

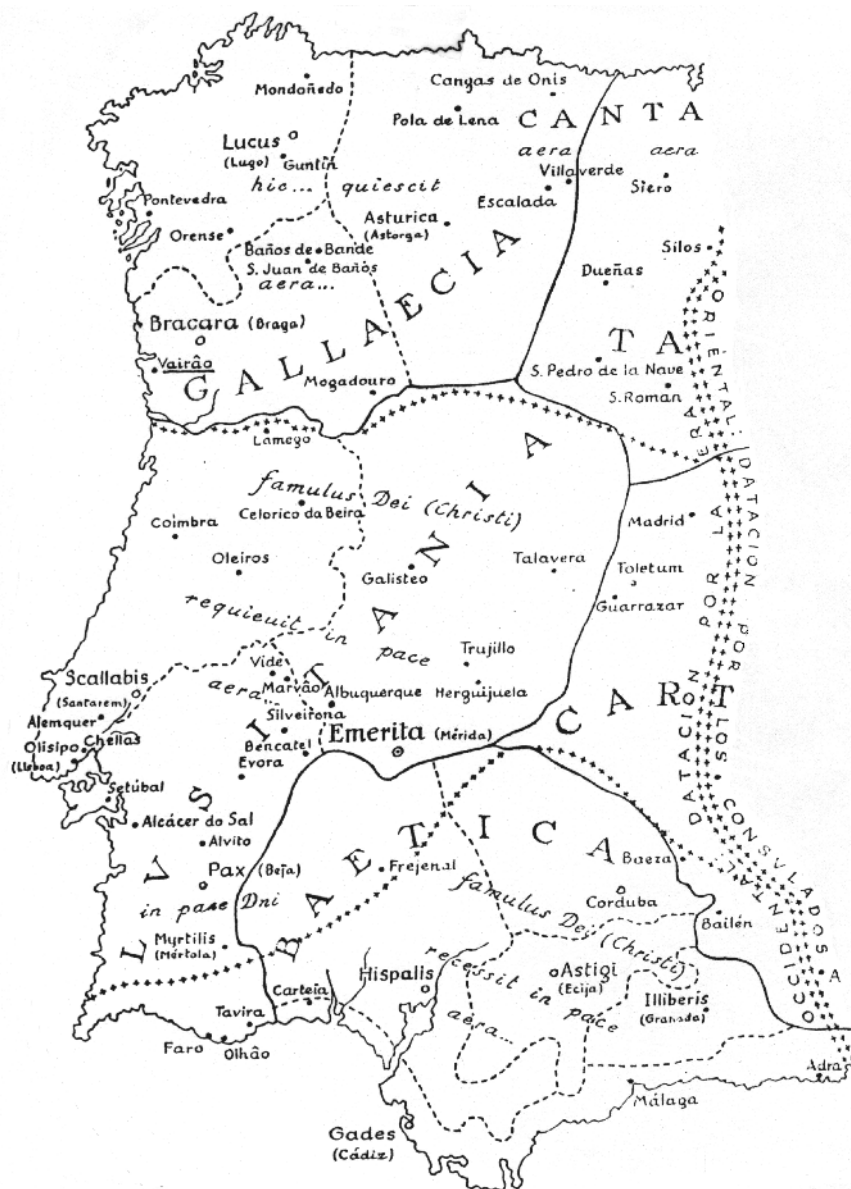
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VEREMUNDU R(EG)E: REVISITING AN INSCRIPTION FROM SAN SALVADOR DE
VAIRÃO (PORTUGAL)

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VEREMUNDU R(EG)E: REVISITING AN INSCRIPTION
FROM SAN SALVADOR DE VAIRÃO (PORTUGAL)*



Western Iberian Peninsula, scanned from Vives, *Inscr. Crist.* (see n. 3)

The history of the province of *Gallaecia* (Galicia) in the Northwestern corner of the Iberian Peninsula for the period between 469 to 550 is one shrouded in obscurity. The last literary notice that we have up to the year 469 is from Hydatius's *Chronica* and we do not hear a word about Galicia until John of Biclar, in his *Chronicon*, reports once again on the province beginning with the year 550.¹ Fortunately, archaeology has continued to yield finds dating from the fifth and sixth centuries thereby illuminating our understanding of this era lacking in literary testimony. There is, moreover, an already known inscription, originating from San Salvador de Vairão near Porto that has been the source of controversy regarding its date (see map).

Scholarly opinions regarding the origins and

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¹ Hydatius, *Continuatio chronicorum Hieronymianorum*, *MGH*, A.A. 11.1-36, and John of Biclar, *Chronica*, *MGH*, A.A. 11.207-220.

date of the inscription have been generally divided along two lines: one of acceptance for assigning it to the fifth century, or one of denying the inscription that date and relegating it rather to the tenth or eleventh century. All previous studies, for or against, have not adequately set forth convincing arguments to sustain their respective positions. E.A. Thompson, in what is the most recent consideration of the piece, voiced the need for someone to reinvestigate the seventeenth and eighteenth century accounts of the epigraphic inscription at San Salvador de Vairão.² Thompson's observations are a direct challenge to the claims of José Vives, who in two studies that appeared in 1940 and 1942, carried out what appeared to be a thorough examination of the inscription. Vives concluded by rejecting a fifth century date. Instead, he assigned the inscription to the tenth or eleventh century.³ This article is an attempt to answer the call by Thompson and to challenge the various arguments enunciated by Vives.

Neither Thompson nor Vives examined the original. Vives, in fact, had based his conclusions on a plaster cast that had been deposited in what was then the *Museu Etnológico* in Lisbon and is now the *Museu Nacional de Archeologia* (*Inscr. Crist.* [n. 3], 170 no. 510). The inscription and the plaster copy are identical in their content.

The resolved text and reading that I will argue for reads as follows (See Pl. XI.1):

In n(omin)e d(omi)ni perfectum est templum hunc per Marispalla d(e)o uota
sub die xiiii k(alendas) Ap(riles) er(a) DLXXIII regnante serenissimo Veremundu r(eg)e.

