RE-IMAGINING ROMAN PERSECUTION IN THE VISIGOTHIC PASSIONS[1]

Introduction: Martyrs and confessors[2]

No texts from the Visigothic period were more consistently engaged with the memory of the Roman past than the martyr passions. Though redacted mainly in the sixth and seventh centuries, the Iberian passions of the Visigothic period vividly evoked the world of the Roman persecutions over two centuries earlier. Historians put little faith in their historical veracity—only the *Passio Fructuosi, Augurii et Eulogii*, known to Augustine of Hippo, appears in corpora of 'genuine' ancient passions—but what they do reveal is the cultivation of a useful Roman past by post-Roman Christians.[3] They were unusually widely disseminated works, read out to congregations at martyr festivities, and repeatedly performed through the cycles of the liturgical calendar.[4] In Robert Markus' words, 'on a large number of the year's

[1] Drafts of this chapter have been read by Julia Smith, Lisa Lodwick, and Kati Ihnat, each of whom provided stimulating comments. I am grateful also to the editors of this volume and to the anonymous peer reviewers whose critiques greatly improved the text. Finally, I owe a debt to the organizers and participants of the 2019 Princeton University workshop where I first presented a version of this chapter. Particular interventions are acknowledged in the notes. All errors, of course, remain my own.

[2] For general accounts of the cult of saints in Visigothic Hispania: García Rodríguez 1966; Castillo Maldonado 2006; Brown 1981 remains fundamental for wider paradigms.

[3] On 'authentic passions', see Rebillard 2017, pp. 1-27 with the *Passio Fructuosi* at pp. 258-62 (with English trans.).

[4] de Gaiffier 1954.

days, a Christian who attended a church service would be liturgically thrust back into the age of the martyrs.'[5] Historians, however, have been more prone to think about the other side of the equation—how the martyrs, in relics or legendary retellings, were brought into a new medieval world.

It is often suggested that the figure of the bloody martyr was superseded by new modes of sanctity, particularly that of the ascetic 'confessor' saint. Yet this assertion rests on arguments advanced by particular late antique Christian authorities themselves. While the notion of martyrdom was, of course, forged in the violence of the Roman persecutions and bore the distinctive marks of the very Roman cultural world of judicial tortures and spectacular entertainments, the basic ideal could be divorced from this historical context.[6] Drawing on a long patristic tradition reaching back to Augustine of Hippo and others, Gregory the Great crystallized the notion of the 'two martyrdoms'. One was that of the bloody martyr whose inner virtue was made manifest in violent passion; the other was that of the ascetic, whose historical context did not provide opportunity for outer, manifest struggle. Alike in their inner struggle against vice, the two were distinguished only by historical serendipity.[7]

With martyrdom generalized into an inner conflict against vice, sanctity could be drawn away from the increasingly distant figures of the Roman martyrs and brought into the world of the holy bishop or abbot, the eremitic miracle-worker, or the lone ascetic. A vast corpus of hagiography from Gaul and elsewhere concerns such people, and the works of exceptionally vocal figures like Gregory of Tours have been allowed to cast a heavy shadow

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[5] Markus 1990, p. 99.

[6] On passions' 'Romanness': Bowersock 1995; Shaw, 2003; Grig 2004.

[7] On Augustine: Ployd 2018. For Gregory: Greg. Mag. Dial. 3.26, with Straw 1999 and Leyser 2000.

over historians' understandings of post-Roman sanctity.[8] Only recently has it become clear that those who promoted such visions of saints' cult—like Gregory the Great in his highly-influential *Dialogi*—were arguing positions which aroused controversy in their time.[9] Such ideas did indeed reach Visigothic Hispania, as did some appetite for confessor *vitae*. The Visigothic evidence, however, suggests that this ideal of sanctity was far less widespread outside of ascetic circles than that of the bloody martyr.[10]

In the liturgical cult of the church, the Roman-era martyrs, rooted strongly in time and place, remained unequivocally at the centre. Confessor piety was marginal here. If the evidence of the eleventh- and twelfth-century manuscripts of the *Liber missarum* are any guide, the only Iberian confessor saint to receive liturgical cult in the Visigothic period was Aemilian, a sixth-century hermit whose *vita* was written by Braulio of Zaragoza. Given such patronage he was the exception not the rule.[11] Though liturgical texts (and passions) did occasionally use the word 'confessor' for figures like Leocadia of Toledo, here the word was understood in the manner closer to that in which Cyprian of Carthage had originally used it—

[8] On Gregory of Tours: Van Dam 1993; on Merovingian *vitae*: Van Uytfanghe 1987 and Kreiner 2014.

[9] For the *Dialogi*: Dal Santo 2012; for earlier scepticism: Hunter 1999. Isidore of Seville was sceptical about contemporary miracles: Isid. Sent. 1.24.1-4b, with commentary in Cazier 1994, pp. 129-32.

[10] For Gregory's 'two martyrdoms' in Hispania: Isid. Etym. 7.11.4 and Valerius, *De uana seculi sapientia*, 9, ed. Díaz y Díaz 2006, p. 180, with commentary in de Vogüé 1989. For the *Dialogi*, generally: VPE, *praefatio.* On Visigothic confessor hagiography: Castellanos 2004; Velázquez 2005, pp. 150-245.

[11] See *Liber missarum*, II, ed. Janini, 1982-3, pp. xvii-xxxix, for provenance. The texts for Aemilian are in *Liber missarum*, I, 149.1327-35, pp. 494-9; but note that he does not appear in VO. On Braulio and Aemilian: Castellanos 2011.

that is, to refer to someone who suffered persecution but died in prison rather than by direct execution.[12] The historic Roman context of violence—not the ascetic struggle of inner virtue or the miraculous deeds of holy people—predominated in the liturgical side of Visigothic saints' cult. The passions have a claim to being more representative of the regular lay encounter with the saints than confessor hagiography, which had an ambiguous relation to popular cult.[13]

Re-focussing on the passions, we find that the dominant narrative form was that of a martyr suffering passion amid the civic and judicial landscape of the later Roman city. The passions' sense of the past was not one in which elite ascetics—as Valerius would have it—were true heirs to the martyrs' contests, but rather one in which the whole civic Christian community was.[14] The martyr passions were a key means of articulating and asserting a particular vision of civic community, developed in explicit dialogue with images of Roman civic life and the urban crowd. In many ways this Roman past was an imagined past—a legitimating forebear for the contemporary community—but in other ways it demonstrated that there was sufficient continuity in the urban fabric of post-Roman cities to render the passions' social and cultural world legible to contemporary audiences. The passions need to be set against the actual history of Visigothic urbanism and, particularly, of Christianity's changing place within it. These texts imagined a history, but at the same time they were, as a genre, distinctive products of that real later Roman world. As well as their re-imaginings and anachronisms, we should seek the passions' more direct relationship to the physical and cultural vestiges of the Roman city.

