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## THE REGNAL YEARS OF AMALARIC: REVISITING THE SOURCES

In 511, Amalaric, who was still a child, became king of the Visigoths, with the Ostrogothic king Theoderic acting as his senior king or his regent. Almost all modern researchers claim that this situation did not change until Theoderic's death in 526. However, this means dismissing as incorrect the information transmitted by the acta of the Second Council of Toledo of 527: the bishops date the Council to the fifth year of Amalaric's reign, which would place his accession in 522/3. In this paper, I reconsider the chronology of Amalaric's reign before Theoderic's death. For this purpose, I revisit the relevant source material and the textual problems surrounding the Second Council of Toledo. I argue that Amalaric must have been promoted in some way in 522/3 and look at the contemporary political situation in Italy to make a tentative reconstruction of the events<sup>1</sup>.

### I. CONTEXT: THE AFTERMATH OF VOUILLÉ

In 507, war broke out between the Visigoths and the Franks, supported by their Burgundian allies. In the same year, the Visigoths, led by Alaric II, met the Franco-Burgundian coalition at the Battle of Vouillé. The forces of Alaric's ally, Theoderic the Great, lingered in Italy throughout the year 507, either as a deliberate strategy or due to Imperial coastal raiding in Italy. The battle resulted in a crushing defeat for the Visigoths. Alaric was killed in combat and, in the following months, most of the Visigothic territory in Gaul was overrun, including the capital, Toulouse<sup>2</sup>.

1. I would like to thank Rodrigo Furtado, Paulo Farmhouse Alberto, and Jamie Wood for their helpful comments and suggestions on earlier versions of this work.

2. For an overview of the events surrounding this war, from the lead up to Vouillé until Gesalic's death, see Heather 1996, pp. 210-5, 230-4; Delaplace 2015, pp. 290-

Alaric II left two male descendants. His only legitimate son, Amalaric, was still a child<sup>3</sup>. He was a grandson of the Ostrogothic king Theoderic through queen Thiudegotho and, thus, a half-Balth, half-Amal. Alaric's other son, Gesalic, was illegitimate (born *ex concubina*<sup>4</sup>) but he was already an adult. In this dire military situation, Gesalic's fighting age made him a more viable contender and he was made king. He rallied the surviving Visigothic forces and, in the following years, tried to hold his ground in Septimania, although with little success since he was eventually forced to retreat to Barcelona. In the meantime, the Ostrogoths finally entered the conflict in 508, invading Southern Gaul. The Ostrogothic forces commanded by Ibbas were remarkably successful, defeating the Franco-Burgundians, driving them out of Septimania, and lifting the sieges of Arles and Carcassonne. In this process, Theoderic seems to have taken control of a good part of the Visigothic nobility, of the treasure, and, most importantly, of the young Amalaric.

While Gesalic appears to have been recognized by Theoderic at first<sup>5</sup>, his inability to stabilize what must have been a very dire military situation gave the Ostrogothic king a pretext to turn against him. In 511, Gesalic was defeated by Ibbas and forced to flee to Vandalic Africa. There, he enlisted king Thrasamund's support and returned to Aquitaine, sometime before 513. Eventually, he was again defeated by the Ostrogoths, captured in 513 or 514, and executed.

## 2. 511: THE BEGINNING OF AMALARIC'S REIGN

To better understand the events of the 520s, we should first consider the arrangements that followed Gesalic's defeat and expulsion in 511. It seems clear that it was at this moment that Theoderic took control of the Visigothic kingdom. This is suggested by two testimonies: 1) the Visigothic regnal list or *laterculus regum Visigothorum* attributes a reign of 15 years to Theoderic. This matches the period between 511 and 526, which we know to be the year of his death<sup>6</sup>. 2) two Iberian provincial

8; Wolfram 1990, pp. 191-3; Moorhead 1992, pp. 175-88; García Moreno 1989, pp. 83-9; Cristini 2022, pp. 13-24.

3. Against the generally accepted idea that Amalaric was a minor: Iglesia Ferreirós 1970, p. 669, n. 89. For Wolfram, he was about 5 years old (1990, p. 244, n. 605).

4. *Cons. Caes.* 89a.

5. See Cassiod. *Var.* 5.43.2.

6. *Chron. Reg. Vis.* 17a. This information of the 15 years of Theoderic is also transmitted in Isidore of Seville (*Goth.* 39) and in the *Consularia CaesarAugustana* (94b).

church councils, held in Tarragona and Gerona, in 516 and 517, respectively, are dated according to the regnal years of Theoderic. According to the dating of these councils, Theoderic's reign over the Visigoths started sometime between the 7th of November 510 and the 9th of June 511<sup>7</sup>. A start in 511 is, nonetheless, more likely due to the information present in the *laterculus*<sup>8</sup>.

However, it is not entirely clear what the precise nature of Theoderic's rule over the Visigothic kingdom was. The *laterculus* and the *Consularia Caesaraugustana* count the regnal years according to Theoderic, suggesting that he was ruling as king. At the same time, in an apparently contradictory fashion, they mention a *tutela* and claim that Theoderic ruled not so much in his own right (*non tam suo ordine*), but simply as a guardian or regent for the young Amalaric, even though his regnal years are not considered:

*Chron. Reg. Vis.* 17-8a: Theudericus regnavit annos XV. Ste ab Italia veniens non tam suo ordine regnum in Spania tenuit quam tutelam agens Amalarici nepotis per cons[ules].

*Cons. Caes.* 94b: Post Alaricum Theodoricus Italiae rex Gotthos regit in Hispania an. XV, Amalarici paruuli tutelam gerens.