1. É DÑI DŌ 2. K APERdXXIII

The inscription is quite large and is composed of six panels or stones. Together they measure 287 cm. in length and 32.5 cm. in height. Since the inscription has spent, as far as I can tell, virtually its entire life indoors, it has not suffered greatly from weather erosion. Furthermore, the fact that it is carved on a sandstone type of granite also accounts for its durability. As the photographs reveal the letters are not carved in a highly polished style nor made consistently. Some abbreviation marks are still visible. A fracture is located precisely at the place where the date of the reign of King Veremundus begins. As we shall soon see the date of this inscription and the fracture are at the heart of most of the controversy. Finally, there is one area where most scholars are in agreement on the inscription; it is not a foundation declaration of the medieval monastic community at Vairão, but rather it refers to a now unknown religious building either in the vicinity of Vairão, or even perhaps an older structure that once stood at that site.

In 1637 Jeronymo da Cunha de Almeida, abbot of Bitarães, published the earliest known account and study on the inscription at Vairão. The inscription had been discovered earlier in 1608 by the abbess Anna de Mendoça who then commissioned Abbot Almeida to give a historical assessment of the inscription. His reading of the inscription led him to propose the date as 485 and a Suevic identity for Veremundus. The published pamphlet by Almeida of 29 pages also contains the first etching of the inscription before it was severely damaged as a result of several moves in the next 150 years.⁴

² E. A. Thompson, "The Conversion of the Spanish Suevi to Catholicism" in *Visigothic Spain: New Approaches*, ed. by E. James (Oxford 1980), 77-92, remarks at 82.

³ "Inscriptiones Hispaniae Christianae: Cuestiones de datación", *Spanische Forschungen der Görresgesellschaft* 8 (1940) 1-24, at 18-20. Vives echoes his conclusions on the inscription in *Inscripciones Cristianas de la España Romana y Visigoda* (Barcelona 1942), 123 no. 355 and 170 no. 510.

⁴ Bibliography: **I. 1637-1893** (listed by earliest date): CUNHA DE ALMEIDA, *Iuizo Historico sobre o letreiro que se achou em hua pedra que estaua no celeiro do mosteiro de Vayrão da ordem de S. Bento no anno de M.DC.VIII* (Porto 1637), 281-303 at 288-289, reproduced conveniently in M. P. de NOVAIS, *Colecção de Manuscritos inéditos agora dados à estampa*, IV. *Anacrísis Historial*, II parte, *Episcopologio* (Porto 1690), reprint edition (1918). L. de S. TOMÁS (an important intermediary before the fracture was reported in the sources), *Benedictina Lusitana* II (Lisbon 1651); facsimile edition, *Notas críticas* de J. MATTOSO (Lisbon 1974), 351-353; see also, M. P. de NOVAIS, *Colecção de Manuscritos* IV (above), 215-219 and I (1916) of the same collection, 262. A. C. PINTO, *Catalogo dos Bispos do Porto composto pelo illustrissimo D. Rodrigo da Cunha* (Porto 1742), 82-91. M. J. RAMOS, *Dicionario Geográfico XXXVIII*, no. 6, f.33. *Arquivo Nacional da Torre do Tombo* at folios 36 and 37. E. FLÓREZ, *España Sagrada de la Iglesia de España XXI* (Madrid 1766), p. 280 no. 63. J. P. RIBEIRO (publishing the first serious critique of Cunha de Almeida) in "Memoria acerca da Incripção Lapidar, que fe acha no Mofteiro do Salvador de Vayraõ, de Religiofas Benedictinas, no Bifpado do Porto, e da pertendida antiquidade do mefmo Mofteiro, que daquella incripção fe tem procurado deduzir", *Memorias de Litteratura Portuguesa* 5 (1793) 421-428. A. HÜBNER (text without commentary), *Inscriptiones Hispaniae Christianae* (Berlin 1871), no. 135. F. GÖRRES (defend-

1. Veremundu rege

In the context of the dating formula the ablative r(eg)e is needed, although editors resolve the abbreviation as re(x). Correspondingly Veremundu should be taken either as an undeclined name (instead of an ablative) or as an ablative (instead of Veremundo). In the same vein, it should be noticed that the scribe says *per Marispalla d(e)o vota* (line 1), thus no longer using the spelling of the accusative with *m*, here after the preposition *per*. This phenomenon is well known from other inscriptions.

The identity of King Veremundus has been at the heart of the major arguments advanced by Vives and others to reject the fifth century date of the inscription. The fact that not a single source mentions such a Catholic king as ruling in Galicia in the fifth-century is reason enough for Vives to reject the date on the inscription (*Inscr. Hisp.* 19-20; *Inscr. Crist.* 123 no. 355 [n.3]). Relying only on epigraphic evidence, he also points out that prior to the year 500 there is no testimony of a Catholic of Germanic origin, much less a possible Catholic Suevic king. But since we have no other inscriptions or literary texts between 469 and 550 for Galicia this is hardly surprising. It is well known, however, that Rechiarius (448-456), King of the Sueves, became the first Germanic chief to convert to the Catholic faith, according to Hydatius (*Catholicus Rechiarius succedit in regnum, Chronicon* 137, p. 25).

More telling is the fact that for many personages of the early Middle Ages we have singular testimony that cannot be confirmed by a second source, literary or archaeological. This is especially true of names of persons found in inscriptions. The kings that we know of from the chronicles of Isidore of Seville, John of Biclar, Hydatius, and Gregory of Tours as ruling in the Suevic kingdom of Galicia are at times uncorroborated by a second source. The best example is another rather obscure Suevic king named Chararic identified by Gregory of Tours, but not by any other writer, Gallic or Iberian. But this fact is not sufficient grounds for discarding the existence of Chararic as I have argued elsewhere.⁵ Our inscription needs to be considered on its own merits, and we cannot rule out that a Suevic king, unknown to us in the literary sources, may well be identified here in a single epigraphic source.