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[12] E.g. Cyprian, *Ep.* 12, ed. Hartel 1968-71, pp. 502-4. Pacian of Barcelona attests Cyprian's categories in fourth-century Iberia, e.g. in *Ep.* 2.7.8, ed. Anglada Anfruns 2012, at p. 91.

[13] Castellanos 2004 presents hagiography as a largely elite genre. Cf. Kreiner 2014.

[14] Valerius, *De uana seculi sapientia*, 8, ed. Díaz y Díaz 2006, p. 178.

The passions and the *Pasionario*

Perhaps the largest obstacle in the study of the Iberian passions has been the difficulty in placing them in time and space. None can be securely attributed to a named author, and some cannot even be pinned down to a single century. As composite texts, re-using and elaborating on older material from both written and oral traditions, they render the notion of a single author ill-fitting.[15] In the *Passio Felicis*, it is true, the hagiographer stated that he was a deacon and that, along with people from his region, he had translated Felix's body out of Gerona, but his autobiographical candour has no parallel elsewhere in the corpus.[16] Furthermore, the corpus cannot usually be analysed in terms of factions or interest groups as the material from Rome can be: the evidence is simply not fine-grained enough.[17] Even the city of composition is sometimes unknown, and as the case of Felix shows, not every text was composed in the main centre of cult.

The Iberian passions are almost always read within the context of a collection known as the *Pasionario Hispánico*. This collection, preserved in tenth- and eleventh-century

[15] See the wider scholarship on hagiographical *réécriture*: esp. Goullet and Heinzelmann 2003; Goullet 2005. Given our slight knowledge of the earliest texts of the Iberian tradition, however, it is often unclear if we are dealing with texts which have undergone conscious, focussed *réécriture* or texts which have experienced more general, cumulative alterations through the vicissitudes of transmission.

[16] *Passio Felicis*, 21 (PH). The translation was likely to a basilica in Narbonne attested in Gregory of Tours, *Liber in gloria martyrum*, 91, ed. Krusch, p. 99, with discussion in Reiss 2013, pp. 80-92, 117-23. Ildef. De viris. 9, complicates matters by referring to a *sepulchrum sancti Felicis martyris* in Gerona in the seventh century.

[17] Cooper 1999; Leyser 2000. Various Roman passions are translated in Lapidge 2018.

manuscripts from the northern Spanish monasteries of San Pedro de la Cardeña and San Domingo de Silos, contains all of the passions relevant to this study, alongside a host of post-Visigothic passions and a large corpus of texts from pertaining to saints from other regions. In the middle of the twentieth century the passionary was edited in full by Ángel Fabrega Grau, chiefly on the basis of the earliest manuscript, the tenth-century Cardeña manuscript now in the British Library.[18] Pilar Riesco Chueca subsequently re-edited only the passions pertaining to Iberian martyrs using a wider range of *Pasionario* manuscripts.[19] Valeriano Yarza Urquiola has recently published a critical edition of the entire *Pasionario*, distinguishing and separately editing the tenth- and eleventh-century redactions.[20] It is crucial to understand, however, that these are editions of the *Pasionario* as a collection, not of each individual passion according to its earliest manuscripts. While we have evidence for Iberian collections preceding the extant *Pasionario* manuscripts (including mentions of now-lost ninth-century collections), it cannot be presumed that these were examples of the *Pasionario Hispánico* in the form attested in later manuscripts.[21] Indeed, it is worth pushing back against the common assumption that these later manuscripts represent versions of a 'national' liturgical collection with general Iberian scope: as Fernand Péloux has recently argued, this idea owes as much to the twentieth-century nationalist imagination as to the evidence itself.[22]

It is clear, nonetheless, that the *Pasionario* manuscripts preserve various texts which circulated in the Visigothic period. These most likely pre-existed the *Pasionario*, which may

[18] London, BL, add. ms. 25600. See Fábrega Grau 1950-1953, with the MSS. discussed at I, pp. 25-57.

[19] Riesco Chueca, *Pasionario Hispánico*, with MSS. at pp. xv-xix.

[20] Yarza Urquiola (2020), with MSS. at I, pp. 11-13, 291-332. This edition appeared too late to be taken into detailed consideration.

[21] Martín 2009.

[22] Peloux 2018.

well be a post-Visigothic production. The earliest evidence we have for such a collection comes at the opening of the ninth century. Guy Philippart has identified a core corpus of 48 passions in the oldest manuscript (tenth-century) which, following the work of Henri Quentin, he suggests was known to a Frankish writer who augmented Bede's martyrology around 806 (albeit perhaps not in a version identical to the extant *Pasionario* manuscripts).[23] This is as early as we can go. By contrast, individual passions can be securely dated to the Visigothic period or even earlier. The contributions of various scholars in the wake of Fábrega's edition have established a more-or-less agreed-upon corpus of passions circulating in the Visigothic period.[24] There is not the space to detail all the textual considerations upon which these judgements are grounded, but I will lay out one particularly important line of argument.

Many of the passions involve the legendary persecuting governor Datian. The historical record first attested him in Augustine and Prudentius's discussion of Vincent, indicating that the governor was already present in Vincent's now-lost fourth-century passion.[25] The passions frequently borrowed characters and episodes from each other, in Hispania as elsewhere.[26] From Vincent's text, Datian came to be implicated in more and more martyrdoms—including those already attributed to other governors—until he appeared in the near-identical historical prefaces to the *Passio Leocadie* and *Passio Vincenti, Sabine et*

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[23] Philippart 2014, pp. 42-8, drawing on Quentin 1908, pp. 139-221. Cf. Peloux 2018, pp. 130-3. The oldest *Pasionario* manuscript is London, BL, add. ms. 25600.

[24] The main contributions are: Fábrega 1950-1953, I; Díaz y Díaz 1957 and 1964; García Rodriguez 1966; Castillo Maldonado 1999, pp. 21-70.

[25] On the passion known to Augustine and Prudentius, see Saxer 2002, pp. 67-97.

[26] E.g. the recurring character of the *matrona* Lucina in the Roman corpus, discussed in Cooper 1999.