Isidore, on the other hand, associates the arrival in power of Theoderic amongst the Visigoths exclusively with the removal of Gesalic and Amalaric is only mentioned with respect to a later transfer of power:

*Isid. Goth.* 39b<sup>9</sup>: (...) Theudericus iunior (...) rursus extincto Gisaleico rege Gothorum Spaniae regnum XV annis obtinuit quod superstes Amalarico nepoti suo reliquit.

7. *Concilium Tarraconense*, p. 4:269: *Concilium Terraconense decem episcoporum habitum AERA DLIII* [ERA 554=A.D. 516]; p. 4:271: *In nomine Christi habita synodus Terracona, ANNO VI THEODERICI REGIS, CONSULATU PETRI* [A.D. 516], *SUB DIE OCTAUO IDUS NOVEMBRES*. [6 NOV.]. *Concilium Gerundense*, p. 4:283: *Concilium Gerundense septem episcoporum HABITUM AERA DLV* [ERA 555=A.D. 517]; p. 4:284: *In nomine Christi synodus habita Gerunda, ANNO SEPTIMO TEUDERICI REGIS, SEXTO IDUS IUNIAS* [8 JUN.], *AGAPETO* [A.D. 517] *UIRO CLARISSIMO CONSL.* For the 6th of November 516 and the 8th of June of 517 to fall in the sixth and seventh years of Theoderic, respectively, his reign must have started between the 7th of November 510 and the 9th of June 511. The *Consularia* (94a-b) apparently points to 513 for the beginning of Theoderic's rule but this entry has a series of textual problems that make it highly unreliable. On this, see Jiménez Sánchez 2007, pp. 348-51.

8. The Anon. Vales. (94-6) places Theoderic's death in late August 526, so a reign starting in late 510 would likely be rounded upwards to 16 years.

9. For Isidore's *Historia Gothorum*, I am using the letters *a* and *b* after the chapter

The picture is a confusing one: Isidore and the counting of Theoderic's regnal years suggest that he was a fully independent king, while the wording of the *laterculus* and the *Consularia Caesaraugustana* indicate that he was but a guardian or regent for Amalaric<sup>10</sup>. While no definitive answer can be provided, I think that these possibilities can and should be conciliated to some extent. First, despite the suggestion of the *laterculus* and the *Consularia*, I argue that Theoderic presented himself as a king ruling over both kingdoms. While it may be argued that Isidore's words and the counting of Theoderic's regnal years simply reflect the matter-of-fact recognition that the Ostrogothic king was the real powermonger<sup>11</sup> and do not necessarily mean that he openly presented himself as king, another substantial piece of evidence is provided by Theoderic's initial plans for his succession. Lacking male sons, Theoderic nominated a man named Eutharic as his intended successor<sup>12</sup>. The fact that he was a notable issuing from the Visigothic kingdom, who was presented in Italy as an Amal and married to one of Theoderic's daughters, Amalasuintha, suggests that the Ostrogothic king intended to keep the unity of the two Gothic polities by selecting a successor with good chances of maintaining control in both territories. If this was not the case, it is hard to understand why he would choose a foreigner to rule over Italy instead of a man with strong connections in that territory<sup>13</sup>. This means that, if Eutharic was to lay

number to indicate whether the given portion of text belongs to the short redaction (a) or the long redaction (b). For the regnal list and the *Consularia*, the letters *a* and *b* are already used in Zeumer's and Cardelle de Hartmann's editions.

10. This has generated quite a lot of discussion. In favour of Theoderic acting as a fully independent king, see Delaplace 2015, pp. 296-7; Wolfram 1990, p. 245; García Moreno 1989, p. 89; Claude 1971, p. 47; Iglesia Ferreirós 1970, p. 670. In favour of a regency, see Valverde Castro 2000, p. 118; Moorhead 1992, p. 191; Cristini 2022, p. 24.

11. There can be no doubt that, in the years after 511, power laid with the Ostrogothic king: the royal treasure was sent to Italy; taxes, payments to the troops and major administrative decisions were referred to Ravenna; and top commanders were appointed and sent to the west by Theoderic. See Procopius, *Wars*, 5.12.47-8; Cassiod. *Var.* 5.39. Heather 1996, p. 232; Moorhead 1992, p. 191; García Moreno 1989, p. 92.

12. Eutharic's presumptive succession is confirmed by a prestigious joint consulship with the emperor Justin I in the year 519, and by the fact that he was proclaimed son-at-arms by this emperor, which by this time had become a way for Constantinople to express its approval for its neighbors' heirs. Iord. *Get.* 298; Cassiod. *Var.* 8.1.3; *Chron.* a.518-9. Moorhead 1992, pp. 200-13, 233; Heather 1996, p. 253; Wolfram 1990, pp. 328-9.

13. Heather 1995, pp. 167-8; 1996, pp. 233-4; García Moreno 1989, p. 88;

claim to power in both kingdoms, he had to do so as the successor of a king and not as the successor of Amalaric's guardian, especially since, by 519, Amalaric was likely already of age. This strongly suggests that Theoderic indeed presented himself as king in the Visigothic kingdom.