While Vives ruled out this Veremundus as a possible Suevic king, he argued that the inscription refers either to Veremundus II (982-999) or even Veremundus III (1028-1073) who also ruled in Castilla-León. In order to arrive at this conclusion Vives had to reconcile the date of the inscription with these latter Castilian-Leonese rulers. He therefore declared the sixth century date either as a wrong reading or an error by the carver (see section 2). Scholars before Vives had already proposed various readings of the date that would establish the identity and reign of this Veremundus.⁶

ing a fifth century date and arguing that Veremundus was a Sueve not a Visigoth), *Forschungen zur Deutschen Geschichte* 14 (1874) 405-407, and *Zeitschrift für wissenschaftliche Theologie* 36 (1893) 542-578, at 553-558. F. FITA (adopting a tenth century interpretation), *Boletín de la Real Academia de la Historia* 28 (1896) 268. There is also a very brief geographic notice about Vairão in *Memorial Histórico Español. Colección de documentos, opúsculos y antigüedades que publica La Real Academia de la Historia* XXVI (Madrid 1893), 195.

II. 1902-1976: F. FITA (leaving open the possibility that the inscription may attest a fifth century Suevic king), *Boletín de la Real Academia de la Historia* 41 (1902) 495-497. M. FERREIRA, *O Archeologo Português* 12 (1907) 281-289 (with the first known photograph). E. DIEHL (reproducing the inscription and dating it to the fifth century), *Inscriptiones Latinae Christianae Veteres* I (Berlin 1925), 335 no. 1721. S. McKENNA (not supporting a tenth or eleventh century date), *Paganism and Pagan survivals in Spain up to the Fall of the Visigothic Kingdom* (Washington 1938), 78 note 11. L. SCHMIDT (asserting a tenth century date), *Geschichte der Deutschen Stämme bis zum Ausgang der Völkerwanderung. Die Westgermanen*, I (Munich 1938), 213. K. SCHÄFERDIEK (choosing an M instead of a D in the reading of the date [below, section 2] and dating the piece to 985 during the reign of Veremundus II), *Die Kirche in den Reichen der Westgoten und Suewen bis zur Errichtung der westgotischen Katholischen Staatskirche* (Berlin 1967), 116 note 40. Finally, "Vairão", *Enciclopedia Luso-Brasileira da Cultura*, XVIII (Lisbon 1976), 697-698.

⁵ *De virtutibus sancti Martini*. 1.11, in Gregorii Turonensis Opera, *Miracula et Opera Minora. MGH, SRM*, 1, pars II, ed. by W. Arndt and Br. Krusch (Hannover 1885). A full analysis of this text is in A. Ferreiro, *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 3,2 (1995) 195-210. We may also mention the other well known example of the Suevic King Ariamir who preceded over the First Council of Braga (561). Not a single Iberian or Gallic chronicler mentions this king as ruling in Galicia, but rule he did, and the presence of his name in the proceedings of the council is testimony enough, in *Concilios Visigóticos e Hispano-Romanos*, ed. by J. Vives et al (Barcelona-Madrid 1963), 65.

⁶ *Inscr. Crist.* (n. 3), 170 no. 510. See Thompson's critique, above (n. 2), 82. L. Schmidt believed that Veremundus II

Even though a Veremundus II and III ruled in Castilla-León in the tenth and eleventh centuries, including the region of Porto where Vairão resides, it does not necessarily follow that the Veremundus in the inscription is any of these two. Germanic proper names from the Sueve-Visigoth era survived abundantly in various forms well into the Middle Ages.⁷

The intentions of early medieval chroniclers such as Isidore of Seville, John of Biclar, Hydatius, and Gregory of Tours largely determined which personages they chose to include or exclude in their narratives. Since we have no literary sources for the years between 469 to 550 it is hazardous to invoke the argument from silence—in this case non-existing literary sources—as a means to reject the possibility that Veremundus may have been a Suevic king.

2. DLXXIII

This is a new reading: DL written in ligature (d). Hitherto the beginning was read either as D or L. What creates the difficulty is a fracture that has destroyed the very beginning of the date. In addition, a slash (ligature) extends to the right from the base of the letter D (see Pls. XI–XII). Virtually every scholar who has rejected a fifth century date and has relegated Veremundus to either the tenth or eleventh century has based this position upon the questionable date of the inscription.

Vives was so determined to admit to anything but a D, which would render the date as 485 (or 523 of the Spanish era), that he proposed several alternate letters.⁸ He suggested L as the correct reading of the initial trace, thus producing the year 73 or 1073, corresponding to the reign of Veremundus III. However, he even held out the possibility of an M, or, accepting the reading of L, maintained that sometimes the D appears in inscriptions instead of a T.⁹ He also faults seventeenth and eighteenth century scholars for having assigned it an earlier date based upon their erroneous reading of the inscription (*Inscr. Hisp.* [n.3], 19). His logic is that since a Veremundus did not exist in the fifth century, then obviously the date must be wrong. Vives, then, makes a rather startling admission, "The only reason to favor the fifth-century [date] is the weighty evidence that that is the date given in the numbers."¹⁰ Thus he admits on the one hand that a plain reading renders a fifth century date, but on the basis of suspect assumptions on his part, he faults the original carver of the piece or early modern copyists so as to suggest alternate letters to substitute for the D.

(982-999) is mentioned, *Geschichte der deutschen Stämme* (n. 4.II), 213. S. McKenna argued for a Suevic Veremundus, *Paganism and Pagan survivals* (n. 4.II), 78 note 11. M. Ferreira assigned it a date of 1073, thus making him Veremundus III: *O Archeologo* (n. 4.II), 282. F. Fita argued for 987, hence for Veremundus II (n.4.II), 496. F. Görres, emphatically said Veremundus was a Sueve, *Zeitschrift* (n. 4.I), 555. J. P. Ribeiro was convinced of a 1073 date and Veremundus III as the king in question, "Memoria acerca da Inscricção lapidar" (n. 4.I), 423. M. J. Ramos said Veremundus was a Sueve, *Dicionario Geográfico* (n. 4.I), 36-37 as did likewise A. C. Pinto, *Catalogo dos Bispos do Porto* (n. 4.I), 85. M. P. de Novais had the most original interpretation in which he posited that Veremundus was in fact Remismund; he changed the date to 503, *Colecção de Manuscritos I* (n. 4.I), 262.