Christete.[27] Here he was written up as the author of a spree of violence, slaughtering the martyrs Félix of Gerona, Cucuphas of Barcelona, Eulalia of Barcelona, the Innumerable of Zaragoza, Justus and Pastor of Compluto, Leocadia of Toledo, Vincent, Sabine, and Christeta of Ávila, and Eulalia of Mérida. In Baudouin de Gaiffier's view, these long prefaces marked the furthest elaboration of Datian's legend.[28] Manuel Díaz y Díaz gave them a *terminus ante quem* in the last years of the seventh century owing to dependencies found in Valerius of

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[27] *Passio Leocadie*, 2-3 (PH); *Passio Vincenti, Sabine et Christete,* 2-3 (PH). A *terminus post quem* is provided by their dependency on a fifth-century Gallic passion from Toulouse: the *Passio Saturnini*, 2, ed. Cabau 2001, at p. 66. The Visigothic prefaces' curious claim that the martyred bodies of the child martyrs Justus and Pastor emitted milk rather than blood (at 3: *pro cruore lac* […] *fundens*) indicates another intertext. It seems to derive from apocryphal traditions concerning the apostle Paul's beheading, the closest parallel being pseudo-Abdias, *Passio sancti Pauli*, 8 ed. Eastman 2015, p. 184: *pro sanguine lac cucurrit.* This text has traditionally been connected to sixth-century Gaul, though on shaky grounds: see Rose 2013a and 2013b. Apocryphal traditions around Paul's beheading were, however, already circulating in the Latin West by the fifth century, though without precise verbal parallels: see Maximus of Turin, *Sermo*, 9.2, ed. Mutzenbecher 1962, at p. 32: *dicitur fluxisse lactis magis unda quam sanguinis*. A separate possibility is that the Visigothic prefaces draw on Prud. Peri. 10.700, where it is said of an infant undergoing judicial torture that *plus unde lactis quam cruoris defluat*. Prudentius' image has been seen to play on a Juvenalian intertext rather than apocrypha on Paul: Tsartsidis 2017, p. 81.

[28] de Gaiffier 1954. This was a reaction against Fábrega 1950-1953, I, pp. 68-75, which posited a now-lost common liturgical text, a '*Passio de communi*', which served as the base for the whole 'cycle of Datian'. See García Rodríguez 1966, pp. 251-3, and Guerreiro 1992b, p. 18, n. 10, for positive discussion of de Gaiffier's argument. Yarza Urquiola 2020, I, pp. 19-

Bierzo.[29] If we accept these arguments we have good reason to place the passions of the martyrs listed above before the end of the Visigothic period.[30] In addition, we can add, on separate grounds, the passions of Fructuous, Augurius, and Eulogius of Tarragona, Vincent of Zaragoza, Justa and Rufina of Seville, and Mantius (said to have been martyred by Jews in the post-Roman period).[31] Aside from the early outliers of the *Passio Fructuosi, Augurii et Eulogii* and the 'version brève' of Vincent's *passio*, these are all dated no earlier than the sixth and seventh centuries.

In a few cases, there are critical editions of individual passions based on the full range of manuscripts, including those outside the *Pasionario* tradition.[32] This is true for our earliest text, the *Passio Fructuosi, Augurii et Eulogii*, which survives in a mid-eighth-century Frankish passion collection held in Munich.[33] It is also true for the *Passio Vincenti*, which has been edited in three substantially different redactions by Victor Saxer. These include a fifth-century 'version brève' and a sixth-century 'version commune' (of which the *Pasionario* text

21, returns to Fábrega's view.

[29] Díaz y Díaz 1957, p. 456.

[30] Eulalia of Barcelona's cult continues to arouse controversy, and I omit it from further discussion. See García Rodríguez 1966, pp. 289-303.

[31] On Justa and Rufina: García Rodríguez 1966, pp. 231-4. On Mantius: Díaz y Díaz 1982; Gil 1984, pp. 189-93; Fernández Catón 1983; González Salinero 2018. I discuss Fructuous *et al.* and Vincent below.

[32] For the Gallic diffusion of Iberian passions: Guerreiro 1992a.

[33] Franchi de'Cavalieri 1935, pp. 183-94, with the MSS. discussed at pp. 168-81. The Munich MS. is BSB, Clm 3514, pp. 145-8, described in Bierbrauer 1990, p. 16. MS. viewable online at: http://daten.digitale-sammlungen.de/0001/bsb00017241/images/index.html [last accessed 16/07/21].

is an example), as well as a Carolingian redaction (c. 870) from Saint-Germain-des-Prés.[34] The earlier testimonies of passions give us confidence in the reliability of the *Pasionario* as a channel of transmission. The eighth-century Munich collection gives texts of the *Passio Fructuosi* and *Passio Vincentii* ('version commune') differing little from the *Pasionario* texts. A different eighth-century Carolingian passion collection preserved in a Turin manuscript gives a text of the *Passio Eulalie Emeritensis* closely mirroring the *Pasionario* manuscripts.[35]

Some cases are more complicated. The *Passio Innumerabilium Cesaragustanorum*, for example, is first known in a ninth-century manuscript from Saint-Germain-des-Prés in a redaction significantly divergent from the *Pasionario* text.[36] While both versions were printed in the *Acta Sanctorum*, no subsequent edition of the variant Carolingian text has been made.[37] Rosa Guerreiro's suggestion that it represents an Aragonese variant does not seem to be the most plausible explanation.[38] Instead, the Carolingian version was likely edited in the ninth century by the monks of Saint-Germain-des-Prés in much the same manner as the *Passio Vincenti*. Both re-written texts appear for the first time in a Saint-Germain manuscript which collected texts pertaining to the monk Usuard's journey to Hispania.[39] The Saint-Germain version of the *Passio Innumerabilium* plays down any local specificities and displays a much

[34] Saxer's various studies and editions are collected in Saxer 2002.

[35] Turin, BNU, MS. D.V.3, ff. 104v-111r. The text is ed. Caterina Mordeglia in Goullet 2014, pp. 446-57. I am grateful to Jamie Kreiner for notifying me of this edition.

[36] Paris, BN, lat. 13760, fols. 83r-89v (MS. viewable online at: https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b90767846).

[37] Smedt 1887, pp. 643-9, with the Carolingian text edited from a tenth-century Saint-Amand MS. (Paris, BN, lat. 5568), derivative of Paris, BN, lat. 13760. On these MSS.: Smith 1996, esp. pp. 161-2.