On the other hand, this mention of a *tutela* must mean that Amalaric was king *de iure* alongside Theoderic from 511, even though his regnal years are only counted after Theoderic's death in 526 (the question posed by Amalaric's regnal years will be considered below)<sup>14</sup>. This is corroborated by Procopius, who claims that Theoderic placed Amalaric on the throne after ousting Gesalic<sup>15</sup>. Indeed, the assertion of his underage grandson's rights to the throne must have been the surest way for Theoderic to justify his dominion over the Visigothic kingdom and Gesalic's expulsion. The so-called Balths, the descendants of Theoderic I (418-451), had dominated the Visigothic throne for almost a hundred years, since the establishment of the kingdom of Toulouse in 418, with little to no challenge from outsiders<sup>16</sup>. Belonging to this line must have started to resemble a pre-requisite to rule, turning Amalaric into a necessary card in Theoderic's hand when it came to ruling the Visigoths. Coincidentally, the fact that Isidore justifies Gesalic's ousting not only on the grounds of his inability but also of his low birth might suggest that, at the time, this was used against him to assert the superiority of his half-brother Amalaric's claims:

Isid. *Goth.* 37b: (...) Gisaleicus superioris regis FILIUS EX CONCUBINA creatus Narbona princeps efficitur regnans annis quattuor, SICUT GENERE UILISSIMUS, ITA INFELICITATE ET IGNAUIA SUMMUS. Denique dum eadem ciuitas a Gundebado Burgundionum rege direpta fuisset, iste cum multo sui dedecore et cum magna suo- rum clade apud Barcinonam se contulit. IBI MORATUS QUOUSQUE ETIAM REGNI FASCIBUS A THEUDERICO FUGA IGNOMINIA PRIUARETUR<sup>17</sup>.

Delaplace 2015, p. 299; Heydeman 2016, pp. 30-1. Somewhat different is: Cristini 2022, p. 28-9.

14. *Chron. Reg. Vis.* 17-9; Isid. *Goth.* 39-40; *Cons. Caes.* 94b, 108a.

15. Procopius, *Wars*, 5.12.46. Dewing translates ἐπετρόπειε as «acting as regent», implying that Theoderic ruled without being king. This is, however, not necessary, especially as the modern accession of regent is anachronic. On the problem of applying the concepts of regent and guardian to the late Roman world, see McEvoy 2013, pp. 9-12. Other translations such as «to administrate», «to govern», or even «to rule» would also be allowed. See *Dictionnaire Grec-Français d'Anatole Bailly* 2020 and *Greek-English Lexicon (LSJ)*.

16. Against this idea, see Heather 1996, p. 199.

17. The *Consularia Caesaraugustana* also stress the circumstances of his birth (*Cons. Caes.* 89a).

Following this logic, Isidore's earlier silence with respect to Amalaric might be due to the recognition that his kingship was, at this time, little more than an artifice to justify Theoderic's power. Until Eutharic's death, which took place at an unknown date, sometime between 519/20 and Theoderic's death in 526<sup>18</sup>, there must have been very little hope for Amalaric to become anything more than a nominal ruler, even after coming of age. In fact, Peter Heather suggests that under this plan for Eutharic's succession, Amalaric was not intended to hold power. Furthermore, this author claims that the role of Theudis, who was Theoderic's governor and *de facto* ruler in the Visigothic kingdom and succeeded to Amalaric as king in 531, might have involved keeping a watchful eye over him<sup>19</sup>. In short, it seems that Amalaric was made king as a minor in 511 and that Theoderic presented himself as his senior, ruling over both kingdoms. This arrangement resembles some Imperial regimes which comprised a senior active *Augustus* ruling alongside one or several juniors with prestigious claims to the throne but who were not intended to assume real power, even after coming of age<sup>20</sup>.

### 3. THE BEGINNING OF AMALARIC'S REIGN AS AN ADULT

After Theoderic's death in 526, we find Amalaric and Athalaric ruling in the Visigothic and Ostrogothic kingdoms, respectively. Athalaric was the late king's other grandson through Eutharic and Amalasuintha. Even though was still a child, after his father's death, he became the strongest candidate for succession to Theoderic amongst the Ostrogoths since the only other male Amal in Italy, Theodahad, Theoderic's nephew through

18. We know that Eutharic was alive during his consulship in 519. Later, he took a role during the conflicts between Jews and Catholics in Ravenna (Anon. Vales. 81). This event is hard to date and may have taken place as early as 519/20, shortly after his consulship. After that, we have no further news of Eutharic but he certainly died before Theoderic.

19. Heather 1995, p. 168. Even after Eutharic's and Theoderic's deaths, Amalaric must have never held much power. While, initially, he must have been useful for Theudis, his usefulness eventually expired and it seems that in a later stage of his reign, Theudis was trying to get rid of him, eventually succeeding in 531. On Theudis' involvement in Amalaric's death, see Heather 1996, p. 278; García Moreno 1989, pp. 94-5; Thompson 1969, p. 18.

20. On the passive role of some emperors, both minors and adults, see McEvoy 2013.

Amalafrida, had a very strained relationship with his uncle<sup>21</sup>. Amalaric's accession, on the other hand, is often attributed to Theudis' ability to leverage in his favour the Visigothic resistance to Theoderic's plan of maintaining the unity of the two Gothic polities (see the considerations on Eutharic above).