⁷ For collections of sources on the reigns of Veremundu II and III consult, *Las Crónicas Latinas de la Reconquista. Estudios prácticos de Latín Medieval* ed. by A. Huici (Valencia 1913), I, 221-223 and 305-321; II, 67-69, 97-101 and 105-107. Also, *Sampiro. Su crónica y la monarquía leonesa en el siglo X*, ed. by J. Pérez de Urbel (Madrid 1952), 45-52, 115-118, 279, 342-346, 358-360, 433-456 and 480. A useful article with documents is by J. M. Ruiz Asencio, "Rebeliones Leonesas contra Vermudo II" in *León y su Historia*, I, Colección Fuentes y Estudios de Historia Leonesa 1 (León 1969), 215-241. For a collection of manuscripts from the reigns of Veremundu II and III see *Colección Documental del Archivo de la Catedral de León (775-1230)*, Colección Fuentes y Estudios de Historia Leonesa, vols. 42-44, 316-323; E. Saéz and C. Saéz, II (953-985), vol. 42 (León 1990); J. M. Ruiz Asencio, III (986-1031), vol. 43 (León 1987), 27-28, 42-44, 51-58, 70-71, 76-81, 88-91, 96-101, 162-165, 480-483; J. M. Ruiz Asencio, IV (1032-1109), vol. 44 (León 1990), 13-15 and 88-91. For Germanic/Gothic names in medieval Iberia see J. M. Piel, *Estudos de Linguística Histórica Galego-Portuguesa* (Lisboa 1989), 129-147.

⁸ The Spanish Era calendar, which was in use in the western part of the Iberian Peninsula in the fifth and sixth centuries, begins with the date 38 B.C. and it was not changed until the late fourteenth century.

⁹ "Ya que no es raro encontrar la D en vez de la T (=1000)", *Inscr. Crist.* (n. 3), 123 no. 355, and "pero con un ápice en la parte inferior que lo hace una L, aunque también podría ser parte de una M", *ibid.*, 170 no. 510.

¹⁰ "En favor del siglo V hay la única razón, naturalmente de peso, de que así lo indican las cifras de la Era", *ibid.*, 18.

Turning to the actual reading of the number, we may first dispose of an additional complication. The D is preceded by damage. As far as I have been able to ascertain Ribeiro is the first scholar to mention this fracture. Prior to 1793 scholars relied on copies of the sketch made by Cunha de Almeida. The last report we have before 1793 fares from Marcelo Joaquim Ramos in 1758. This means that somewhere between these dates the stone was damaged while it was being transferred to the site where it was still deposited when consulted by Ribeiro in 1793. Cunha de Almeida in 1637 also provided a sketch of the piece as originally found and he does not identify any damage to the stone.

As stated before, the first letter of the number has been read as D or L. Paleographically, L can be ruled out. It is different from Ls in the name Marispalla. On the other hand, the vertical stroke of D is not surviving, but the right curvature is identical to all the Ds found intact in the inscription. Even with the connecting vertical line lacking, Vives admitted that a plain interpretation renders it a D (*Inscr. Hisp.* [n.3], 18). But, what of the ligature mark at the base of the D? There is good reason to take it as part of the ligature DL. The plaster cast reveals a clearer view of the ligature DL than the original (see Pl. XII.3). This is due to the fact that when the fracture was 'repaired' a cement stripe was added to the stone. Part of the cement covered small areas of the surface of the stone. Thus the D was obscured somewhat, but certainly not the ligature. There are other ligatures in this inscription, and it seems almost certain that it was the intention of the carver to make the ligature of DL and not a singular D or L. Therefore, the correct date of the inscription is to be rendered DLXXIII (573 of the Spanish Era), thus making the adjusted date 535.

3. regnante serenissimo

Vives also argued against an early date because he maintained that the phrase *regnante serenissimo* was not in use in fifth century Iberia. He insisted that the earliest inscriptions describing Visigothic regnal years used *anno regni*, or an equivalent, not *regnante* which appeared much later in imitation of *imperante*. (*Inscr. Hisp.* [n.3], 20). He stated that this formula was non-existent prior to the sixth century, and it appears for the first time somewhere around 561. The dating phrase as well as the title *serenissimus* were indeed used in the tenth and eleventh centuries in the Iberian Peninsula, also in combination with other titles.¹¹

In reference to eastern emperors, the title *serenissimus* appears frequently in documents dating from the fifth century.¹² The same and other titles were used with great flexibility in the West and were appropriated for use by Germanic leaders who attempted to enhance their authority by using such high born titles. Closer to the Iberian Peninsula the title appears in numerous instances in addresses to Visigothic kings in conciliar legislation, and it is once found in the legal codes. At the Thirteenth Council of Toledo (683) *serenissimus* is used for queen Liubigotoni. *Serenissimus* is not always coupled with *princeps*.¹³ Is it reasonable to argue that for some reason the Suevic kings of Galicia would not have

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 19. For examples also see A. Sánchez Candeira, *El 'regnum-imperium' Leones hasta 1037*, Monografías de Ciencia Moderna 27 (Madrid 1951), 66, 68-69, nos. 24, 26, 52, 54, 59, and 60. L. Schmidt believed *serenissimus* pointed to Veremundus II (982-999): "Aber die für jene Zeit ungewöhnliche Titulatur *serenissimus* macht es wahrscheinlich, daß das Datum falsch überliefert ist und daß man zu denken hat an den gleichnamigen König Bermudo II von León (982-99)", *Geschichte der deutschen Stämme* (n. 4.II), 213. See also Ribeiro who expressed similar suspicions, in "Memoria" (n. 4.I), 422. McKenna noted that *serenissimus* was already used by the eastern emperors in the fifth century, *Paganism* (n. 4.II), 78 note 11; also Görres in *Forschungen* (n. 4.I), 406-407.