[38] Guerreiro 1992a, p. 152.

more muted tendency for *laus urbis* in comparison to the Iberian redaction. The Iberian text, by contrast, has the marks of a text written to be preached in Zaragoza, with exhortations to an audience and abundant references to the glory of the city and its festivals.[40] All this suggests that the Saint-Germain text was a result of *réécriture* in a monastic context, distancing it from the oral, civic sensibilities of the original text preserved in the Iberian manuscripts. The *Pasionario* tradition is therefore a more secure line of transmission than that which ran through Saint-Germain. While due caution is essential, and more philological work on the passions is needed, Visigothicists have more secure passions at their disposal than do many early medievalists: we can have confidence in the Visigothic provenance of many texts in the *Pasionario*.

Oblivion and eternity

While the passions transmitted in later monastic manuscripts were used perhaps for private reading or in monastic liturgy, it is important to re-situate them in their Visigothic context as far more public and wide-reaching texts, chiefly delivered orally.[41] Replacing them in the context of urban cult, as texts preached about the Christian past of the various cities of Hispania, we see them in dialogue not only with the Roman past but also with Roman modes of memorializing. I want to think, in particular, about how passions engaged with the physical environment of the Roman and post-Roman city. Doing so requires an examination

[39] On the MS.: Decker 1990 and Saxer 2002, pp. 293-4. On Usuard: Nelson 1993 and Christys 1998.

[40] *Passio Innumerabilium Cesaragustanorum*, 13-14 (PH). For discussion: Tovar Paz 1994, pp. 226-30.

[41] *Pace* the more monastic interpretations of Díaz y Díaz 1992 and Gil 2000.

of how the passions related to anterior memorial culture. Christian memorialization claimed to transcend the empty material memorialization of Roman society, but at the same time it developed new ways of understanding the physical world—particularly Roman urban and suburban sites—as sanctified by connection with a martyr and their deeds.[42] The underlying logic of this 'materialization' of the holy can be elaborated in some detail.

The passion most consciously attentive to the relationship between classical and Christian ways of remembering was the *Passio Innumerabilium Cesaragustanorum*.[43] Opening with a discourse on the nature of mortality and memory, it positioned itself against the literary memorialization of 'the deeds of worldly ancient men' in history and literature. It described these men as violent people, pouring out 'the blood of innocents' and seeking glory only in fighting and defending their homes and property. Their memorialization—'in the schools of the Greek philosophers' as well as in 'the studies of the Latin peoples' and 'the remembrances of the historians and equally the books of the poets'—was a frantic attempt to stave of the oblivion of mortality.[44] People might try to create a more lasting memory through inscribing words in marble or bronze, but all was bound to fail. Christian memorialization, in contrast, was aimed at those who had already attained eternal life—those already resident in the 'eternal dwelling-places'.[45]

[42] On sanctity and place: Sotinel 2005.

[43] I cite from the PH.

[44] *Passio Innumerabilium Cesaragustanorum*, 2-3 (PH), quotes at 2: *Priscorum mundialium gesta uirorum, quorum obstinatio extitit inrumpere acies bellatorum cruoremque effundere innoxium seruantium iura terrarum tectaque uel claustra domorum, non solum Grecorum gimnasia concrepant filosoforum, sed etiam ethnicorum studia personant latinorum. Celebritatem quippe nominis eorum tam monumenta storicorum quam etiam libri concinunt poetarum*.

[45] *Passio Innumerabilium Cesaragustanorum*, 3 (PH): *in mansionibus eternis.*

The contrast between ancient heroes and martyrs was well-known in other passions—it was used similarly, for example, in the opening of the *passio* for the second-century martyrs of Lyon, preserved in Eusebius's *Historia ecclesiastica*.[46] In the bluntest sense, passions cast Roman culture as a foil against which Christian eternity could stand out, and identified it accordingly with empty glories and fleeting pleasures. Various Iberian martyrs were depicted dramatically abandoning elements of classical culture. Thus Justus and Pastor, infant martyrs, rejected schooling from 'the teacher or doctor of this world (*istius seculi*)' and rushed off to seek martyrdom instead.[47] Félix of Gerona rejected the liberal education he was receiving in his native North Africa, saying: 'What is the philosophy of this world to me?'[48] This was a gendered trope: female martyrs like Eulalia of Mérida were more likely to be depicted rejecting socially advantageous marriages.[49] In a sense, however, both stood for the seductions of worldly cultural norms as a whole.

The stark dichotomy set up between Roman and Christian culture was a trope that co-existed with a very substantial borrowing of elements of the Roman cultural imagination. Militant metaphors for martyrdom are well known: martyrs could be 'soldiers of Christ', and Christ could be 'our emperor who arms his martyrs with the triumphal standard'.[50] More interesting for our purposes was the binding of martyr cult into the civic world of Roman

[46] Its influence, via Rufinus' translation, is possible, though there are no clear verbal borrowings. For Eusebius' and Rufinus' texts: *Historia ecclesiastica*, 5.1.3-4, ed. Schwartz and Mommsen 1903-1908, pp. 400-3.

[47] *Passio Iusti et Pastori*, 2 (PH): *iam non ad studium magistri iustius seculi uel doctoris ire ceperunt.*

[48] *Passio Felicis Gerundensis*, 3 (PH):*"Quid mici est filosophia huius mundo?"*

[49] *Passio Eulalie Emeritensis*, 8 (PH).

[50] *Passio Innumerabilium Cesaragustanorum*, 3 (PH): *militum Christi* […] *imperatoris nostri, qui triumfali uexillo* […] *suos martyres perarmauit?*

cities. Rome itself could be understood in a new Christian way—as ‘that head of peoples (*caput gentium*), most noble of cities, golden Rome’ with ‘two consuls of Christ, the great holy apostles Peter and Paul’, in the words of the *Passio Innumerabilium Cesaragustanorum*.[51] The curious phrase *caput gentium*—a play on the classical *caput mundi* —appeared also in Isidore’s *De laude Spaniae,* where the Visigoths were described coveting *aurea Roma caput gentium*.[52] This had no martyrial context, however, and it may be more plausible to connect the *Passio Innumerabilum*’s imagery to a sermon on Peter and Paul, once attributed to Augustine of Hippo but of doubtful provenance, which described the martyred apostles as ‘two lights of the *gentes*’ held by *Roma caput gentium*.[53] This is uncertain but, either way, it remains true that there were strong precedents for re-using ancient civic imagery in martyr cult. Indeed, martyrs were key tools in the Christian reinterpretation of traditional urban culture. They were, more broadly, sites in which the Roman cultural past was confronted and re-interpreted.