There are reasons to believe that Theoderic's plans of unification were not popular amongst at least part of the Visigothic kingdom's ruling class<sup>22</sup>. Likely, these elites saw rule by a far-away king (with a far-away treasure) as a threat to their social position as it distanced them from royal largess and the patronage networks of the court, resulting in them being consistently passed over for prestigious nominations in favour of Ostrogothic nobles<sup>23</sup>. We even have news of a skirmish at the gates of Arles in which Theoderic's prefect of Gaul, Liberius, was seriously wounded by some Visigothic fighters<sup>24</sup>. This situation might have allowed Theudis to consolidate his power locally by defying his master in Italy. Backed by the local nobility, he may have exerted pressure to revive Amalaric's claim to rule in order to further consolidate his position, get rid of any supervision from Italy, and profit from the presence and control of a (weak) king in the Visigothic territory<sup>25</sup>. Likewise, Theudis' marriage with a wealthy Hispano-Roman lady, that allowed him to raise 2000 fighting-men from his private resources alone, is in accordance with this strategy of alliance with local elites. Even though he never openly revolted, never refused to

21. On the hostility between Theodahad and Theoderic, see Vitiello 2014, pp. 56-8.

22. On this, see Cristini 2022, pp. 26-7.

23. See Fouracre (2005, pp. 375-7) for a similar situation amongst the Franks. See also Heather 1995, p. 164.

24. *Vita sancti Caesaris episcopi Arelatensis* 2.10. This opposition in the Visigothic kingdom might explain why Theoderic took such a restrained and cautious policy towards the Visigoths and the union of the two Gothic kingdoms, for example: keeping an independent counting of the regnal years for the Visigothic kingdom, sending the treasure to Ravenna but keeping it apart from the Ostrogothic treasure, and maintaining a separate administration, albeit one controlled from Italy (Procopius, *Wars*, 5.12.45-9, 13.1-6. García Moreno 1989, pp. 89-90). Could this be connected in some way with the confusing picture given by the *Consularia* and the *laterculus* on the nature of Theoderic's rule over the Visigoths?

25. Heather 1995, pp. 168-9: «We are not told what prompted Theudis' rebellious behaviour, but there is good reason to link it to Eutharic's death and the quarrels over succession. (...) Since Theudis was *de facto* ruler in Spain before Theoderic's death, he must have been behind Amalaric's elevation. He presumably supported Amalaric to ensure the continuation of his own pre-eminence». See also Heather 1996, pp. 254-5; García Moreno 1989, pp. 93-4. *Contra*: Cristini 33, n. 91.

send tribute to Ravenna and, carried out orders, he repeatedly refused summons to go to Italy, and Procopius even claims that he was a tyrant and that Theoderic feared to act against him due to the risk of a Visigothic revolt or a new Frankish intervention<sup>26</sup>.

#### 4. THE 526 HYPOTHESIS

Almost all present-day authors claim that, even if Athalaric's accession in Italy was likely prepared sometime after Eutharic's death, Theoderic's bipartite succession by his two grandsons was decided only after his death in 526. For these authors, the arrangements in the Visigothic kingdom suffered no alteration until 526, when Amalaric came to the throne amongst the Visigoths. For Peter Heather:

the united kingdom which Theoderic had ruled since 511, and to which Eutharic was surely meant to succeed in its entirety, split apart after his death: Italy and Spain being divided respectively between Theoderic's two grandsons, Athalaric and Amalaric. This had not been pre-planned by Theoderic. IT IS HARD A PRIORI TO IMAGINE THAT HE WOULD HAVE ACQUIESCED IN SUCH A DEVELOPMENT, AND, IN FACT, THE DIVISION WAS ARRANGED ONLY AFTER HIS DEATH. Procopius tells us that it was Amalaric and Athalaric themselves, for which we must read the young men and their supporters, who decided how to split the kingdoms<sup>27</sup>.

The passage of Procopius mentioned by Heather is the following:

AFTER THEODERIC HAD DEPARTED FROM THE WORLD, the Franks, now that there was no longer anyone to oppose them, took the field against the Thuringians (...) AND AMALARIC, WHO WAS RULING OVER THE VISIGOTHS, upon coming to man's estate, became thoroughly frightened at the power of the Germans and so took to wife the sister of Theudibert, ruler of the Germans, AND DIVIDED GAUL WITH THE GOTHS AND HIS COUSIN ATALARIC. The Goths, namely,

26. On these moves by Theudis, see Procopius, *Wars*, 5.12.50-4. See also: Heather 1996, pp. 239-42; Collins 2004, p. 42; Moorhead 1992, p. 191.

27. Heather 1995, pp. 168-9. On the idea that Amalaric's situation only changed in 526: Moorhead 1992, p. 191; Claude 1971, pp. 47-8; Wolfram 1990, p. 311; García Moreno 1989, p. 89; Thompson 1969, pp. 9-10; Valverde Castro 2000, pp. 118-20; Cristini 2022, pp. 33-5. Against this, I know only of Collins 2004, p. 41: «The Second Council of Toledo, which was held in 527, is, however, dated as falling in the fifth year of Amalaric, which would imply that he began to reign in his own name in 522 or 523, prior to his grandfather's death in 526. Such a view is also confirmed by a later narrative account of the period».



received as their portion the land to the east of the Rhone River, while that to the west fell under the control of the Visigoths. AND IT WAS AGREED THAT THE TRIBUTE WHICH THEODERIC HAD IMPOSED SHOULD NO LONGER BE PAID TO THE GOTHs, AND ATALARIC HONESTLY AND JUSTLY RESTORED TO AMALARIC ALL THE MONEY WHICH HE HAD TAKEN FROM THE CITY OF CARCASIANA. (*Wars*, 13, 1-6)

Besides Procopius, two further arguments apparently support what I call here the 526 hypothesis: 1) we can make a parallel for the Visigothic kingdom with the claim made by the Anonymus Valesianus that Athalaric's succession in Italy was proclaimed on Theoderic's deathbed<sup>28</sup>; 2) all sources dealing with the regnal years in the Visigothic kingdom in this period (the *laterculus*, Isidore, and the *Consularia*) are unanimous in claiming that Theoderic ruled for 15 years and that Amalaric ruled for 5 years after him. This perfectly matches the period from 511 to Theoderic's death in 526 (15 years) and the period from 526 to Amalaric's death in 531 (5 years)<sup>29</sup>.

