [11–22]; Millares, *Tratado de Paleografía*, I, 30; Díaz y Díaz, *La cultura literaria*, 63–64; Millares, *Corpus*, n° 2. Online: Autun <https://bvmc.irht.cnrs.fr/sommaire/sommaire.php?reproductionId=21865>; Paris <http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b8490080k>

<sup>38</sup> Uncial and Half-uncial. CLA, V, n° 592; Millares, *Tratado de Paleografía*, I, 31, n. 45; Millares, *Corpus*, n° 251; Sánchez Prieto, “Bibliotheca Wisigothica,” 267 (list). Online: Paris <http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b105154587>; Berne <http://www.e-codices.ch/fr/list/one/bbb/F0219-III>

<sup>39</sup> CLA, VII, n° 918; Millares, *Tratado de Paleografía*, I, 31 fn. 45; Díaz y Díaz, *La transmisión*, 148–49; Díaz y Díaz, *La cultura literaria*, 66; Sánchez Prieto, “Bibliotheca Wisigothica,” 273. Online: <http://www.e-codices.unifr.ch/en/list/one/csg/0194>

<sup>40</sup> CLA, VI, n° 823.

<sup>41</sup> Robinson, *Manuscripts Autun*, 18–19: “If we wish to indulge in speculation, we may surmise that these three codices (Autun 107, BnF 9533, BnF 10233) represent a type of half-uncial practiced in the French part of the Visigothic kingdom or in the north of the Iberian peninsula, that Autun 27 and Leon 15 offer

### 2.3. The “Visigothic symptoms”

It is always difficult to identify a manuscript as belonging to a particular place of origin, but those written in Uncial and Half-uncial scripts pose the additional challenge of the graphical homogeneity of each writing system. As a result, instead of the shape of the letters, specialists depend on other peculiarities, observed in the abbreviations and the orthographic system – in addition to the marginalia and other specific notes contained in the manuscript, as can be seen in Lowe’s *Codices Latini Antiquiores* (CLA) – to propose the most likely locations. These peculiarities that enable us to recognize Hispanic manuscripts are known as “Visigothic symptoms”:

A) Alphabet: pronounced slant to the left; long ascending and descending strokes; *a* with an oval or flattened eye, placed almost horizontally on the baseline; *c* and *e* with a slightly flattened upper stroke (initial stroke slightly horizontal); *e* with an eye that is almost closed; slight compression of the upper stroke of *S*; a tall *T*; use of *U* in superscript position with a *V* shape; frequent ligatures and links (*AR*, *IS*, *NT*, *ON*, *OR*, *UR*, *US*).

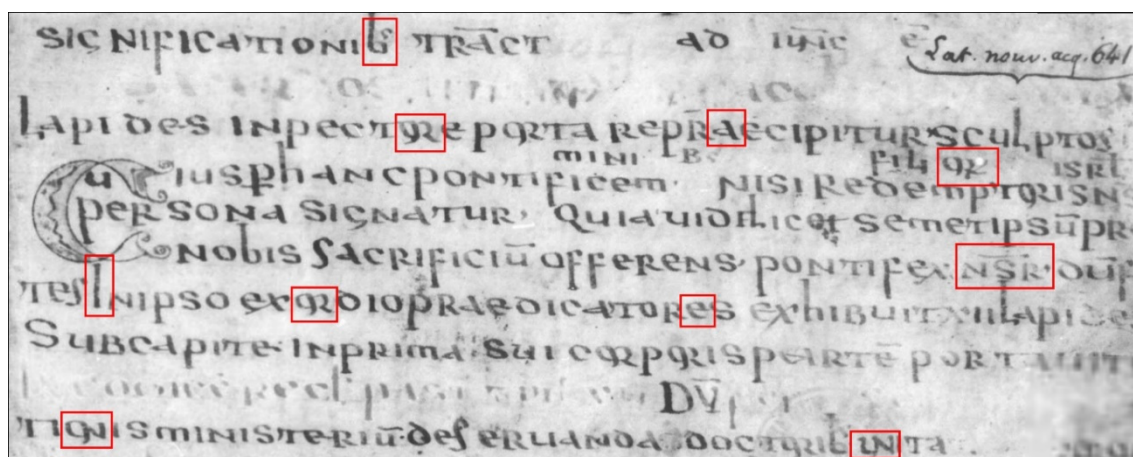
B) Abbreviation system: *APSTLS*, *APSLs*, or *APLS* for *apostolus*; *AUM* for *autem*; *DCT* or *DCTUR* for *dicitur*; *EPSCPS* for *episcopus*; *IHRSLM* for *Iherusalem*; *ISRHL*, *SRHL*, *SHRL*, *SRL* or *STRL* for *Israel*; *NSR* and *VSR* (theme in *S*) for *noster* and *vester*; *OMPS* for *omnipotens*; *PRSBTR* for *presbiter*; *QNM* for *quoniam*; *-us* (after *b* and *I*, marked by a sign similar to *s* in superscript position); *-ue* (after *q*, marked using the same sign); *per* (with the *p*’s last stroke tilted across the descending stroke and ending in a spiral to the left); *qui* (a vertical stroke cutting the descending stroke of *q*); abbreviation of nasal *M* by a horizontal stroke topped by a point.

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a type of writing at home in some remote part of the peninsula (Andalusia?), and that Vat. Reg. lat. 1024 comes from some point intermediate between these two extremes.”



