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*The Beginning of Time at the Edge of the World:
Visigothic Minitexts in Autun, Bibliothèque
Municipale, S 129*

Abstract

The disruption caused by the Arab Conquest of the Iberian Peninsula in 711 made the already poorly sourced northeastern fringe of the Visigothic world harder to see. This was a complex multiethnic and multifaith zone on the border with the Frankish kingdoms. Fortunately, surviving in AUTUN, Bibliothèque municipale, S 129 (107) are a large number of minitexts written in the late seventh-early eighth centuries in the vicinity of Urgell. These texts, ranging from psalms and legal formulae to poetry and computus, provide an extraordinary window onto the period. Taken together, they offer compelling evidence for a complex and intellectually involved world sat between the Visigothic and Frankish kingdoms.

Keywords

Minitexts; Visigoth; Frank; Autun; Urgell; Intellectual Culture

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Beyond Toledo, with its royal court and ecclesiastical councils, the wider Visigothic realm is poorly sourced in the late seventh and early eighth centuries. This is particularly the case for the north-east and Septimania, where the primary scholarly narrative is one of instability and neglect, dominated by rebellions such as that of Hilderic and Paul in 672¹. Septimania's position north of the Pyrenees, on the border between the Frankish and Iberian worlds, placed it in an ambiguous position that only intensified following the Arab invasion of 711. The sources for this latter event are largely concerned with affairs elsewhere, and the shadowy kings who ruled Septimania in the decade after the conquest are known only from coins and king-lists². Our surviving evidence paints a picture of turbulence in the north-east even after the Muslim conquest of Narbonne in 720, as Arabs, Aquitanians, Basques, Berbers, Franks and Goths battled over the region³. Although archaeology is beginning to allow us to say more about the area in this period, it remains poorly understood⁴.

Any source of light to illuminate this gloom is therefore to be welcomed. One such torch can be found in the minitexts contained in the manuscript AUTUN, Bibliothèque municipale, S 129 (107) (henceforth AUTUN S 129). The marginalia in this manuscript has been justly celebrated on palaeographical grounds as an unusual example of cursive in the Visigothic world⁵. What has not been appreciated are the way the contents of these texts can be used to the Visigothic north-east in the otherwise poorly understood years mentioned above. The wide variety of genres represented by these minitexts give us a

1 GODOY FERNÁNDEZ 2020; RIESS 2012, pp. 176-177; *Historia Wambae*, pp. 213-255; VELÁZQUEZ 2003, pp. 161-217.

2 COLLINS 1989, pp. 23-36; CHALMETA 2003, pp. 31-68; MILES 1952, pp. 40-42; RIESS 2012, pp. 221-223.

3 On the reputation of the period, see DÍAZ-POVEDA 2016, pp. 191-218.

4 RIPOLL LÓPEZ 1992, pp. 285-301.

5 MILLARES CARLO 1973, p. 23 n. 36. For the sake of clarity and to indicate that this is a cursive from the Visigothic world but not the later script formally known as «Visigothic cursive/cursiva visigótica» I will describe this as «cursiva visigoda». On the potential for confusion, see CASTRO CORREA 2020-2021, p. 180.

glimpse, however furtive, of an otherwise hidden world. What follows will take a look at this material and think about how it might be used to expand our understanding of the culture of this region.

The uncertainties surrounding this manuscript begin with how it came to the Visigothic world. AUTUN S 129 currently consists of 204 leaves. Two further pages can be found in PARIS, Bibliothèque nationale de France, MS Nouv. Acq. Lat. 1629 (fols. 15-16) having been stolen by Guglielmo Libri in 1841 or 1842⁶. The main text in the manuscript is Augustine's *Commentaries on the Psalms*, specifically Psalms 141-149, written in a neat half-uncial by a single scribe. Our understanding of the manuscript has recently been dramatically advanced by the work of Tino Licht. Whereas previously it was assumed that it had been written in the Iberian Peninsula, he has demonstrated that it was written in Ravenna, probably in the second half of the sixth century⁷. The journey this manuscript took between Ravenna and Autun is difficult to chart. Given the contacts between Italy and the Iberian world in the period it is not too hard to imagine ways the manuscript may have travelled⁸.

It was present in the cathedral library of Autun in 1709 and was taken to the Grand Séminaire of Autun with the rest of the collection in 1819 where it remained until 1909 when it was transferred to its current home in the Bibliothèque municipale⁹.

Before that, one relatively solid point can be found in the history of the manuscript. This was discovered by Rodney Potter Robinson in 1939, whose work remains the most important study of S 129¹⁰. He observed a note written in *cursiva visigoda* in the bottom margin of fol. 152v that recommended the contents of the manuscript to a Bishop Nambadus [fig. 1].