## 5. THE SECOND COUNCIL OF TOLEDO

The 526 hypothesis, described above, is contradicted by the acts of the Second Council of Toledo, which place the start of Amalaric's reign between the 18th of May 522 and the 18th of May 523:

In nomine Domini Iesu Christi synodus habita in ciuitate Toletana apud Montanum episcopum SUB DIE XVI KALENDAS IUNIAS [17 May] ANNO QUINTO REGNI DOMINI NOSTRI AMALARICI REGIS AERA DLXV. [era 565=a.D. 527] (*Conc. Tol.* II, p. 4: 346)

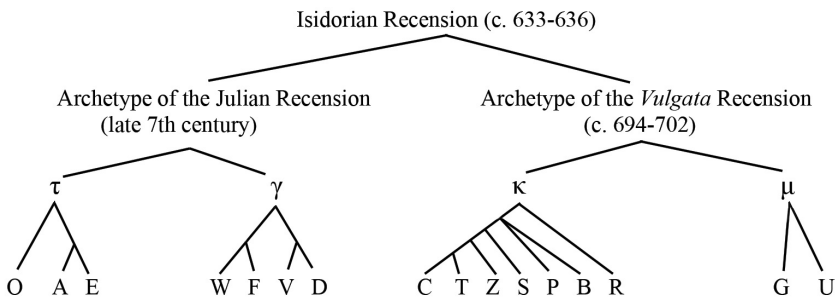
This testimony is often completely overlooked in modern studies of the political events of the 520s. When it is taken into consideration, its information is discarded as erroneous. In order to fit the traditionally ascribed year of Amalaric's promotion – 526 –, it is either claimed that *anno quinto* must be read as *anno primo* or that this council in fact took

28. Anon. Vales. 96: *Ergo antequam exhalaret, nepotem suum Athalaricum in regnum constituit*. See also Iord. *Get.* 304. However, this must be a case of artistic license. Despite what both texts suggest, Theoderic's appointment of Athalaric as heir in Italy is highly unlikely to have been a spur-of-the-moment decision since he already knew that he needed to find an heir. See Heather 1995, p. 168.

29. *Chron. Reg. Vis.* 17-9; *Isid. Goth.* 39-40; *Cons. Caes.* 94b, 108a.

place in 531. In the latter case, this council is sometimes equated with the one which Isidore claims to have taken place in Toledo during Theudis' reign (531-548) and that, apparently, cannot be found in the *Hispana* collection<sup>30</sup>. However, as I will try to demonstrate, the text and the manuscript tradition of the Second Council of Toledo give us no reason to neglect this testimony. There is only one (external) reason to do so: the fact that it does not match what we believe to have taken place (i.e. the 526 hypothesis).

Let's first consider the three most pertinent lessons of the above-quoted passage with the help of this simplified version of the *stemma codicum* established by Martínez Díez in his edition of the *Collectio Hispana*<sup>31</sup>:



Disregarding orthographic variants such as *Amalrici* for *Amalarici*, we can see that: a) the lesson *anno quinto* – i.e. if the council was actually held in the fifth year of Amalaric's reign – is copied in every manuscript. b) for the lesson *Amalarici* – i.e. if the text really referred to king Amalaric – there is only one variant: *Alarici* in manuscript U. This, however, can easily be discarded as an error. c) in the case of *DLXV* – if the council was

30. Isid. *Goth.* 41. On the idea that there is an error in the Second Council of Toledo, see Schäferdiek 1967, p. 85, n. 48; Schmidt 1969, p. 346, n. 1; Cristini 2022, pp. 34-5. Without seeking to be comprehensive, it is ignored by García Moreno 1989; Heather 1995; 1996; Wolfram 1990; Moorhead 1992; Thompson 1969; Delaplace 2015. As far as I know, only Collins gives credit to this testimony (2004, p. 41).

31. After: Martínez Díez 1966, p. 205; for the description of the manuscripts, see *ibid.*, pp. 103-46. This scheme includes all manuscripts used by the editors of the *Hispana* except the fragmentary *K* since it does not contain the II Council of Toledo. For the purpose of this work, it is unnecessary to identify all the manuscripts and their respective families, so I simply kept the letters assigned by the editor. For B: Martínez Díez 1999.

held in the era 565 (= a.D. 527) –, manuscripts *T* and *Z* show *DLXII* (era 562 = a.D. 524). This can also be discarded, as it is contradicted by every other manuscript, including those of the same family.

As we can see, with the exception of three unremarkable cases in manuscripts *T*, *Z*, and *U*, these lessons are present in every single manuscript of the four families identified by Martínez Díez. This means that they must be present in the tradition of the *Hispana* since before the creation of the two divergent recensions (the Julian and the *Vulgata*, as Díez calls them) in the late 7th century, as these had largely independent transmissions<sup>32</sup>. Any error that might exist would have to be already present somewhere in the Isidorian recension.

As we have seen, one cannot find any suggestion of an error in the Second Council of Toledo. By extension, this means that this council should not be equated to the one Isidore claims to have gathered in Toledo during Teudis' reign. There is further evidence to confirm this conclusion. Both in the subscriptions and in the main body of the text, every manuscript mentions that the Second Council was headed by Montanus of Toledo. Montanus is one of the bishops whose life is narrated by Ildefonsus in his *De Viris Illustribus*. Ildefonsus – who must have been well informed on the tenure of his predecessors in the See of Toledo – is quite specific when describing the kings under which each bishop held office. For example, of Aurasius, he writes: *Vixit in sacerdotio temporibus Vuitterici, Gundemari et exordiis Sisebuti regum, annis ferme duodecim*<sup>33</sup>. However, of Montanus, Ildefonsus simply writes: *Gloriosus habitus fuit temporibus Amalarici regis; annis nouem pontificatus tenuit dignitatem*<sup>34</sup>. This strongly suggests that Montanus' nine years in office took place exclusively under Amalaric and that he was no longer in office during Theudis' reign<sup>35</sup>.