The main architect of the Christian understanding of Late Roman civic culture in Hispania was Prudentius of Calahorra. Deeply imbued with the classical poetic canon, he had

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[51] *Passio Innumerabilium Cesaragustanorum*, 13 (PH): *ipsa caput gentium, nobilissima urbium, aurea Roma, qui cum duobus consulibus Christi*, *magnis scilicet sanctis apostolis Petro et Paulo, gestat innumerabilium martirum suaue olentia incrementa rosarum.* For the Christianization of the classical imagery of Rome cf. Prud. Peri. 2, on the martyr Laurence.

[52] Isid. Hist. Goth., *De laude Spaniae,* lines 26-7. Deswarte 2010, p. 96 notes the parallel, though without reference to the sermon below.

[53] [Pseudo-]Augustine, *Sermo,* 381, ed. Migne 1865, col. 1684: *Habet ergo Roma caput gentium, duo lumina gentium*. For doubts on Augustinian provenance: Hill 1995, p. 375, n. 1. For the cult of Peter and Paul in Hispania: García Rodríguez 1966, pp. 146-53; Deswarte 2010, pp. 92-7.

served in high—though somewhat unclear—office in the western imperial administration.[54] He came to exert a major influence over later Iberian passions and liturgical compositions. The question of how Christianity should relate to the anterior classical literary heritage and its role in memorialization was especially vital in poetry. Prudentius's Iberian predecessor, the Constantinian-era versifier of scripture Juvencus, had stated that ancient poetry served only to 'bind together lies about the deeds of ancient men', all the while utilizing its aesthetic achievements in the service of scripture.[55] Horace and Ovid had both famously suggested that their literary work could attain a transcendence and longevity denied to physical monuments doomed to crumble.[56] Juvencus considered ancient poetry as equally awaiting oblivion—equally part of the mutable world that God will bring to an end when he wishes. Prudentius shared this conception of poetry, yet as Cillian O'Hogan has eloquently shown, he also had a vision of martyr cult which borrowed heavily from the Roman civic imaginary.[57] Thus, while the martyrs belonged to universal Christian history, their deaths could also be imagined as sacrifices purifying particular cities and citizenries as bounded entities.[58] Martyr commemoration was about things eternal, but it was tied tightly to physical spaces, monuments, and objects on earth. To understand this seeming paradox, we need to think more broadly about Christian 'materiality'.

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[54] His career is known from the remarks in his *Praefatio*, ed. Cunningham 1966, pp. 1-2.

[55] Juvencus, *Euangeliorum libri IIII*, *Praefatio*, 16, ed. Huemer 1891, p. 2: *quae veterum gestis hominum mendacia nectunt.* See Green 2006.

[56] On Horace and Ovid: O'Hogan 2016, pp. 21-3. On similar sentiments in Eusebius of Caesarea: Castelli 2004, pp. 104-5.

[57] O'Hogan 2016. On Prudentius and martyr cult: Palmer 1989; Roberts 1993; Hershkowitz 2017.

[58] Petruccione 1995.

It has long been established that martyrs and other saints allowed the holy to be manifested in particular objects. Patricia Cox Miller has suggested that there was a 'material turn' in Late Antique Christian culture, involving relics, new thinking on the body, aesthetic trends, and so on.[59] While some ecclesiastical figures, notably Vigilantius of Calagurris, vigorously opposed the notion of the divine's substantial interpenetration of the material world, historians tend, nonetheless, to identify relics as indicative of a new religious mentality and praxis.[60] As the 'moveable wealth' of holiness, they were capable of transcending their origins: they could be brought into new centres like monasteries, or be bought and sold, stolen and divided up.[61] The Iberian passions do discuss relics, but in relatively muted terms, tending to emphasize the importance of the bodily integrity of the martyr's corpse rather than its capacity to be split or traded.[62] A notable exception is the *Passio Felicis*, in which the author, a presbyter, recounts how he produced portable blood relics from the martyr's body.[63] The passions, with their civic sensibilities, were usually, however, more concerned with the way in which sites were rendered special by connection with a martyr's life. It is this 'immovable wealth' that will elucidate the rootedness of martyr cult in the topography, as well as the imaginary, of the Late Roman city.

Topographies of martyrdom

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[59] Miller, 2009.

[60] Hunter 1999.

[61] On relics: Smith 2012, 2015; Wiśniewski 2019; on thefts: Geary, *Furta Sacra*.

[62] E.g. *Passio Fructuosi, Augurii et Eulogii*, 6, ed. Franchi de'Cavalieri 1935, pp. 192-3; Prud. Peri. 6.130-41.

[63] *Passio Felicis*, 22 (PH).

Martyr cult was typically conservative as regards Late Roman topography. When the near-identical historical prefaces to two later-seventh-century texts—the *Passio Leocadie* and *Passio Vincenti, Sabine et Christete*—built up a unified historical narrative of the Diocletianic persecution in Hispania, grouping together different pre-existing cults by the legendary activity of the governor Datian, they gave a catalogue of cities not dissimilar to that given in a poem of Prudentius's on the Innumerable of Zaragoza. Prudentius opened by evoking the end times. Each city walked in a line, like an imperial procession, to the seat of judgment, bearing the martyrs with which it was blessed.[64] While the Visigothic prefaces did not follow Prudentius's imperial imagery, they did retain his fundamentally urban focus, with one key difference: while Prudentius included some North African, Gallic, and Italian cities, the Visigothic prefaces described only Iberian examples. They mark the contours of Visigothic political topography, constructing a usable past better adapted for the shape of the new polity, and thus narrower than Prudentius's more expansive Late Roman vision. They did so, however, without allowing the centrality of cities to recede.

The civic basis of cult comes across most sharply in instances where a martyr's patronage was contested. While martyrs were, in theory, all equally deserving of worship by everyone, most martyrs were bound up with local civic identity, and their special patronage was subject to more or less exclusive claims. Vincent's cult was contested between Zaragoza—where he had served as deacon—and Valencia—his place of martyrdom and burial. The sermon known as *Gloriosissimi*, probably preached in Valencia, showed how exclusive a local sense of connection to a martyr could be:

> Although this special friend of Christ should be worshipped by all Christians, with the relics of the martyrs, for his holy confession, he is nevertheless our holy servant

[64] Prud. Peri. 4.1-76.

> joined by the piety of our people, for which reason he is ours in stock (*genere*), ours from faith, ours in vestment (*stola*), ours in duty, ours in burial, ours in patronage.[65]

Similar rhetoric, awash with first-person plurals and metaphors of kinship, is known in parallel Gallic cases. Drawing on sermons preached in Lyon, Lisa Bailey has connected such language to civic competition and anxiety over urban status.[66] The author of this particular Iberian sermon is uncertain, but the competition between Valencia and Zaragoza over Vincent's patronage is certainly the most plausible context in which to place it. It has been argued that it was written to be preached by Justinian of Valencia, the mid-sixth-century bishop of the city, though it is unclear whether he composed it himself or whether—as some manuscripts say—it was written by his brother Justus of Urgell.[67] Either way, its attachment to the martyr is strikingly exclusive.