Robinson ingeniously deduced that this referred to Bishop Anambadus, who is known by a single, rather grisly, mention in the *Chronicle of 754*¹¹. The *Chronicle* tells us that the bishop was burned by the Berber leader 'Uthmān b. Naïssa, better known as Munuza, in about 731¹². This took place in what is

6 DELISLE 1898, p. 383.

7 LICHT 2018, pp. 201-208.

8 FERREIRO 2005.

9 GORMAN 1997, pp. 173-177.

10 ROBINSON 1939, p. 59.

11 CARDELLE DE HARTMANN 1999, pp. 13-29.

12 *Chronica Muzarabica* 1973, «nimum erat crapulatus Anambadi inlustris episcopi decoram iuventutis proceritatem, quam igne cremaverat» p. 41.

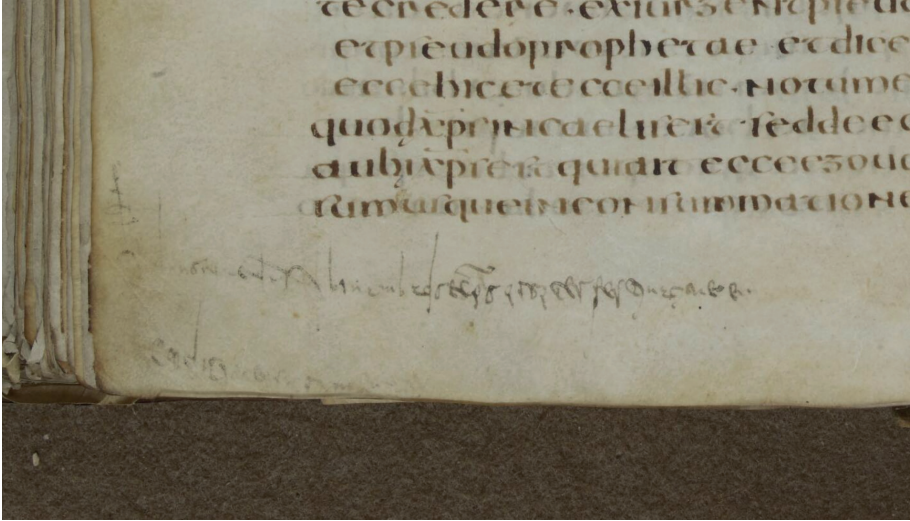


Fig. 1. AUTUN, Bibliothèque municipale, MS S 129 (107), fol. 153v, (Chrismon) «in nom[in]e domini tibi nambado episcopo propter festinatione et/condicionem sacr[al]mentorum.».

now the town of Puigcerda, in Catalonia, right on the border with France¹³. While extremely unfortunate for Nambadus, this is a stroke of luck for historians. The bishop is described as having been young, which suggests that his episcopacy must have been relatively short, allowing us to probably date this note to the 720s. Because of the geography of his death, Nambadus is generally identified as the Bishop of Urgell, whose seat was about a day's walk west of Puigcerda¹⁴. This allows the manuscript to be placed in the vicinity of Urgell around 731.

How it got from there to Autun is still unclear. In 2007, Louis Holtz suggested that it might have travelled with Bishop Felix of Urgell in 799 when he was exiled from his see to Lyon for his Adoptionist beliefs¹⁵. This is a nice idea but does not take into account the large amount of Merovingian minuscule (fols. 31v, 32r) and cursive (fols. 24v, 129v, 202v) also present in the manuscript. There are few clues concerning the origin of this marginalia, the most striking of which is a unique chant celebrating New Year's Day in the name of an otherwise unknown St Nelida or Helida (fol. 129v)¹⁶. Nonetheless, these notes

13 DELCOR 1972, pp. 171-182.

14 CCI, pp. 15-17.

15 HOLTZ 2007, pp. 181-187.

16 ROBINSON 1939, p. 70.

suggest that the manuscript was circulating in a Frankish context for a decent part of the eighth century.

Generally, scholars have assumed that the manuscript was carried by Visigothic refugees fleeing the Muslim conquest. Other manuscripts, such as AUTUN, Bibliothèque municipale, S 29 and VERONA, Biblioteca capitolare, MS 89 appear to have travelled from the peninsula to Gaul and Italy at around this point in time¹⁷. This does not necessarily have to have been a response to the conquest. People and objects had been moving between the Visigothic world and Francia long before 711. While it's tempting to connect all of this to the immolation of Nambadus, it should be noted that 'Uthmān b. Naïssa was in rebellion against the government in Córdoba at the time, and had allied with Duke Eudo of Aquitaine, marrying his daughter¹⁸. This means that Nambadus might have been killed for being too loyal to Córdoba, rather than for opposing the Caliphate¹⁹.

Whatever the cause, AUTUN S 129 most certainly moved. Lyon is often suggested as an initial destination, being a place that had a large Gothic population²⁰. From there it would be an easy move to Autun, perhaps when Modoin became bishop there in 815²¹. Alternatively, AUTUN S 129 is often paired with another Iberian manuscript now in the Bibliothèque municipale, S 29, which seems to have spent time in Flavigny because missing parts of the text were replaced in a hand reminiscent of the Burgundian monastery²². Bishop Walter I of Autun is known to have taken books from the monastery when he reformed it in 992, which might provide another plausible context for the moving of the manuscript²³. Bischoff argued that the *cursiva visigoda* in S 29 might be by the same hands as those in S 129, a suggestion that seems doubtful in light of the striking differences in stroke evinced in both examples²⁴.