¹² See the examples cited by Sister L. Dinneen, *Titles of Address in Christian Greek Epistolography to 527 A.D.*, Catholic University of America Patristic Studies 18 (Washington 1929), 29 and 107-109. The abundant references in Latin sources are conveniently gathered by Sister M. B. O'Brien, *Titles of Address in Christian Latin Epistolography to 543 A.D.*, Catholic University of America Patristic Studies 21 (Washington 1930), VIII-IX, 21-22, 139-141, and 166.

¹³ For the conciliar citations using *serenissimus* in Visigothic Spain see J. Mellado Rodríguez, *Léxico de los Concilios Visigóticos de Toledo*, II, K-Z (Córdoba 1990), 635. See also the Council of Zaragoza II (592) where *sanctissimi principis Reccaredi regis* is used, and the Council of Mérida (666) with *serenissimi atque clementissimi domini nostri et principis Reccesvinthi regis*, in Vives, *Concilios Visigóticos* (n. 5), 154 and 330. All subsequent references are from this edition. In the acts of the councils of Toledo *serenissimus* is not joined with *princeps*, but instead with other titles such as *amator Christi*,

used similar titles among others to establish their authority? Another matter to keep in mind are the heavy influences the Iberian Peninsula experienced from the Byzantines notably throughout the fifth and sixth centuries. The Suevic kings, as much as their nemesis the Visigothic kings, embellished themselves with Roman titles in an attempt to achieve some semblance of equality with the neighboring Visigoths and probably to some degree with the distant emperors at Constantinople. Aside from our inscription there is not a single reference to *serenissimus* associated with a Suevic king.¹⁴

The research of S. Teillet and M. Reydellet has decisively enlightened our understanding on the use of titles of address by the Germanic rulers in Western Europe as attested in literary sources.¹⁵ Since the sources are written overwhelmingly from a Catholic orthodox perspective they reveal to us a decidedly subjective, but no less useful picture of this process. The fact that superlatives such as *gloriosissimus*, *piissimus*, *serenissimus* are not conferred upon non-Catholic Germanic kings should not come as a surprise. It also does not mean that Arian Suevic or Visigothic kings did not use them for themselves and were not ascribed to them by the Arian clergy. Among Catholic writers there is at times a lack of consistency in this matter, even when it involved Catholic Suevic and Visigothic kings. Sidonius Apollinaris, in a rare exception, used *princeps* to describe the Visigoth King Theoderic II, an Arian. Ennodius employed both *princeps* and *imperator* to describe a variety of Germanic kings.¹⁶ Although there are exceptions to the rule, they are nevertheless significant testimony of the liberality in which these titles were conferred upon and appropriated by Germanic rulers. John of Biclar showered superlatives upon Reccared, the newly converted Visigothic king at the Third Council of Toledo; but referred to his enemy Suevic kings as *rex* only, even though they were Catholic (Teillet, *Des Goths*, [n.15], 438-441 and 448-455). Martin of Braga, in his *Formula Vitae Honestae*, did not hesitate to address King Miro of the Sueves with a wide assortment of superlatives such as *gloriosissimus*, *tranquillissimus*, and *clementissimus*.¹⁷ One thing is certain, from the fourth century to the end of the Visigothic kingdom in 711, there were no set *formulae* for these titles and the myriad of superlatives that were attached to them. The determining factors as to who received these titles in these chronicles was governed by whether the kings in question were Arian or Catholic. When two Catholic Germanic kings of separate peoples—Sueves and Visigoths, Franks, and Visigoths—were involved in war, the titles depended only on the loyalties and sympathies of the chronicler, as is evidenced in the case of John of Biclar and Gregory of Tours (Teillet, *Des Goths*, [n.15], 373, 388, 417, 438-455).

It need not, then, overly concern us that our sources on the Suevic and Visigothic kings prior to the Third Council of Toledo (589)—which invokes for the first time *serenissimus princeps*—do not confer upon them such a distinguished title.¹⁸ In regard to the Sueves, the source material is so scanty that we can scarcely make any general observations that establish a full inventory of the titles used by the rulers in Galicia. The most we can affirm is that the Sueves like other Germanic tribes appropriated numerous Roman cultural mores, including titles of address, albeit in a new context. All of our sources, conciliar,

clementissimus, *rex*, *piissimus*, *dominus*, *orthodoxus* and with various combinations of these: VII (646), 249; VIII (653), 286 and 292; IX (655), 297 and 305-306; XII (681), 380, 384, and 400; XVI (693), 505, 508, and 512; XVII (694), 522. See also, Zaragoza III (691), 475 and 480. We read in the *Lex Visigothorum* XII, 2,17 *clementissimo huic serenissimo domino nostro Reccesvindo regi* (K. Zeumer, *Leges Visigothorum* (Hannover-Leipzig 1902), II, 425.

¹⁴ For the Byzantines in Iberia see M. Vallejo Girvés, *Bizancio y la España Tardoantigua (SS.V-VIII), un capítulo de historia mediterránea* (Alcalá de Henares 1993). At the First Council of Braga (561), Ariamir is called, *gloriosissimus atque piissimus filius noster*, and at the Second Council of Braga (572) *gloriosissimi filii nostri regis* is said of Miro (Vives, *Concilios Visigóticos* [n. 5], 65 and 78).

¹⁵ S. Teillet, *Des Goths à la Nation Gothique. Les origines de l'idée de nation en Occident du Ve au VIIe siècle* (Paris 1984), 110-111, offers a broad discussion of titles. M. Reydellet, *La royauté dans la littérature latine de Sidoine Apollinaire à Isidore de Séville*, Bibliothèque des Écoles Françaises d'Athènes et de Rome 243 (Rome 1981), 22-46 and 128-137, discusses *rex* and *princeps christianus* respectively.

¹⁶ See Teillet, *Des Goths* (n. 15), 203, note 136 and 277. Reydellet, *La royauté* (n. 15), 128-137, 197-205, and 214-216.

¹⁷ C. W. Barlow, *Martini episcopi Bracarensis opera omnia* (Yale 1950), 236.