- C) Orthography: confusion of *B/U* (e.g. *tiui*); use of tall *I*; addition of *I* before *SC*, *SP*, *ST*, or unjustified suppression (e.g., *Spaniarum*, *istudio*); use of non-etymological *h* (e.g. *hactum*); *QV* (*qu*) for *C* (e.g. *qum*).
- D) Another peculiarity appears to be the marking of omissions in the text by *dh*, with a corresponding *ds* in the margin.
- E) According to the CLA, the color “bright vermillion” or “vivid red” (see, e.g., CLA V, 592; CLA V, 587; CLA VI, 729) is used in titles and decoration (seen as a particularity of Visigothic and northern Italian manuscripts).



Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, NAL 641, fol. 1<sup>r</sup>

Although, as far as I know, no specific codicological feature of the Hispanic manuscripts in Uncial and Half-uncial has been determined, I have checked the notes included in the CLA for possible trends. Unfortunately, I have not been able to identify any clear characteristic.

Therefore, on this basis, we can say that any hand that repeatedly shows a combination of the above peculiarities is very likely of Hispanic origin. In order to make progress in



the identification of the manuscripts, it would be advisable to carry out a detailed analysis of the hands of all these codices, starting with those whose origin is most securely identified. This has not yet been done but would be very useful.

### 3. Some Personal Reflections

- I find it strange that, given the volume of books that we know circulated in the Iberian Peninsula between the sixth and eighth centuries, only the items written in Uncial and Half-uncial listed above have been preserved. Although it may be that the actual volume of books was less significant than a list of their titles might suggest – if their use was exceptional and their fundamental ideas were perpetuated through excerpts – the Hispanic literary production alone, on which there is no doubt, and the production of books in response to basic administrative needs (legal) and cult (ecclesiastical), had to be considerable. The non-negligible number of graphic examples on hard materials, be they monumental inscriptions (most commonly) or slate tablets, indicate a cultural context where graphic production was not unknown to the general population. Intellectuals were not alone in using and, perhaps even mastering, writing. I have no doubt that what has survived offers a likely reflection, considering the losses, of the extent of literary production, but I am not convinced by the explanations given above for the small number of Uncial and Half-uncial Hispanic codices. It is not easy to identify graphic samples as belonging to a specific territory, but I think that the clues used so far are insufficient.

- I also believe that to rely on the presence of the “symptoms” pointed out in Uncial and Half-uncial codices is a double error. In the first place, it has become anachronistic, although not when first used. I shall explain. When Lowe and Robinson mention the “Visigothic symptoms” as a means of geographic ascription, they both

refer quite consciously to the observable characteristics of graphic samples of the Visigothic period, and not to “Visigothic” as in Visigothic script, of which we have no examples until the eighth century (although we can trace its formation back to the second half of the seventh century by a simple consolidation of style). Since in English the term “Visigothic” makes no distinction between the Visigothic period and the Visigothic script (in Spanish, designated *visigodo* and *visigótica* respectively), these “symptoms” of the Visigothic period have since come to be identified as characteristics typical of the Visigothic script in Uncial and Half-uncial manuscripts. This is clearly wrong, and this minor terminological issue has given rise to other problems. Obviously, if there was graphical contamination, and not hybridization, between the minuscule book hand and the documentary minuscule (also in minuscule and cursive format), it would be because they were coeval. In short, *visigoda* and *visigótica* script are not the same thing, although in English there is only one term for both.

Secondly, given the current state of research on both scripts, much remains to be determined. It is true, however, that thanks to previous efforts (especially Anscari M. Mundó, Jesús Alturo, Carmen del Camino, and Isabel Velázquez), we seem to be very close to seeing the light at the end of the tunnel. In any case, based on these researchers’ progress, we can state that *visigoda* script (script used in the Visigothic kingdom) was very dynamic, in constant mutation or evolution through its use, and that from the time it could be identified until it gave way to the *visigótica* (properly Visigothic) script, each hand was different. Based on similar forms, we can see that certain innovations were tried out, accepted or not, and consolidated progressively, although we may not know why, how, or where. Much remains to discover about its historical-cultural contextualization. This process, similar to the gestation of other “national scripts” as

they all came from the Roman Cursive minuscule, leads us to ask how certain we can be that the symptoms considered *visigodos* by Lowe and Robinson, did not emerge in other areas too, such as, for example, northern Italy. We have a clear example of such a possibility seen in the opening folios of the codex known as the *Camarín de las Reliquias*, which is considered to be Hispanic by some experts, but is clearly Italian for others, or at least has an un-Hispanic “air” that is difficult to define. We must also bear in mind that in the Hispanic context we have the added problem of the northward migration of hands with the arrival of Muslims. In addition, if only for the sake of playing devil’s advocate, we should ask: What if only some copyists, those who usually used *visigoda* minuscule, showed traits of this in their book hand? What if the more experienced scribes perfected the graphic quality according to the ideal graphic model of Uncial and Half-uncial styles? There are multiple possibilities.

- Although the Visigothic symptoms are not unviable as a means of determining the Hispanic origins of Uncial and Half-uncial, particularly when there are plenty of examples in the same hand, we should first know what *visigodo* is exactly, from a graphic point of view. To this end, further research on this script is necessary, at least on its two basic graphic modes or typologies (the issue of mixed half-cursive also needs to be discussed). Once we have made progress on this path, we can review all the post-Roman codices, beginning with those on subjects related to Visigothic Hispania, and consider their origins again. Then we will be able to determine the characteristics of Hispanic Uncial and Half-uncial, although the homogeneity of their polished aesthetics makes it harder to place them geographically.

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