Having established this background, we can shift focus to the marginalia in *cursiva visigoda* that runs throughout AUTUN S 129. Robinson argued that nearly all of this could be attributed to one writer, named Honemundus, who

17 REYNOLDS 1997, p. 921. On VERONA, Biblioteca Capitolare 89, DÍAZ Y DÍAZ 1997, pp. 13-29.

18 SÉNAC 1998, pp. 52-53; SÁNCHEZ MARTÍNEZ 1999, p. 29.

19 ACIÉN ALMANSA 1999, p. 61.

20 See TIGNOLET 2019, pp. 49-61.

21 On the career of Modoin, see GODMAN 1985, pp. 250-253, 256-257.

22 BISCHOFF 1981, p. 19 n. 66.

23 AUTUN S. 26 (22) 22, fol. 191v. BOUCHARD 1991, pp. 82-86; GORMAN 1997, p. 172.

24 BISCHOFF 1961, pp. 317-344.

lived at the same time and place as Nambadus²⁵. The name Honemundus first shows up in the manuscript in the lower margin of fol. 46v, where we find the line «Honemundi vita Deus benedicat amen» preceded by a Chrismon [fig. 2].

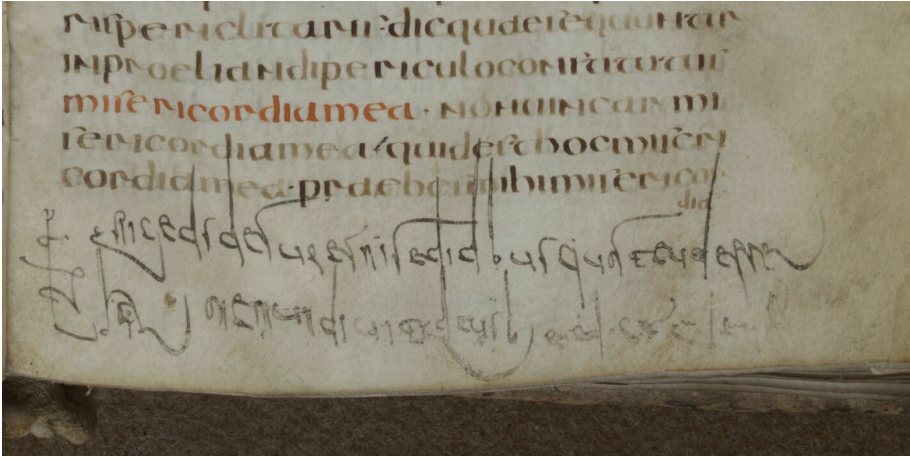


Fig. 2. AUTUN, Bibliothèque municipale, MS S 129 (107), fol. 46r, (Chrismon) «Honemundi vita Deus benedicat amen.».

It then reappears at the top of fol. 93v as part of a form for a witness testimony, «Hone[m]undus rog[a]tus ic testis suscripsi [Hon]emundus ic fui (?) et suc[ri]psi» again preceded by a Chrismon [fig. 3].

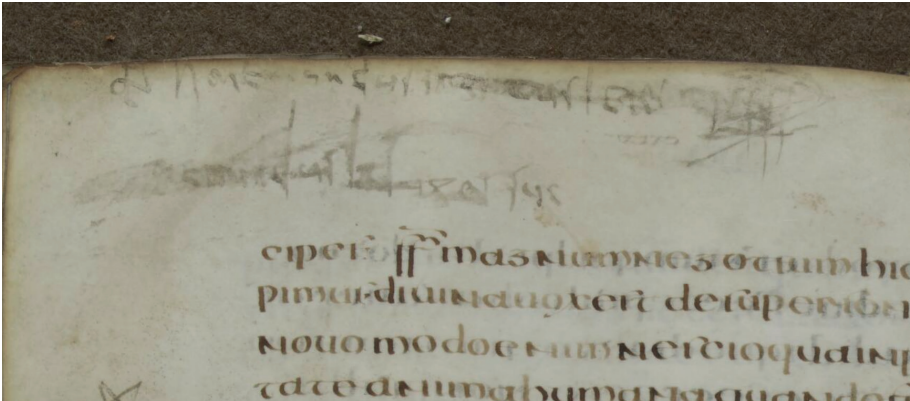


Fig. 3. AUTUN, Bibliothèque municipale, MSS 129 (107), fol. 93v, (Chrismon) «Hone[m]undus rog[a]tus ic testis suscripsi/ [Hon]emundus ic fui (?) et suc[ri]psi (?)».

25 ROBINSON 1939, p. 60.

Closer inspection of the marginalia reveals considerable variation in the hands contributing *cursiva visigoda*. This is most obvious in the case of the note that mentions Nambadus, which is considerably more cursive than any of the other Visigothic writing. Given the number of later Merovingian additions to the manuscript, this is probably the most recent Visigothic minitext in the manuscript. The Nambadus note therefore stands on its own. The rest of the texts show deep inconsistencies in the same line, so determining how many different hands there are is difficult.