32. On the recensions: Martínez Díez 1966, p. 206-47.

33. Ildefons. *Vir. Ill.* 4.66-7. Similary: 6.110-3; 5.82-3; 7.125-6; 8.145-8; 9.156-7; 10.164-6, 11.173-6, 12.189-90, 13.218-21.

34. Ildefons. *Vir. Ill.* 2.42-3

35. It must be noted that only two bishops mentioned in his *De Viris Illustribus* are not contemporaries of Ildefonsus (d. 667): Montanus, and the very distant 4th century Asturius. Of Asturius, Ildefonsus only claims that he was the ninth bishop of Toledo (*Vir. Ill.* 1.14-5. This information matches the list of bishops of the *Codex Emilianense* (Madrid, Biblioteca del Escorial, RBME D-I-1, a. 976-994, f. 360v). This break with Ildefonsus' usually more specific style might suggest that he was unaware of the exact length of Asturius' tenure. On the other hand, for the much closer Montanus, Ildefonsus follows his usual formula of mentioning the king/kings under which he held office and the according number of years (see the passages mentioned on note 33), suggesting that, in this case, he was well informed on his tenure.

This means that the council Isidore claims to have been held under Theudis is either: a) misattributed by Isidore, which does not seem too likely since he must have had a solid grasp of the conciliar literature – Martínez Díez even suggests that he might have been the compiler of the *Hispana*<sup>36</sup>; or, most likely, b) this is another council that for some reason did not enter the *Hispana*. In fact, we know of at least two conciliar meetings gathered in Toledo (and several others in other cities) that are not present in this compilation, both very close to the period of the elaboration of the original Isidorian version of the *Hispana*: the Council of 597, transmitted only by the *Codex Emilianense* (E)<sup>37</sup> and the Council of 610, which defined the primacy of Toledo over the province of *Carthaginensis* and is transmitted in every manuscript of the Toledan family (τ)<sup>38</sup>. These councils were only integrated into part of the tradition of the *Hispana* at a later date, likely at the time of the elaboration of the archetype of the Toletan family, which was a lost manuscript of 775 copied in Córdoba<sup>39</sup>. Since the *Hispana*'s original Isidorian version was elaborated between the 4th and 5th Councils of Toledo (633-636), this means that the compiler left out some Toletan meetings of his lifetime and many other earlier councils (the compilation was made around 100 years after the beginning of Theudis' reign) may have also been left aside and eventually lost<sup>40</sup>. Therefore, the fact that we cannot find a surviving record of this council held under Theudis is no reason to suspect that it is, in fact, the Second Council of Toledo. Again, everything suggests that the information about Amalaric's reign transmitted by this text should be taken seriously.

## 6. TO MAKE SENSE OF CONTRADICTORY SOURCES

If the information transmitted by the acts of the Second Council of Toledo is indeed correct, we are left with a hefty interpretative challenge

36. Martínez Díez 1966, pp. 309-10.

37. *Codex Emilianense*, Madrid, Biblioteca del Escorial, RBME D-I-1, ff. 222v-223r.: *Concilium Toletanum, anno duodecimo Recaredi*.

38. *Conc. Tol.* 610, pp. 5: 209-12.

39. Martínez Díez 1966, pp. 119, 205-12, 236.

40. This is even more meaningful if Martínez Díez is correct in claiming that Isidore might be the compiler: the bishop of Seville himself, as the metropolitan of the province of *Baetica*, features in the subscriptions of the Gundemar's *decretum* confirming the decisions of the meeting of 610, proving that he knew of this council and still chose not to include it. *Decretum Gundemari Regis in confirmationem concilii Toletani anno 610 celebrati*, p. 5: 208.

since it disagrees with the indication, found on the Visigothic regnal list, that Theoderic ruled for 15 years and Amalaric ruled for 5 years after him (511-526-531). The 15 + 5 years are also transmitted in Isidore's *Historia Gothorum* and the *Consularia Caesaraugustana*, but this is most likely because this information originates from a *laterculus* (this is harder to prove for Isidore but, for the *Consularia*, Jiménez Sánchez has convincingly demonstrated this to be the case)<sup>41</sup>. These testimonies, however, may not be as irreconcilable as they seem. The *laterculus* intends to highlight the uninterrupted continuation of royalty and ignores the overlapping reigns of Leovigild and Reccared:

*Chron. Reg. Vis.:*

25a. Leuua regnavit annos IIII menses IIII.

26a. Liuuigildus regnavit annos XVIII.

27a. sed secundo anno Leuuani in regno levatus est.

28a. Reccaredus regnavit annos XV menses VII dies XX.

Here, while the overlap between Liuva and Leovigild is considered, the 15 years of Reccared's reign concern only the period after Leovigild's death, and we know that Reccared ruled alongside his father<sup>42</sup>. Therefore, the list may only reflect Amalaric's solo reign, leaving aside a period in which he might have already been promoted in some way but still had Theoderic as his senior.