A city's claim to special connection with the martyr was not solely about the possession of relics. The locations of suffering and martyrdom attained a special connection to the martyrs in their own right, and did so in ways that more closely bound memory to physical monuments. In the near-identical prefaces to the later-seventh-century *Passio*

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[65] Justus of Urgell, *Gloriosissimi*, 1, ed. Martín and Abellán 2012, p. 243: *Qui licet precipuus Christi amicus ab omnibus christianis cum reliquis martiribus pro sancta sit confessione colendus, est tamen nobis uernula quadam et gentili pietate coniunctus, eo quod sit noster ex genere, noster ex fide, noster in stola, noster in gloria, noster in officio, noster in tumulo, noster in patrocinio.*

[66] Bailey 2010, pp. 41-5.

[67] Its recent editors Martín and Abellán, argue the traditional case for Justus' authorship; Linage Conde 1972 argued influentially for Justinian's. Sceptical of any attribution is Meyer 2012, pp. 141-2. On Justus and Justinian: Isid. De viris, 20-1.

Leocadie and *Passio Vincenti, Sabine et Christete*, the various martyrdoms of Zaragoza were described as follows:

> If the human tongue would pass over in silence how many insults and blows were in that place—of how many tortures and how many effusions of blood had been carried out—the land itself, polluted with the blood of Christians, would speak, for there would be no excepted place which would not hold the revivified and most flourishing ashes of the martyrs in the site of cremation.[68]

Zaragoza did certainly hold ashes of martyrs, but the prior image—that of the land, wet with blood, attesting their martyrdoms—reflects a different logic. Martyrs could be thought of as literally writing their deeds on the earth in blood. Prudentius opened his poem for the local martyrs of Calahorra, Emeterius and Chelidonius with the following words: 'Two martyrs' names are enrolled in heaven; there Christ registered them in golden letters, but on earth he recorded the names in figures of blood.'[69] Michael Roberts has called this bloody writing 'the indelible stain of blood that that constitutes the minimal Passion text'.[70] According to Prudentius's imagery, the written passion composed by humans is secondary to the indelible passion written on the ground, itself corresponding to the eternal and immutable passion

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[68] I translate from *Passio Leocadie*, 3 (PH): *Quanta in ibidem ludibria quantaque berbera, quot cruces, quotque effusiones sanguinum in ea operatus fuerit, si humana lingua taceat, ipsa que polluta est christianorum sanguinibus terra, loqueretur, eo quod nullus exceptus fuerit qui bustuali situ non teneat rediuibos ac florentissimos cineres martyrum locus.* See also *Passio Vincenti, Sabine et Christete*, 3 (PH).

[69] Prud. Peri., 1.1-3: *Scripta sunt caelo duorum martyrum uocabula,/ aureis quae Christus illic adnotauit litteris,/ sanguinis notis eadem scripta terris tradidit*; trans. Roberts 1993, p. 11.

[70] Roberts 1993, p. 13.

written in heaven.[71] Martyrs' bloody writing roots the passion in a location, and renders a spot holy by anointing it or consecrating it with blood.

Numerous Visigothic sources attest the importance of sites made holy by bloodshed. Eugenius II of Toledo, former deacon of Zaragoza, wrote a verse inscription for a basilica in Zaragoza dedicated to Vincent, stating that Vincent had shed blood from his nose on the spot on which the church was built.[72] A more striking example is provided by the church built in the amphitheatre at Tarragona. While epigraphic evidence is mute on the point, it seems overwhelmingly likely that this Visigothic-era church was placed in the old Roman amphitheatre where the city's martyrs Fructuosus, Augurius, and Eulogius were believed to have been martyred.[73] Their passion places their deaths in the amphitheatre and, as Jordina Sales Carbonell has shown, parallel cases are known from elsewhere in the Mediterranean.[74] The presence of different cult sites in the same city, some based on body relics and others on sites of bloodshed, is a phenomenon known elsewhere in the Mediterranean, too—in Arles, for example.[75] Michael Kulikowski has emphasized that Iberian cult sites tended to develop outside of cities, typically on the site of a Roman necropolis, thereby decentring communal focal points away from the prior symbolic heart of the Roman city.[76] This was true in Tarragona, for example, as well as for Mérida and Toledo where the major cult sites lie outside the walls.[77] Yet in all these cases there is also evidence of intramural building—which is more difficult to identify archaeologically—from around the sixth century. This was a

[71] Cf. Prud. Peri. 10.1111-35, where perishable imperial documents telling of martyrdom are contrasted to the imperishable account taken by an angel.

[72] Eugenius of Toledo, *Carmina*, 10.7-8, ed Alberto 2006, p. 222.

[73] Godoy Fernández 1995.

[74] Sales Carbonell 2014 and 2016.

[75] Bailey 2010, pp. 44-5, with background in Loseby 1996.

[76] Kulikowski 2004, pp. 215-55, 287-310.

hinge-point in Visigothic urbanism, with Christianity engaging more directly with the fabric of monumental Roman urbanism and claiming spaces once at the symbolic heart of the ancient city. The sanctification of intramural sites became newly important.

Valencia is a well-documented case.[78] Preceded by some precocious fifth-century burials, most of the buildings of the Valencian 'episcopal complex' are datable to the sixth century. These include the cathedral, a cruciform mausoleum, a baptistry, and other edifices.[79] A large number of burials are present in the area, some of which indicate high prestige and others whose simultaneous multiple inhumations have been connected to waves of the Justinianic plague.[80] Especially interesting is a building indicated by a seventh-century apse built over the ruins of a third-century peristyle house. Later tradition and modern archaeological work has sought to identify this as the location of the prison in which Vincent was incarcerated. That the Roman house was used in this way seems unlikely—especially since it seems to have had a subsequent phase of use in food-production before its destruction—but its later monumentalization suggests that Visigothic-era Christians may, nonetheless, have already made this connection.[81] Christianity's growth in the civic spaces of cities involved new logics of cult, sometimes based on relics but sometimes based instead on the physical sites of past suffering. Since most of the Iberian passions were composed in the sixth

[77] Mar et al. 1996; Chavarría Arnau 2018, pp. 81-4; Mateos Cruz 1999, esp. pp. 179-95; Gurt i Esparraguera and Diarte Blasco 2012.