Nor is it clear that both references to Honemundus are by the same hand, with strong differences in both stroke and aspect being evident. A plausible hypothesis is that Honemundus himself was responsible for the witness template, but that a friend of Honemundus wrote the note asking for him to be blessed, perhaps because the manuscript was associated with Honemundus. This would imply a chronology to the hands, with the latter coming after the former. Another, different, hand can be identified by a series of pen trials consisting of a faulty quotation of the opening line of the fourth book of the *Disticha Catonis* («uir quicumque cupis perducere uita[m]» fol. 35v, fol. 41r, fol. 47r)²⁶. Going through the Visigothic minitexts, they can be divided into at least four hands: (1) The one who wrote about Nambadus, which is extremely cursive; (2) Honemundus, signing his name, with a distinctively large letter e; (3) the *Disticha Catonis* IV.1 hand, which was also responsible for quoting a number of psalms, with particularly tall ascenders; and (4) the assorted other texts, including the other quotes from the *Disticha Catonis* and a number of other texts we will talk about later. This last group may be open to challenge and might prove to be multiple scribes.

That said, there is reason to believe that all of these hands were close in time and probably at the same institution. First, there are certain common patterns in the material they share, including Honemundus' name and the *Disticha Catonis*. Second, with the exception of the Nambadus note, their Chrismons have the same basic form even if their execution is wildly inconsistent, which suggests a shared training. Because of this, it seems likely that all of these marginal notes were produced in the same place within a couple of decades of each other.

If the Nambadus note is the most recent, a terminus ante quem of about 731 can be identified. Going through the texts that can be identified in the marginalia, which include works by Venantius Fortunatus and Martin of Braga,

26 *Disticha Catonis*, 4. Praefatio, «Securam quicumque cupis perducere vitam», p. 190.

the latest is the *de Sex Aetatibus Mundi* of Theodofrid of Corbie, the opening line of which appears twice in the manuscript (fols. 46r, 114v)²⁷. Theodofrid was appointed abbot of Corbie in 657 and appears in the source record as Bishop of Amiens in 681²⁸. That means the very earliest this could have been written is probably the middle of the seventh century. That date can probably be pushed back at least a couple of decades to give the poem time to travel and then become sufficiently embedded in a teaching curriculum. With that in mind, the *cursiva visigoda* should probably be dated to approximately 680-730. This could possibly be connected to the cathedral at Urgell, which emerged as a key centre on the frontier²⁹.

To review, AUTUN S 129 was originally put together in Ravenna in the second half of the sixth century before moving to the Visigothic world. In the last decades of the seventh or first decades of the eighth centuries, this manuscript was in the possession of a community that had links to the Bishops of Urgell. At some point after about 730 it then made its way into the Frankish world on its journey ultimately to Autun. The second half of this paper will examine the texts contained in the *cursiva visigoda* and think about what they tell us about this region and its intellectual culture in the last decades of the Visigothic north-east.

One starting point here is the name Honemundus. This is not a name found elsewhere in the Visigothic world, making it difficult to place. It is more commonly encountered several centuries earlier. Jordanes makes reference to a son of Ermanaric named Hunimund who ruled the Greuthungi Goths in the late fourth century³⁰. This Hunimund was praised by Cassiodorus for his beauty³¹. Another Hunimund features in Jordanes as a king of the Sueves who was active in the middle of the fifth century and he may also make an appearance in Eugippius' *Life of Saint Severinus*³². Neither of these were Visigothic figures, but given the migration of Sueves to the Iberian Peninsula in the fifth century and the often-tight connections between the Goths of Italy and Iberia, particularly in southern Gaul, this does not seem like a particularly problemat-

27 THEODOFRID OF CORBIE, pp. 559-564.

28 *Vita Sanctae Bathildis*, c. 7, p. 491.

29 GASCÓN CHOPO 2015-2018.

30 JORDANES, *Getica* c. 81, p. 77.

31 *Variae* II.I.19, p. 330; HEATHER 1989, pp. 103-128.

32 JORDANES, *Getica* c. 273, pp. 128-129; EUGIPPIUS, *Vita Sancti Severini* 22.4, p. 19.

ic name³³. Because of his name, it is tempting to attribute an elite «Gothic» origin to Honemundus, although the complexity of early medieval ethnicity and identity advises caution with placing too much emphasis on such evidence³⁴.

The text that appears most frequently among the minitexts in this manuscript is the *Disticha Catonis*. As mentioned above, the first two lines of Book 1 appear four times in the manuscript (fol. 30v, fol. 65r, fol. 103v, fol. 120v), as do, in a different hand, a faulty version of the opening line of Book 4 (fol. 35v, fol. 41r, fol. 47r, fol. 137r). The *Disticha* is a collection of Latin hexameters purporting to be advice to a son from either Cato the Censor or Cato of Utica, which probably date to the first century AD³⁵. There is good evidence that it circulated in the Iberian world. Proverbs from the *Disticha* were quoted by Eugenius of Toledo (646-657) and Julian of Toledo (680-690)³⁶. Parts of the *Disticha* also appear in Iberian manuscripts, such as the *Azagra Codex* (MADRID, Biblioteca nacional de España, MS.10029, fols. 76r-76v), where they feature together with a collection of late antique poetry assembled in Córdoba in the ninth century³⁷.