¹⁸ Teillet, *Des Goths* (n. 15), 448-455, especially at 452 and for other councils, 505-506 and 538-543.

and literary, are hardly objective on this matter. Can we really expect a Council of Toledo prior to 589, or say an Isidore of Seville, Gregory of Tours, or John of Biclar, to confer *serenissimus* or *princeps* upon an Arian ruler, especially in light of their strong anti-Arian agenda? Consider further that lamentably Arian sources are virtually non-existent. We can hardly insist that the Arian Sueves and Visigoths did not use the same secular and ecclesiastical titles as did their Catholic counterparts.

This brings us back to the use of *serenissimus* in our inscription. If we believe Isidore, the Sueves had a long series of Arian kings until Theodemir converted—with the aid of Martin of Braga—the entire Suevic people to the Catholic faith.¹⁹ Even if Isidore knew the identity of these Arian kings he chose not to provide any details since he was focusing on the conversion of the Sueves. Thus, we cannot rule out the possibility that the inscription at Vairão refers to an Arian Sueve king and an Arian religious woman, Marispalla. Whether Arian or Catholic, one thing is certain, the Germanic kings employed *gloriosissimus*, *piissimus*, *clementissimus*, *tranquillissimus*, and other such titles. Why not *serenissimus*? If our inscription originates from the sixth century (535), the use of *serenissimus* becomes epigraphic proof for the use of such a title before 589 in the Iberian Peninsula.

In the eras of both Veremundus II and Veremundus III the kings of Castilla-León increasingly preferred the title of *imperator*, coupled at times with the superlative *serenissimus*. They chose the more authoritative *imperator* to emphasize their authority over their subjects and territories.²⁰ Sánchez Candeira noted that the Leonese kings used the titles of *imperator*, *rex magnus*, *princeps magnus*, and *basileus* to identify their standing. He also reproduces two *formulae* that call Veremundus II *rex imperator serenissimus princeps* and Veremundus III *Veremundus serenissimus princeps*. (*ibid.*, [n. 11], 16-17, doc. 24, p. 66 and doc. 52, p. 69). In two documents ascribed to Veremundus III the king is called *Veremundus rex*, but both are preceded by *regni imperii*, a formula not utilized in the Vairão inscription (*ibid.*, [n. 11], doc. 54 and 59, p. 69). Candeira also observes that *imperator*, which appears frequently in Leonese documents, was not used at the Councils of Toledo, whereas *imperium* was invoked at times. The title *imperator*, according to Candeira, seems to have had a socio-political hierarchical meaning that did not identify military authority or victory in battle (*ibid.*, [n. 11], 26 and 35).

In the numerous charters from the reigns of Veremundus II and III at the *Archivo de la Catedral de León* there are further revealing combinations of titles used by these Leonese sovereigns. In every document cited in the collection when *regnante* appears the superlative *serenissimo* is absent, instead *rege* or *princepe* is used.²¹ When the superlative *serenissimus* is invoked for Veremundus II, the title *princeps* appears in every instance. Already in the fourth and fifth centuries a flexible combination of titles was used when referring to the Emperor at Constantinople or to the Visigothic kings at the Councils of Toledo, who as is well known imitated their counterparts in the East.²² The Vairão inscription does not fit into any of the *formulae* patterns found in these documents or in those cited by Sánchez Candeira nor in the Latin chronicles that mention the sovereigns of Castilla-León.²³

¹⁹ *Historia Gothorum Vandalorum et Suevorum* 91, MGH, A.A. XI (Berlin 1894), 302-303.

²⁰ A little known fundamental study on this development is by Sánchez Candeira, *El 'regnum-imperium' Leones* (n. 11); see especially the *formulae* of documents cited at 66 and 68-71.

²¹ See Ruiz Asencio, *Colección Documental del Archivo III* (n. 7), nos. 529, p. 27; 531, p. 29; 542, p. 44; 551, p. 59; 563, p. 76; 564, p. 77; 566, p. 80; 575, p. 91; 580, p. 97; and 870, p. 481, all documents issued by Veremundus II. There are two additional documents from the reign of Veremundus III in Ruiz Asencio, *Colección Documental del Archivo IV* (n. 7), nos. 902, p. 12 and 958, p. 89.

²² For Veremundus II see, Ruiz Asencio, *Colección Documental del Archivo III* (n. 7), nos. 530, p. 27; 541, p. 43; 567, p. 80; 581, pp. 98-99; and 869, p. 480. Pérez de Urbel provides additional documents that confirm the joint usage of *serenissimus* and *princeps*, *Sampiro* (n. 7), 447-448, 450-451, and 455-456. There are a few instances where *princeps* is used by itself, Ruiz Asencio, *Colección Documental III* (n. 7), no. 629, p. 163. Two Veremundus II documents that follow this singular citation of *princeps* are in Saéz, *Colección Documental del Archivo II* (n. 7), nos. 506, p. 317 and 507, p. 318. For the use of *serenissimus* by the Eastern Emperors see O'Brien, *Titles of Address* (n. 12), 21-22 and 139-140.

²³ The superlative *serenissimus* is strikingly absent in the Latin chronicles of the Reconquest, see Huici, *Las Crónicas Latinas*, I (n. 7), 221-222, 305-306, 311-312, 313-314, 317-318, 319-320; II, 67-69, 97-99, 100, and 105-106. The same is

In the final analysis, these titles and others with the exception of *imperator* were already used in the Late Roman Empire throughout the entire fifth and sixth centuries by both emerging Visigothic kings in the West and, before them, by the emperors in the East. As it stands, there is not a shred of substantial evidence that militates against the use of *regnante serenissimo* in the fifth or sixth century in reference to a King Veremundus or any other Germanic ruler in the West.