[78] Summarized in Diarte Blasco 2012, pp. 234-44 and Löx 2017.

[79] Soriano Sánchez 1994; Alapont Martín and Ribera i Lacomba 2006 and 2009.

[80] Gruber 2018. Keller *et al.* 2019 demonstrates the presence of the pathogen *Y. pestis* in one grave from the episcopal site at l'Almoina.

[81] Alapont Martín and Ribera i Lacomba 2009 affirms the traditional thesis; Löx 2017 gives a sceptical take.

and seventh centuries, while this change in Visigothic urbanism was in motion, they ought to be read as part of a new Christian engagement with the Roman urban past.

The Roman crowd and the Christian congregation

Thinking of the passions' relationship to the physical vestiges of Roman urbanism, the material they contain about public space and crowds acquires new significance. 'Public' is a word with a wide semantic range, both in its Latin root, *publicus*, and in its modern scholarly uses. In its narrowest sense it could just denote 'the state' as opposed to 'private' citizens, as when Chindasuinth ruled that lords could not kill their dependents *extra publicum iudicium* (that is, without going through the systems of royal justice).[82] Isidore glossed the term *publicus* minimally, citing the Roman jurist Ulpian's definition of *ius publicum*.[83] More relevant here, however, is the broader notion of 'publicness' as representativeness and openness—as things occurring before the eyes of a given community. In this sense we can refer to 'public spaces' that were not controlled by the state. We can also describe bishops addressing themselves to a Christian 'public' inasmuch as they were seen as the representative of a given community and exercised their authority before its scrutiny. A vision of a Christian 'public', worked out in dialogue with Roman civic ideas, was particularly apparent in the passions.[84]

Passions' main action occurred in public trials before the spectating eyes of the crowd. Eulalia of Mérida's passion described the young girl entering the city's forum like an *adventus*, claiming that 'there assembled an innumerable crowd, vast beyond measure, such

[82] LV 6.5.12.

[83] Isid. Etym. 5.8.

[84] On ecclesiastical 'publicness' in a somewhat different, rural context: Addison 2020.

that there was no-one left in their house.'[85] The crowd was an important background character in a passion, rarely discussed but essential to its logic. While martyrs were themselves witnesses to the Christ's truth, they also needed their confession to be witnessed by others.[86] Interestingly, the Iberian passions did not depict the crowd as 'pagan' or inherently hostile. Instead, they were ready and able to witness the truth set forth in the person of the martyr. This is a remarkable feature of the Iberian texts, not present in all other traditions.[87] Governors thus had to avoid the public gaze. In the *Passio Iusti et Pastoris*, the governor Datian:

> ordered that they be arrested without being heard, and ruled that they be sent away, fearing that if they were led to his presence for interrogation they would ready the souls of those standing around them for the confession of Christ's name, or that if he did not prevail over them it would be seen publicly (*publice*) that his malice was overcome by little infants.[88]

The spectating crowd was an oppressive burden to the governor, ready to witness the martyr's triumph.

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[85] *Passio Eulalie Emeritensis*, 7 (PH): *facta est turba innumerabilis, ingens nimis, ita ut in domo sua nemo remaneret.* On late Roman and Visigothic ceremonial: McCormick 1986, pp. 297-327.

[86] On Christian subversions of judicial confession: Grig 2004, pp. 67-77. In the Iberian corpus see esp. *Passio Vincentii* [version brève], 2, ed. Saxer 2002, p. 138.

[87] I am grateful to Peter Brown for drawing my attention to this theme.

[88] *Passio Iusti et Pastoris*, 3 (PH): *inauditos eos iussit conpreendi et cedi precepit, timens ne, dum eos ad interrogandum ad eius presentiam perduceret, aliorum circumstantium ad confessionem Christi nominis animos preparassent aut ne, dum in eis non preualuisset, suam publice prospiceret malitiam ab infantulis superari.*

The prospective martyr, then, did not witness their faith exclusively in these open environments, but cycled between periods of imprisonment and periods of 'public' confession. This heightened the symbolic importance of the publicity of martyrdom. Vincent and his bishop Valerian were incarcerated after their first encounter with Datian. The sixth-century passion expressed this in a language of publicness: they were 'secluded for so long from the common light of public intercourse (*publicae conuersationis*)'.[89] When Vincent was later returned to prison—'isolated from all public light (*publica luce*) and damned to perpetual night'—he miraculously produced a startlingly bright light, a synecdoche of the entire coming-to-publicness that passions dramatized.[90] A derivative story appeared in the *Passio Felicis* in which the light converted the jailers.[91] The martyr thus found a receptive audience even in prison. Later in Vincent's passion, Datian tried to destroy the remains of the martyr's body to avoid attracting cult, exclaiming: 'Let him be submerged in the sea, that we might not blush daily under the eyes of all! The seas will conceal his victory.'[92] It is notable that the sixth-century 'version commune' brings out the language of publicness far more than the fifth-century 'version brève'.

The figure of the crowd ought to be understood within the concrete pastoral context of the passions.[93] They were to be read liturgically on feast days. They were a literature that was

[89] *Passio Vincentii* [version commune], 3, ed. Saxer 2002, line 27: *a communi tamdiu publicae conuersationis luce seclusos*.

[90] *Passio Vincentii* [version commune], 17-19, ed. Saxer 2002, lines 148-83, quote at 17, line 151-2: *ab omni publica luce sepositum et perpetua nocte damnatum.*

[91] *Passio Felicis*, 17 (PH). The dependency is probably to the 'version brève'.

[92] *Passio Vincentii* [version commune], 23, ed. Saxer 2002, lines 221-2: *inmergatur pelago, ne erubescamus cotidie sub oculis omnium. Victoria eius uel maria celabunt.* This episode was echoed in *Passio Felicis*, 18 (PH).

[93] For the broader historiography of early medieval crowds: Bobrycki 2018, esp. pp. 3-17.

repetitive and stereotyped, easier than most ecclesiastical genres to be appreciated by audiences who were not necessarily all literate.[94] The manner in which martyrs provided spectacles thus had a double significance. The martyr was a spectacle before the Roman crowd—Eulalia of Mérida furnished 'such a pleasing spectacle to the citizens'; Justa and Rufina were *spectacula Dei*, contesting in the 'stadium of spiritual contest'—but the passion text was *itself* also a spectacle set before the early medieval Christian congregation.[95] The audience was encouraged to see themselves mirroring the crowd who watched expectantly as the martyr contested with the governor.[96] It is this role into which congregants were 'thrust back', as Markus would have it—that of the 'public' before whom the martyr could symbolically enact Christianity's conquest of the Roman civic sphere.