There is thus nothing inherently surprising at finding quotes from the *Disticha Catonis* in a manuscript in the Visigothic world. Interestingly, they are all pen trials. In addition to full lines, there are also places where the writer has stopped after two or three words. Pen trials come in numerous varieties, but they are commonly school texts that the scribe encountered early in their career and become embedded in their minds, so they can be written automatically³⁸. The evidence of this manuscript suggests that multiple writers had a formative experience with the *Disticha Catonis*. The *Disticha* was indeed commonly part of the school curriculum right down to the sixteenth century, but it is normally assumed to have taken on that role in the late eighth century as part of a reform of education in the Carolingian period³⁹. Appearing in pen trials in AUTUN S 129 suggests that the *Disticha*'s use as a teaching text predates the Carolingian moment.

If the pen trials quoting the *Disticha Catonis* suggest a place of education somewhere in the northeast of the Peninsula, the legal formulas present in the manuscript also indicate one active in the world. As discussed earlier, there is a

33 DÍAZ 2011; ARNOLD 2014, pp. 272-273.

34 AMORY 1994, p. 14.

35 CONOLLY 2012, pp. 119-130.

36 *Disticha Catonis*, p. lxxiv. TIZZONI 2017-2018, p. 163.

37 ALBERTO 2014, pp. 667-668.

38 KWAKKEL 2013, pp. 231-261.

39 GIANFERRARI 2017, pp. 4-5.

witness subscription at the top of fol. 93v in the name of Honemundus [fig. 3]. There is also a formula from a deed of sale on the lower margin of fol. 105v [fig. 4], with a less complete version begun on the lower margin of fol. 70r in the same hand:

ego ille vinditor ffratri illio emtori constat me t[ibi]/vi[n]d[e]ret iuris mei nomine illo natione illa n .. / - .. cep

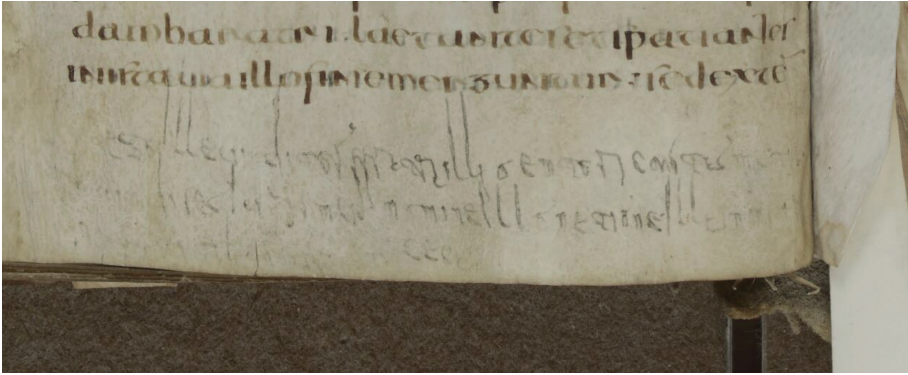


Fig. 4. AUTUN, Bibliothèque municipale, MS S 129 (107), fol. 105v, «ego ille vinditor ffratri illio emtori constat me t[ibi]/vi[n]d[e]ret iuris mei nomine illo natione illa n .. / - .. cep».

This looks different from the Honemundus witness hand, but that may be a consequence of the scribe choosing to write the deed of sale formula in a manner that imitates the chancery style of Visigothic charters, with their very long ascenders⁴⁰.

While these may be pen trials, we may suspect that they were actually intended as models to be employed in legal documents drawn up by the community. That it looks like the scribe was copying the handwriting of legal documents as well as their content implies that real use was intended. This suggests an environment in which people were expected to witness legal documents and be involved in the sale of property on a relatively frequent basis.

There is no exact match for either of these formulae in any of the other sources of Visigothic law⁴¹. That said, their contents fit a wider Iberian context. The verbal elements used in the witness formula, *rogatus*, *testi* and *suscripsi*, appear frequently in other such Visigothic documents, particularly the slates found in the northern Meseta of Spain. A case in point is a fragmentary list of

⁴⁰ RUIZ ASENCIO 2007, pp. 265-312.

⁴¹ KING 1972.

subscriptions to a charter dating to the 670s found near the village of Diego Álvaro, near Ávila, where among the witnesses is one Alaric who «subscripsi» when «rogitus a suprascriptis» the transaction⁴². Another, even more fragmentary, list from the late seventh century was found in the nearby village of Martínez, where witnesses whose names have been lost «rogit++testis» to a further transaction⁴³.