Interestingly, this idea is supported by Isidore: while he transmits the information of the 15+5 years, he also claims that Theoderic left the kingdom to Amalaric during his lifetime: *Theudericus iunior (...) rursus extincto Gisaleico rege Gothorum Spaniae regnum XV annis obtinuit quod superstes Amalarico nepoti suo reliquit*<sup>43</sup>. This could, of course, be seen as a way to bolster Amalaric's legitimacy by presenting him as Theoderic's favourite. However, nothing suggests that Isidore would be keen on doing so and Amalaric was hardly in need of such devices since he was the son of Alaric II and, perhaps, the last Balth. Therefore, there is no real reason to ignore this important piece of evidence and focus solely on the 15+5 years, especially since, as we have seen, they are not necessarily mutually exclusive: Theoderic could have left the kingdom to Amalaric but retained a position of seniority towards him that justified

41. Jiménez Sánchez 2007, pp. 354-69.

42. Ion. Bic. 27. Compare *Chron. Reg. Vis.* 25-6a with 25-6b, where Liuva and Leovigild's joint reign is also ignored.

43. Isid. *Goth.* 39b. This information is also in 39a.

the counting of the regnal years until 526 (I will return to this idea below)<sup>44</sup>.

Finally, Procopius' passage (mentioned by Heather and quoted above) does not add much to the chronology of Amalaric's accession. Procopius only claims that: 1) Amalaric was already ruling during the war between the Franks and the Thuringians, which happened after Theoderic's death; and 2) the division of the Gallic territories, the end of the payment of tribute and the return of the treasure only happened after Amalaric's accession and *after* Theoderic's death. The fact that these procedures only happened after 526 does not mean that Amalaric only started to rule in that year. These procedures could have been pre-arranged or their settlement delayed until after the death of the senior king.

## 7. TROUBLE IN ITALY

Looking at contemporary events in Italy can shed further light on this matter. Certainly, the most famous event of the last years of Theoderic's reign is the fall of Boethius and his father-in-law Symmachus. Boethius became involved in an accusation made by a man named Cyprian against senator Albinus. The accusation, described as false by the Anonymus Valesianus, involved treacherous correspondence against Theoderic, exchanged between the senators and emperor Justin I<sup>45</sup>. In his *De Consolatione Philosophiae*, Boethius further clarifies the details of the case: he was indicted of exchanging letters in which he had expressed his wishes for *libertas Romana*<sup>46</sup> and of trying to prevent the accusers from revealing compromising evidence about the treacherous activities of the Senate<sup>47</sup>. Following these accusations, Boethius and later Symmachus were arrested

44. I shall leave aside the *Consularia Caesarangustana* since this source has too many textual problems to draw any meaningful conclusion. These problems were created by the fact that this text was transmitted as a series of notes on manuscripts of Victor of Tunnuna. There are important omissions in the text and many entries appear to be misplaced or incorrectly separated. See, for example, the incorrect consuls of 507/508 (88a, 89a; Cardelle de Hartmann 2001, p. 117) and the entries of 510/511 (91a, 92a; Jiménez Sánchez 2007, pp. 348-51). The entry that would interest the beginning of Amalaric's reign as an adult is 108a. On this, see Jiménez Sánchez 2007, pp. 358-9.

45. Anon. Vales. 85-6. See also: Ibid. 92.

46. Boeth. *Cons. Phil.* 1.4.90-1. The whole section concerning this case is: 1.4.35-164.

47. Boeth. *Cons. Phil.* 1.4.76.

and executed. These events cannot be dated precisely but, according to the Anonymus Valesianus, they occurred while Boethius was *magister officiorum*. It is well-known that Boethius was succeeded in this office by Cassiodorus. The *Var.* 5.42 shows that Cassiodorus became *magister officiorum* during the consulship of Maximus in 523. This means that Boethius' downfall happened sometime during this year<sup>48</sup> and that the accusations, true or false, were related to events that took place sometime before that.

This case is usually interpreted as connected to disputes surrounding the succession to Theoderic. The most popular thesis states that a senatorial faction must have disagreed with the king's plans for his succession in Italy and preferred to support Theodahad instead of Athalaric. For Barnish:

I would conjecturally give the following account of the fall of Boethius and its aftermath: the letter of Albinus to the east concerned the possible regency or succession of Theodahad, and the *libertas Romana* allegedly hoped for by Boethius involved a senatorial share in the choice of the new ruler<sup>49</sup>.

This is supported, namely, by Theodahad's letter to the Senate, written in the context of his accession in 534, in which he suggests that the Senate had conspired in his favour during Theoderic's reign<sup>50</sup>, and by the fact that he favoured Boethius' friends and family later during his own reign<sup>51</sup>. Furthermore, both Theodahad and Tuluin, a military man who was also advanced as a likely candidate to Theoderic's succession, seem to have been rewarded after 526, suggesting the will to insure their compliance now that Theoderic was no longer present to enforce the young Athalaric's claims<sup>52</sup>.

In short, the events surrounding Boethius' downfall show that 523 and the preceding years were pivotal in the discussion of Theoderic's succession and some serious political conflict was taking place. This is

48. Not much more can be said for, while these positions were usually inaugurated on the 1st of September, this replacement was highly irregular and thus might have happened anytime during that year.

49. It is not within the scope of this work to describe and explore the complex intricacies of Boethius' case. On this subject, see Moorhead 1992, pp. 219-35. On the connection with Theodahad, see Heydemann 2016, pp. 31-5; Vitiello 2014, pp. 55-87; Barnish 1990.

50. Cassiod. *Var.* 10.4.1

51. On this: Vitiello 2014, pp. 81-4; Barnish 1990, p. 30.

52. See Cassiod. *Var.* 8.9-12 (on Tuluin) and 8.23 (on Theodahad). See also: Heydemann 2016, pp. 33-4; Heather 1995, p. 169.

thought to be connected with Eutharic's death and coincides perfectly with the timeframe given by the Second Council of Toledo for Amalaric's promotion.