4. per Marispalla d(e)o vota

We have already noticed the lack of an accusative after *per* (above, section 1); here we turn to Marispalla herself. The inscription identifies her as the founder of a religious building. Her title, *Deo vota*, identifies her as a religious woman—presumably a female ascetic or even one belonging to a class of virgins. Vives without any reservations identified her as an ascetic of Germanic origin. He does, however, insist that her title *Deo vota* dates her precisely to either the tenth or eleventh century. He cites as evidence the presence of the title *Deo vota* in the chronicles of *Sampiro* and the *Silense* which identify Elvira, the aunt of Ramiro III (967-984), with that title of address.²⁴ Vives insists that it would be rare—if not unheard of—to find a nun among the Germanic peoples in Iberia in the fifth century who would engage in the founding of any religious building or basilica (*Inscr. Hisp.* [n. 3], 19).

The proper name of *Marispalla* has not escaped various readings and interpretations. Some have suggested readings such as Maris Pala, Maria Pala, or Marispalla, and even *manis Palla*.²⁵ The R in Marispalla appears to be similar to some of the Ns elsewhere. But the use of differently shaped letters in one and the same inscription is hardly unusual. Thus, in our case, the M's in *templum*., which in the ligatures of MP and UM look deceptively like N's, are clearly different from the normal M in the ligature of UM of *perfectum*. But the reading itself, *templum*, is secure (see Pl. XI.1 and XII.2).

Those who adhere to the reading of *manis Palla* have made attempts, based mostly on conjecture, to turn this lady into a distant ancestor of several families which had daughters with the name of Palla. For this reason, the name Palla has been the object of some speculation in the long interpretation of our inscription. For example, there is the unsubstantiated notice by earlier commentators that the region of Maia, where the inscription is found, was known as Pallancia in the Roman period, and its inhabitants were known as Pallancians. On this rather dubious evidence it was further argued that the name Palla or Pallas had a long history that extended from the Roman era into the Germanic period and well into the Middle Ages.²⁶ We are on much firmer historical and paleographical ground regarding the presence of the name Palla in the Middle Ages. Women with the last name of Palla do unquestionably appear in several documents dating from the eleventh and twelfth centuries. Many of these Pallae are later than our inscription, even if one dates it to the tenth or eleventh century. A stronger candidate is a Doña Palla, for example, who in 1064 gave a donation to three presbyters and the Abbot of Vairão; she is not, as some maintain, identified as the abbess of the community. But the Marispalla in our inscription is called *Deo Vota*, a woman religious, and not a *domna* Palla as written in the document of 1064. The title *domna* affirms the secular status of a noblewoman named Palla thereby strongly suggesting that different women, in terms of social status and vocation, are mentioned in these two sources. The title for abbesses *abbatissa* began to be used in the sixth century, as attested by Gregory of Tours and inscriptions; and by the eleventh and twelfth centuries was firmly established along with other titles as *mater monasterii* and the like (*Encicl. Luso-Brasileira da Cultura*, [n. 4], 697 f. XIII, s.v. Vairão).

There have also been claims that the monastery of Vairão did not exist before the Middle Ages. The alleged evidence is found in a document that states the following: "Don Nuno Soares, elder son of

true of the *Sampiro* chronicle, Pérez de Urbel, *Sampiro* (n. 7), 280, 342, 344, and 346.

²⁴ *Inscr. Hisp.* (n. 3), 20. See also, Fita, *Boletín* (n. 4.II), 496.

²⁵ "De suerte que esta fundación fué por una Señora llamada MarisPala, ó Maria Pala... que era Monja de alguna de las Religiones...", *Colecção de Manuscritos*, IV (n. 4.I), 218. Ferreira has been the only scholar to suggest *manis Palla* in *O Archeologo* (n. 4.II), 282.

²⁶ See Pinto, *Catalogo* (n. 4.I), 85-86; Cunha de Almeida, *Iuizo Historico* (n. 4.I), 292-293.

Soeiro Galindes—sent by the Leonese kings—was married to Doña Elvira Touriz, daughter of Don Touriz Sarna, who founded the monastery at Vairão." But a manuscript from the tenth century (974) undermines the Touriz document since it acknowledges the earlier existence of a monastic community at Vairão. Without any firm convincing documentary evidence Enderquina Palla has been linked to the Touriz Sarna family. She and her husband Gundesind did found and gave generous donations to monasteries, but Vairão is not specifically mentioned. Even if this family connection were established it would still be clear that neither she nor the Touriz Sarna family founded the monastery at Vairão. They very likely did not reestablish the community, but rather gave some type of a donation to an already existing monastic community. In contrast, our inscription points to an actual initial foundation of the community.²⁷ In sum, these theories only work if we read the name as *manis Palla* and we alter the inscription to yield a date other than the one clearly carved on the stone. Otherwise we have an attestation that one Marispalla living in the sixth century founded a community of women religious at Vairão.

There remains a further objection. Vives and others would have us to believe that *Deo vota* was not a title given to ascetic women in the fifth century.²⁸ Eustaquio Sánchez Salor, in a study of ecclesiastical titles in Visigothic Spain, carried out an exhaustive survey of the use of *Deo vota* ascribed to religious women and virgins consecrated to God. The earliest textual peninsular reference to *Deo vota* is found in the First Council of Toledo (400), and it overwhelmingly predates our inscription whether one dates it at 485 or 535.²⁹

If Marispalla was a sixth century religious woman and had a direct hand in founding Vairão, this activity suits the role of women in that geographical era, as can be demonstrated by the following two examples from the fourth and sixth centuries. (1) In his letter to Eustochium, Jerome reports that Paula, a virgin consecrated to God, involved herself in founding monastic communities. He (like many other leading male clergy) wholeheartedly encouraged her efforts and offered moral support. What is even more extraordinary is the fact that Paula also founded male monastic communities, and Jerome enthusiastically endorsed and praised her: *post uirorum monasterium, quod uiris tradiderat gubernandum, plures uirgines, quas e diuersis provinciis congregat, tam nobiles quam medii et infimi generis, in tres turmas monasteriaque duxit*.³⁰ Similar activities by other women of the fourth century confirm that what Jerome identified in his letter was hardly an exception. Feminine monastic communities were as widespread geographically as their male counterparts. In short, Marispalla's direct role in the foundation of a religious community at sixth century Vairão was not at all unusual; it is rather consistent with the activities of many ascetic women whose social standing and influence permitted them to establish feminine monastic communities.