The unusual language that appears in the formula for a sale also has Visigothic parallels. *Vendere* frequently becomes *vindere* in Visigothic Latin so *vinditor* meaning someone who sells is not unknown. It appears on another seventh-century slate from Diego Álvaro, where one Gregory describes himself twice as *vinditor*⁴⁴. *Emtor* for buyer, rather than *emptor*, appears in another seventh-century slate from Diego Álvaro, where one Argefredus is described as an «*emtor vini*» or purchaser of wine⁴⁵. This suggests that Honemundus and company were operating in a Visigothic legal context, even if they were on the far north-eastern context of that world. This is exciting for the study of Visigothic law, where much of our source base is extremely geographically concentrated in Toledo, Córdoba or the Meseta where the Visigothic slates are from, indicating that insights can be extrapolated from legal material elsewhere to the north-east⁴⁶.

Despite the strong Visigothic legal connections just discussed, this text also has parallels with Frankish material, most notably formularies⁴⁷. References to *fratri* appear throughout the seventh-century *Formulary of Angers*, as does the use of *vindere* to mean to sell⁴⁸. The *Formulary of Marculf* frequently uses similar language, as do a wide range of other Frankish formularies⁴⁹. The closest textual parallels appear in the formulary collection known as the *Formulae Salicae Bignonianae*⁵⁰. Formulae for the sale of slaves and land contain

42 VELÁZQUEZ SORIANO 2004, no. 44, pp. 248-250.

43 VELÁZQUEZ SORIANO 2004, no. 94, p. 345.

44 VELÁZQUEZ SORIANO 2004, no. 40, pp. 219-220, 225-226.

45 VELÁZQUEZ SORIANO 2004, no. 66, pp. 312-313.

46 COLLINS 1986, pp. 85-104.

47 RIO 2009.

48 *Formulae Andecavenses: fratri*, no. 4, p. 6; no. 9, p. 7; no. 51, p. 22; *vindere*, no. 4, p. 6; no. 9, p. 7; no. 21, p. II.

49 *Formulae Marculfi: fratri*, II.19, p. 89; *vindere*, I.36, p. 66; II.19, p. 89; *Formulae Salicae Lindenbrogianae*: no. 8, p. 272; no. 15, p. 277; *Cartae Senonicae*: no. 2, p. 186; *Formulae Augiensis*, no. 39, p. 362.

50 RIO 2009, pp. 126-132.

familiar elements to that found in the Autun manuscript, «Domino magnifico fratri illo, emptore, ego in Dei nomen ille, vinditur⁵¹.» The contents of this collection are generally from the eighth century, probably before 775, with some formulae predating Pippin III's assumption of the throne in 751⁵². This would tie in well with an early eighth-century dating for the minitext. The *Formulae Salicae Bignonianae* seem to have originated in a Frankish monastic centre, which may be a hint for the origin of the formula copied in the manuscript, but there are limits to how far this can be taken.

As a consequence, the language of the minitext could suggest either a Visigothic or a Frankish legal context. But being too prescriptive about which would be unhelpful. The very text of the formula indicates that it is being used in an environment where people of multiple legal *nationes* coexisted in the same space. This was not uncommon in the Frankish world⁵³. The *Lex Ribuaria*, issued in the seventh century, decrees:

that within the Ripuarian territory whether Franks, Burgundians or Alamanni or whatever nation one belongs to, let one respond when summoned to the court according to the law of place in which one was born⁵⁴.

The Visigothic state enacted stricter controls on outside legal codes, but the Arab Conquest made such a territorial monopoly much more difficult to enforce⁵⁵. The border zones between the Frankish kingdoms and the Iberian Peninsula were an area where multiple laws overlapped in later years. In 759 Pippin III guaranteed the Goths of Septimania the right to continue using Visigothic law⁵⁶. Both Frankish and Gothic law were used in Septimania and the Spanish March in subsequent centuries⁵⁷. If the formula dates to the early eighth century, then it significantly precedes the Carolingian conquests of the region. But Frankish influence predated Carolingian rule. The evidence of this manuscript may be to hint at a fluid frontier world, where multiple national laws were in play in the wake of the events of 711.

51 *Formulae Salicae Bignonianae*, no. 3-4, 229.

52 RIO 2009, p. 127.

53 WOOD 1990, pp. 63-67; COUMERT 2020, pp. 105-111; RIO 2020, pp. 489-507.

54 *Lex Ribuaria* 35.3, «ut infra pago Ribuario tam Franci, Burgundiones, Alamanni seu de quacumque natione commoratus fuerit, in iudicio interpellatus sicut lex loci contenet, ubi natus fuerit, sic respondeat», p. 87.

55 WOOD 2010, p. 165.

56 *Annals of Aniane*, a. 759, p. 118.

57 MCKITTERICK 1980, p. 14; AMORY 1993, p. 21.

There are a number of other interesting minitexts that suggest a Frankish context. One that has already been mentioned comes from the opening lines of the second stanza of Theodofrid of Corbie's *De Sex Aetatibus Mundi*, «aspice Deus de supernis sedibus quos Teudefre condidit versiculos», which appears twice in the manuscript at fol. 46r and fol. 114v⁵⁸. This is an unusual text to encounter here. Theodofrid spent his career in Luxeuil and Amiens, and had no obvious Iberian connection. Most of the early witnesses to the poem, such as SANKT GALLEN, Stiftsbibliothek, Cod Sang.2 and LEIDEN, Universiteitsbibliotheek, MS. Voss. Lat.Q.69, are connected to St Gallen⁵⁹. It is tempting to attribute its presence in AUTUN S 129 to Frankish influence in the Visigothic north-east⁶⁰.