#### 8. A TENTATIVE RECONSTRUCTION OF THE EVENTS

Eutharic must have died sometime between 519/20 and 522/3. After that, Theoderic faced important challenges concerning his succession in both Gothic kingdoms. In the Visigothic kingdom, a defiant and well-established Theudis was profiting from the resistance to the prospective appointment of another ruler based in Italy. In the Ostrogothic kingdom, a faction favoured Theoderic's only other male relative, Theodahad, a man with whom Theoderic had a strained relationship.

None of Theoderic's two prospective successors were in a position to fulfil his expectations for Eutharic: ruling over a united Gothic kingdom. Athalaric was still a child and Amalaric was a young adult who, not only was closely watched by Theudis, but had also long been kept in the backstage, therefore certainly lacking the resources to maintain control in both kingdoms. Facing this scenario, Theoderic may have realized that his plans for a joint succession were doomed and decided to appease tensions by abandoning them definitively. As suggested by the Acts of the Second Council of Toledo, Amalaric was promoted in some way in 522/3, allowed to exit the backstage of his minority and assume the role of an adult, if largely powerless, king ruling over the Visigothic kingdom. This represented a concession to Theudis' Visigothic faction by ensuring the existence of a court in Visigothic territory and confirming that Amalaric would be the sole successor to Theoderic amongst the Visigoths. In turn, Athalaric must have been presented as successor in Italy around this time.

If this is correct, Theoderic's two-staged advancement of Amalaric (in 511 and 522/3) was not a completely isolated case. In fact, it resembles the strategy of some emperors towards their successors. Honorius, Justinian, and Tiberius II were all promoted to the rank of *Caesar* first and, some years afterwards, to the rank of *Augustus* during the tenure of their predecessors. In every case, the second promotion was a restatement of the forthcoming succession in a moment of political significance: the promotion of Honorius was made during the rebellion of Eugenius, and those of Justinian and Tiberius II took place when the health of their predecessors, Justin I and Justin II, respectively, was already very fragile. In these cases,



as with Theoderic and Amalaric, hierarchy was maintained not only due to seniority in office but also to family ties<sup>53</sup>.

The fact that, as claimed by Procopius, tribute never ceased to be paid until after 526 indicates that Theoderic never relinquished his seniority while he was alive. This would explain why the regnal years were counted according to Theoderic until his death while, at the same time, a contemporary Iberian source preferred to consider Amalaric's regnal years as starting in 522/3. This hypothesis accords well with the apparent smoothness of the transition into two fully separate kingdoms that unfolded upon Theoderic's death. Even though the fragility of Athalaric's supporting faction might have played a role in this, it is striking that both Amalaric and Athalaric began to rule alone, the Gallic territories were divided, the treasure was sent back to the Visigoths, tribute ceased coming to Italy, and Ostrogothic troops returned without us ever knowing of any resistance from Italy. This is assumedly an *ex silentio* argument but an interesting one nonetheless.

## 9. CONCLUSIONS

There is compelling evidence to suggest that Amalaric was promoted in some way in 522/3 with Theoderic retaining a position of seniority towards him. An analysis of the textual problems surrounding the Second Council of Toledo indicates that this testimony has been rejected more for the confusion that it throws over the generally accepted theory – that the arrangements of 511 suffered no alteration until Theoderic's death in 526 – than for any concrete evidence suggesting its unreliability. Furthermore, Isidore specifically claims that Theoderic left the kingdom to Amalaric while he was still alive and the years 522/3 coincide perfectly with a period of grave disturbances in Italy connected to the succession of Theoderic, that led to the downfall of some very prominent senators. I think that we must read this as more than a coincidence.

The evidence in Procopius and in the Visigothic regnal list are not necessarily incompatible with the hypothesis advocated here. In the first case, certain matters as the payment of tribute may have been delayed until

53. Arcadius was Theodosius' son, Justinian was Justin I's nephew, and Tiberius II was adopted by Justin II. On Arcadius, Theodosius and Eugenius, see McEvoy 2013, pp. 137-9. On the vast array of sources for the cases of Justinian and Tiberius II, see PLRE 2:646 and 3:1325, respectively. On the matter of seniority, see, for example, McEvoy 2013, pp. 4-5, 63.

after the death of the senior king. In the latter, overlapping reigns are not always registered. Furthermore, the repetition of the 15+5 years in Isidore and the *Consularia* is likely due to its authors consulting such a list. While the 526 hypothesis cannot be definitively rejected, I believe that a promotion in 522/3, before Theoderic's death, is a stronger possibility, which we are advised to consider when studying the complex political events of the 520s, both in the Visigothic Kingdom and in Italy.

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## ABSTRACT

*The Regnal Years of Amalaric: Revisiting the Sources*

In 511, Amalaric, who was still a child, became king of the Visigoths, with the Ostrogothic king Theoderic acting as his senior king or his regent. Almost all modern researchers claim that this situation did not change until Theoderic's death in 526. However, this means dismissing as incorrect the information transmitted by the acta of the Second Council of Toledo of 527: the bishops date the Council to the fifth year of Amalaric's reign, which would place his accession in 522/3. In this paper, I reconsider the chronology of Amalaric's reign before Theoderic's death. For this purpose, I revisit the relevant source material and the textual problems surrounding the Second Council of Toledo. I argue that Amalaric must have been promoted in some way in 522/3 and look at the contemporary political situation in Italy to make a tentative reconstruction of the events.

KEYWORDS: Amalaric, Theoderic the Great, Succession, Second Council of Toledo, Visigoths.

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