(2) In the sixth century the foundation of feminine monastic communities by women showed no abatement. Gregory of Tours in his *Decem Libri Historiarum* relates time and again the significant role and contributions of women religious in Gaul and elsewhere. The most famous of them all was Radegunda, a high born woman from an influential family, who chose to become a virgin of God (*Deo Vota*). She was responsible for the foundation, directly and indirectly, of many monasteries.³¹ Her example

²⁷ For Enderquina and Gundesind see, Pinto, *Catalogo dos Bispos do Porto* (n. 4.I), 85-86, but is convinced Marispalla lived in the fifth century. Cunha de Almeida, *Iuizo Historico* (n. 4.I), 293-294. Ribeiro, "Memoria" (n.4, I), 426-427. The document is quoted in "Vairão", *Enciclopedia* (n. 4.II), 696, and in Ribeiro, "Memoria" (n. 4.I), 423-424.

²⁸ "El *Deo vota*, que a primera vista podría significar antigüedad, también encuadra mejor en la España de los siglos posteriores", *Inscr. Hisp.* (n. 3), 20, and Fita in *Boletín* (n. 4.II), 496 makes a similar case.

²⁹ See *Jerarquías Eclesiásticas y Monacales en época Visigótica* (Salamanca 1976) 244-251. See also J. Mellado Rodríguez, *Lexico de los Concilios Visigóticos de Toledo*, I, A-I (Córdoba 1990), 189.

³⁰ See "Epitaphium sanctae Paulae", *Epistula* 108.20, in *Sancti Eusebii Hieronymi Epistulae*, CSEL 55 (Vindobonae 1922), 306-351 at 334-335.

³¹ Sources on Radegunda are Gregory of Tours, *Libri historiarum decem* 9.39,42; and 10.15-16; *Gloria Confessorum*, 104. For two *Vitae* of Radegunda see Venantius Fortunatus in *MGH, A.A.* 4.2 ed. by B. Krusch (1885), 38-49, and Baudonivia, a contemporary nun living in the same community of religious, *MGH, SRM* 2, ed. by B. Krusch (1888), 377-395. See also the example of Ingtrude who founded a nunnery near the forecourt of Saint Martin's church, *Libri historiarum de-*

demonstrates that some women had the opportunity, influence, and social standing to engage in this activity, as was no less true of men. Both examples are testimony that in the century preceding Marispalla and in the sixth century women founded monasteries. Marispalla is a precious example of a sixth century ascetic woman in Galicia devoted to the advancement of feminine monasticism under the watch of a Suevic King Veremundus.

5. *perfectum est templum*

The last of Vives's objections focused on this formula and specifically the word *templum*. The preceding phrase *in nomine domini* he noted was frequently used in all centuries before and after the fifth century. He conceded that if the inscription were authentically early this would make the use of *templum* a unique epigraphic example prior to the year 711, while it was abundantly utilized in the tenth and eleventh centuries.³² Vives specified that *templum* is not once found in inscriptions from the Visigothic period. True as this may be, why should we limit our search for the word *templum* to epigraphic evidence only?

In the early Middle Ages, including the sixth century, a variety of words such as *ecclesia*, *basilica*, or *templum* were used interchangeably to identify religious buildings. The word *templum* is found, for instance, several times in the Visigothic councils. At the Council of Toledo XVI (693) *ecclesia*, *basilica*, and *templum* were utilized freely to designate religious structures.³³ When in the sixth century, Gregory of Tours relates the story of the conversion of the Sueves in Galicia under Chararic, he refers to the shrine-church of Martin of Tours in Gaul as a *templum*. Within the same narrative Gregory resorts to the term *ecclesia* to identify a shrine-church that was built by King Chararic in Galicia in honor of Martin of Tours (Barlow, *Martini episcopi*, [n. 17], 298-300). Similar fluid usages of these terms are legion in the texts of the early Middle Ages. A broader consideration of the use of *templum* in the early Middle Ages confirms without question the likelihood of a sixth century date.

6. CONCLUSION

The inscription at Vairão is certainly one filled with challenges and peculiarities as this study has demonstrated. Based upon the scant documentary evidence, including that from the tenth and eleventh centuries, the internal evidence leads me to propose a sixth century date for these stones. We can conclude that the letters for the date could not possibly be a singular L or M as proposed by Vives, or a singular D as suggested by others, nor even a T as a result of scribal error. We rather read a DL ligature which renders the date as 573 of the Spanish Era, or 535. Our inscription at Vairão, then, identifies one of those unnamed Suevic kings ruling in Galicia that Isidore of Seville mentions for the years between 469 and 550, a time for which we have not literary sources. The date also places the *Deo Vota* Marispalla in the sixth century as the original founder of a community of religious women. Any future study of the Sueves that engages the question of the chronology of the kings of the Sueves must include a King Veremundus as very likely ruling in the sixth century and more precisely around the year 535. For an era and a region where there is such a dearth of evidence even the smallest of information literary or archaeological is certainly welcome.

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cem, 9.33.

³² "El *in nomine Dei* es fórmula general para todos los siglos; en cambio el *perfectum est templum*, sería un unicum en España antes del 711, mientras no es raro en los siglos X-XI", *Inscr. Hisp.* (n. 3), 19.

³³ The citations are conveniently gathered in, Mellado Rodríguez, *Léxico de los Concilios*, II (n. 13), 692. These are in Vives, *Concilios Visigóticos* (n. 5), Council of Toledo VIII (653). 280; XIII (683).424; XVI (693).485. In the Council of Elvira (ca. 300-306), canon 1.2, the bishops used *templum* for a pagan structure.



Inscription from San Salvador de Vairão: 1) Entire inscription; stripes of cement between sections, visible in picture 3, have been cut out in this photomontage

TAFEL XII



2)



3)

Inscription from San Salvador de Vairão: 2) Closeup. Ligature discussed on p. 270 (original stone);
3) The same section in plaster cut at Lisbon