That said, Theodofrid's poem would be of interest in a seventh-century Visigothic context⁶¹. The idea of six ages of the world was first applied to the writing of universal history by Isidore of Seville in his *Chronica Maiora*⁶². In 686 Bishop Julian of Toledo wrote a polemic against Jews on behalf of King Erwig which aimed to refute Jewish claims that the six ages of history disproved the idea that Jesus was the Messiah⁶³. In doing so, Julian maintained the six ages concept. All this suggests an intellectual environment where the idea of history being divided into six ages was well known and of great interest. In that context, Theodofrid's poem about the six ages fits rather nicely. As a consequence, far from being proof of estrangement, the evidence of familiarity with Theodofrid's work is a sign that the north-east was participating in the culture and debates of the wider Visigothic world, as well as being interested in Frankish poetry.

Theodofrid is not the only poet who made his living in the Frankish world who shows up in the marginalia. In the lower margin of fol. 99r we find the opening line to Venantius Fortunatus's poem to the Merovingian King Chilperic and his wife, Queen Fredegund, mourning the death of their sons to dysentery in 580, «aspera condicio et sors inrevocabilis ore que generis humano» [fig. 5]⁶⁴.

58 THEODOFRID, p. 559.

59 DÜMMLER 1879, pp. 280-281; HENNINGS 2021, p. 83.

60 BISCHOFF 1961, p. 323.

61 PALMER 2014, pp. 87-92.

62 ISIDORE OF SEVILLE, *Chronica Maiora*; VÁZQUEZ DE PARGA 1961. KOON-WOOD 2008; WOOD 2019, pp. 157-159.

63 JULIAN OF TOLEDO, *De comprobatione*, pp. 145-212; COLLINS 1989, p. 63; DREWS 2019, pp. 375-381.

64 VENANTIUS FORTUNATUS, *Carminum* 9.2, «aspera condicio et sors inrevocabilis horae! Quod generi humano t[ristis]», p. 205. GEORGE 1992, pp. 88-91. See also BRENNAN 1984, pp. 1-11.

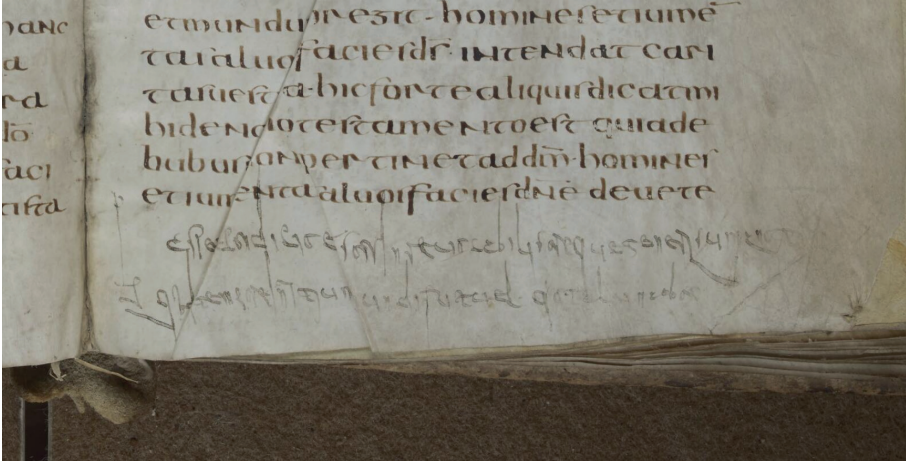


Fig. 5. AUTUN, Bibliothèque municipale, MS S 129 (107), fol. 99r, «aspera condicio et sors inrevocabilis ore que generis humano. / quod tempore initium mundi fuit vel q(u)ota luna ab oc[tavo].».

At first glance this is another slightly odd poem to appear here. Given that Chilperic was widely suspected of murdering his second wife, the Visigothic princess Galswintha, so that he could marry Fredegund in 568, we might expect sympathy for the Frankish ruler to be limited in the Iberian Peninsula⁶⁵. But Venantius had Iberian connections and had travelled through southern Gaul⁶⁶. Nor is this the only Iberian appearance made by this poem, which also featured in the *Azagra Codex* which also contains part of the *Disticha Catonis* (fols. 135r-137v)⁶⁷. This may suggest that the community that owned the manuscript also had access to a collection of poetry analogous to the ones gathered in this codex. Insofar as AUTUN S 129 demonstrates an interest in Frankish poetry, it was part of a wider interest shown across the Visigothic world⁶⁸.

Venantius was a major admirer of St Martin of Braga, and thus might have been pleased to share a margin with material attributed to the apostle of Galicia⁶⁹. This appears directly below Venantius in fol. 99r and is the opening of a text concerned with the Easter cycle, «quod tempore initium mundi fuit vel q(u)ota luna ab oc[tavo]» [fig. 5]. A longer version of this same line appears to

⁶⁵ GREGORY OF TOURS, *Decem libri* 4.28, pp. 160-161. On the vulnerability of Visigothic princesses, NELSON 1986, p. 5.