The sense of unanimity and harmony anachronistically placed onto the Roman crowd articulated an idealized Christian community to the medieval audience and gave a history to the Christian community in the city.[97] I do not want to presume a functionalist model in which an authentic sense of consensus was forged by these means: coercion, exclusion, and the flattening out of real inequalities are by-products of such nominally consensual visions of community.[98] The passions, with their homogenous crowds, show this amply. Jews did appear in some passions, but always as people miraculously converted. They were there as extreme cases showing the power of the martyr to manifest Christ's power even to those who were, as anti-Jewish rhetoric went, typically insensate to spiritual truths.[99] Visions of community are prone to exclude as well as include, but the point here is that the particular

[94] On audience comprehension: Van Uytfanghe 2001.

[95] *Passio Eulalie Emeritensis*, 17 (PH): *tam gratissimum exspectaculum ciuibus*; *Passio Iuste et Rufine*, 3 (PH): *spiritalis agonis stadium*.

[96] Grig 2004, pp. 42-7. On spectacle and martyrdom, see also Castelli 2004, pp. 104-33.

[97] For similar images in Gallic sermons: Bailey 2010, p. 51.

[98] Ginzburg 2012.

integrative picture of civic community presented by the passions was one construed with reference to an imagined—and somewhat anachronistic—Roman civic past.[100]

There are some reasons to question whether audiences would have seen these notions as having any *specifically* Roman content, as opposed to reflecting phenomena still present in society. The strongest argument supporting this objection lies in the fact that spectacular punishments and public trials were not confined to the Roman period.[101] Visigothic penal law insisted on 'publicness' both in terms of 'public' agents of justice and in terms of openness before a notional community: 'The judge, whenever the guilty one is to be killed, should exercise discipline not in secret or hidden places, but publicly, in an assembly.'[102] The same was true for floggings and whippings: they were to be held *publice*, *in conventu publice*, or *in conspectu omnium*.[103] Even the means of governmental violence depicted in the passions would not, for the most part, have been alien to Visigothic practice. One could be burned alive, like Eulalia of Mérida or the martyrs of Tarragona, under Visigothic penal law.[104] Torture was certainly permitted as part of serious criminal inquiries.[105] The only specifically

[99] *Passio Eulalie Emeritensis*, 6 (PH); *Passio Vincenti, Sabine et Christete*, 11-12 (PH); *Passio Mantii* (PH). See Castillo Maldonado 2006, and Guerreiro 1993, and, more broadly, Drews 2006.

[100] See Buc 2001, pp. 123-57.

[101] Petit 1991, gives an excellent overview of Visigothic penal law and catalogues relevant citations. In what follows, I draw heavily on this resource.

[102] LV 7.4.7 (*antiqua*): *Iudex, quotiens occisurus est reum, non in secretis aut in absconsis locis, sed in conventu publice exerceat disciplinam.*

[103] LV 3.4.7 (*antiqua*); 6.4.2 (Chindasuinth); 7.2.6 (*antiqua*); 9.2.2 (*antiqua*); 9.2.4 (*antiqua*); 12.2.4 (Sisebut).

[104] LV 3.2.2 (*antiqua*); 11.2.1 (*antiqua*); 12.2.11 (Reccesuinth).

[105] LV 5.1.2. The same term *quaestio* appears in both Visigothic legislation and passions.

Roman punishment mentioned in regard to the persecutions was damnation to the mines or quarries—though this occurs not in a passion but in Justus of Urgell's commentary on the Song of Songs.[106] While it is a fascinating piece of evidence for memory of the persecutions, it does not connect to the passion corpus in any direct way.

We can see more evidence of rupture, however, when considering the broader changes in cities' urban fabric. In Zaragoza we have remarkable but exceptional evidence of games being held, presumably in the theatre, as late as 504.[107] Despite this, some infrastructure in the same city, like the sewers under forum, had already ceased functioning by the end of the fourth century, and a number of large buildings were abandoned during the fifth.[108] Pilar Diarte Blasco's systematic survey of the archaeology of 'public spaces' in Hispania suggests that we should understand the growth of the ecclesiastical presence as following a brief hiatus in which certain public buildings and spaces fell into abeyance.[109] As Damián Fernández has noted, this abeyance did not constitute a straightforward decline in occupation, but rather a process of transformation and re-use, with ancient monumental spaces coming to be used for private dwellings or productive functions.[110] There was a hiatus in their 'publicness'—if not in occupation—and this implies a greater sense of historical break than is suggested by the continuity of punishments' 'publicness'. Christian authorities certainly relied on a certain degree of urban continuity to make their images legible and

[106] Justus of Urgell, *Explanatio in Cantica Canticorum*, 5.115, ed. Guglielmetti 2011, pp. 90-2. On penal condemnation to mines: Gustafson 1994. I am grateful to Henry Gruber for his comments on penal servitude.

[107] The games are attested in Cons. Caes., anno 504, line 444. See Jimenez Sanchez 2006 and Beltrán Lloris 1993.

[108] Diarte Blasco 2012, pp. 84-91.

[109] Diarte Blasco 2012, pp. 311-13.

[110] Fernández 2017, pp. 126-39.

immediate, but they were not merely stewarding a continuously existing ‘public’ sphere. Through their spoliation of the Roman civic imaginary, they rearticulated the urban community and its history in new ways.

Conclusion

The passions shed light on a world of civic religiosity which is not well represented in other, more well-thumbed Visigothic sources. They suggest a different sense of Christian community and, indeed, a different relationship to the Roman past than that found in confessor piety or in the grand historical works of writers like Isidore. Though the local civic imaginary of martyr passions was partly an inheritance from the Late Roman world, continuity was not inevitable. The civic imaginary long evoked in martyr passions acquired a particular urgency and relevance in the period in which Christianity came to take hold over the monumental hearts of cities—that is, the sixth and seventh centuries. Here the passions, preached at festivities and in the liturgy, were key instruments in the development of a vision of the Roman civic which appropriated and reinterpreted aspects of the physical and the imagined city for newly Christian times.

Theirs was a vision of ‘public’ Christianity, providing a dramatic and legitimizing account of the emergence of Christianity as a major force in the civic world of the Roman city. They did so in such a way as to suggest a genealogical relation between, on the one hand, the martyr before their ‘public’ and, on the other, the later preacher before their congregation. In dialogue with the still-present vestiges of Roman civic life, passions repeatedly re-interpreted and re-enacted a Roman past as a myth of origins for both the urban

Christian *populus* and the 'publicness' of the church as the institution claiming to represent this community.

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