⁶⁶ BRENNAN 1985, pp. 49-78.

⁶⁷ ALBERTO 2014, pp. 667-668.

⁶⁸ On the wealth of the libraries of the Visigothic world, SÁNCHEZ PRIETO 2009, pp. 263-290.

⁶⁹ FERREIRO 1995, p. 209; MÜLKE 2020, pp. 339-342.

have been erased from the bottom fols. 180v-181r, from which we can reconstruct «quod tempore initium mundi fuit vel cota luna ab octavo kalendas abpriles quod factu mundi initium» or «at the time of the beginning of the world, the moon was in the position of the eighth kalends of April [25 March], which was the beginning of the world.»

The authorship of this text is open to dispute. It is unpublished, and the only other example of it appears in PARIS, Bibliothèque nationale de France, MS lat. 609, a manuscript from 819 which contains the full text on fols. 54r-59r among a collection of other texts relating to computus and the date of Easter⁷⁰. This manuscript was probably produced in Catalonia or Septimania to judge by its Visigothic script, eventually ending up in Limoges as a gift from Charles the Simple in 923⁷¹. It is in this manuscript that the composition is attributed to Martin. Given the questions that have been raised about Martin's authorship of another text about the dating of Easter, the *De Pascha*, it would be wise to be cautious about assuming that what we have here is actually from the Bishop of Braga⁷². It seems likely that the writer of the minitext had access to a manuscript that was also the ancestor of PARIS, Bibliothèque nationale de France, MS lat. 609, given the geographical proximity of the two surviving manuscripts.

Having all of these texts in AUTUN S 129 is interesting in itself, but at least some of them may be in conversation with each other. The two quotations in the bottom margin of fol. 99r come from two very different texts, one concerned with the death of two Merovingian princes, the other with the date of Easter. But the actual content included have a shared theme:

O harsh condition and irreversible destiny of time which its tragic origin bequeathed to humankind⁷³.

At the time of the beginning of the world, the moon was in the position of the eighth kalends of April [25 March], which was the beginning of the world⁷⁴.

Both of these lines are concerned with the beginning of the world and the origins of human history. There is no connection to the main text of Augustine on this page, and the author of this marginalia probably just found some

⁷⁰ MILLARES CARLO 1983, no. 9.

⁷¹ ALTÚRO 1994, pp. 185-200.

⁷² ALBERTO 1991, p. 184.

⁷³ VENANTIUS FORTUNATUS, *Carminum* 9.2, «aspera condicio et sors inrevoabilis ore que generis humano», p. 205.

⁷⁴ «Quod tempore initium mundi fuit vel cota luna ab octavo kalendas abpriles quod factu mundi initium.»

clear space where they could add the lines. These are not pen trials, but rather copies of quotes deemed relevant to a subject the copyist was interested in. It is interesting to consider Theodofrid's poem concerning the six ages in this context, as the first stanza of that text is also concerned with the origin of time:

Before the ages and the beginning of the world/ You, holy father, gave birth to a son,/ Who reigns with you with the holy spirit;/ You made nine angelic orders, God who is just and always praiseworthy⁷⁵.

However, the only lines that appear in this manuscript from that work come from the second stanza, calling for divine protection for Theodofrid, and the relevant quotation is placed at some distance from Venantius and Martin. It is unclear why the person who quoted the two passages on fol. 99r did so. But the fact that someone was putting together passages related to an important topic suggests both intellectual curiosity and ambition. Wherever they were, it was a place that had a library with a wide selection of material available.

This has been an essay characterised more by ignorance than by knowledge. It has argued that the texts in *cursiva visigoda* all come from a community somewhere near the modern border between France and Spain in the last decades of the seventh or the first of the eighth. Exactly where, or exactly when these minitexts were made is still unclear, or by who, apart from a few we might attribute to Honemundus. And yet, the Visigothic minitexts in AUTUN S 129 nonetheless shed light on the world in which they were created. This world, on the north-east of the kingdom, in the shadow of the Pyrenees, that would be the home and battleground of Goths, Basques, Franks, Arabs and Berbers was not a backwater divorced from wider intellectual trends, but a place of education and scholarship. This was a frontier region interested in both Merovingian and Visigothic culture, where multiple legal codes could be encountered. Most of all, despite the wretched fate of Nambadus, it was not a decadent confection waiting to be put out of its misery by the Arab conquest, but a living environment, filled with people involved in a wide variety of different activities⁷⁶. If the interest displayed in Venantius and Martin is anything to go by, this was a place more concerned with origins than with endings, and, to judge from the marginalia, very far from marginal.

75 THEODOFRID, «Ante secula et mundi principio / Tu, pater sancta, genuisti filium, / Qui tecum regnat cum sancto spiritu; / Novem fecisti ordines angelicos, Deus qui iustus semper es laudabilis», p. 559.

76 DÍAZ-POVEDA 2016, pp. 191-218.

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