



DIVINE REVELATIONS ON THE FRANCO-VISIGOTH ROADS DURING THE 4TH-7TH CENTURIES

Revelaciones divinas en los caminos Franco-Visigodos en los siglos IV-VII d.C.

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ABSTRACT: In Late Antiquity, travellers suffered countless difficulties when setting out on a journey. The roads were full of problems and in this scenario numerous clerics crossed the Iberian Peninsula and France either to attend the councils to discuss different aspects of dogma or to reach new monastic centers, all after the Council of Nicaea. Thanks to the detailed accounts of the hagiographies, we can give shape to the relationship between man and God in critical situations during a journey.¹

KEYWORDS: Travellers, Late Antiquity, Christianity, Revelations

RESUMEN: En la Antigüedad tardía, los viajeros sufrían innumerables dificultades a la hora de emprender un viaje. Los caminos estaban llenos de problemas y es en este escenario donde numerosos clérigos cruzaron la Península Ibérica y Francia, ya fuesen para asistir a los concilios para discutir diferentes aspectos del dogma o para llegar a nuevos centros monásticos, todo después del Concilio de Nicea. Gracias a los relatos detallados de las hagiografías, podemos dar forma a la relación entre el hombre y Dios en situaciones críticas durante un viaje.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Viajeros, Tardoantigüedad, Cristianismo, Revelaciones

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Introduction

The consolidation of Late-Antique Christianity constituted a determining framework for structuring the use of the roads both in the urban topography and in the rural territory. The need to communicate episcopal sees, churches and monasteries become a symbolic necessity of the new model of the Roman Christian cities. These new monasteries and episcopal sees were often located in remote areas suitable for spiritual retreats (CABALLERO, 1988, p. 31-50). This undoubtedly hindered communications and the mobility of religious travellers. These ascetics, monks, and bishops were to be key in the transmitting role of religious fervor on the sacred narratives, even sacrificing their own *vitae*. This is how we observe the hagiographies which informs us that many clerics would be martyred saints (BOWERSOCK, 1995). It has become clear how, since ancient times, the “journeys” of the holy men and women fulfilled a specific and propagandistic function for the cities: to legitimize them as sacred spaces. For this reason, the hagiographic traditions spread by historians, lay and religious chroniclers, showed the pride and confidence that societies felt for having strong links with their martyrs and Christian saints. The hagiographic literature that emerged around their lives has been analyzed in this work in order to delve into a model of life, an example of morality and miracles, in this case, associated with the need to carry religious virtues throughout the Franco-Visigoth territories (BARENAS, 2015, p. 51-55).

All these narratives are specially interesting for us, in order to to better understand the details about the travels of the research period under the “touristological” focusing, as these spiritual texts offer details of territory movements in socio-economic context. It is clear that the hagiographic literature does not show objective facts, in the modern sense of the word, but the main purpose would be moralizing the Christian readers For these reasons, in addition to the choice of the following texts, they give an account of “real” historical facts, and we are interested in analysing them because they help us understand the aim of the article. Our starting point will be to know the need or real justification for travelling. This reasoning will be clearly associated to the Christianity, and these texts would also favour people’s religious ardour, involved in a society ruled by religion. Thus, we can see what characteristics those travellers were identified with, or what kind of situations they experienced during their journey, always without going into the valuation of the moral judgement itself. In this case, we can learn about the motivations which impelled these “adventurers” to undertake their journeys, through the description of the Visigoth- Frank “tours”. Because we must not forget that the journeys were a very difficult undertaking, and that they took place under exceptional conditions, which were undertaken by both religious and secular travellers, would be the protagonists who tried to confront these sacred subjects directly. This fact

was analyzed for the first time for the former Spanish-Gaulish territory, representing European Christian unity under a cultural hybridization, result of a common religious cult.

For the Late Antique chronologies associated with the Visigoth world, the Hispanic divine protection was linked to Christian emperors, considered as God's agents on earth. Julian of Toledo exalted the Visigoth monarchy for having received divine protection (HWR, 22, p. 583-584; 23, p. 600-604), which was always on the side of the "believing" travellers.

The theme of travelling in the Middle Ages has aroused enormous interest in literature and historiography, and, whether real or imaginary, those accounts have become an ideal means of acquiring geographical, historical, and cultural popular tradition. Much of the research has centred on religious-devotional *homo viator* journeys (which includes not only the religious men and women but also the pilgrims, i.e., to any journey with religious purposes).² Furthermore, it seems that during this period, it was not uncommon to find clerics wandering on the roads once they had been expelled from their orders or had fled voluntarily (SPE, II, *Regula communis* XX). So much so that in 683 the XIII Council of Toledo took measures against those who gave shelter to these religious people seeking for new opportunities (Con. Tolet. XIII.9). Outside ecclesiastical control, the former clerics became vagabonds and were forced to wander the roads like nomads, along with a large group of impoverished peasants who were also begging; so, it was sometimes difficult to distinguish these two groups from the thieves (GARCÍA, 1989, p. 249).

Before we get into the subject of this article, we would like to take the reader deeper into the same legislative regulation of roads and travellers, with the objective of getting to know the stipulation of obligations and rights regarding the public use of roads, related to the mobility. This is due to the Visigoth legislation will be inspired by a set of legal texts. This This would be applied through the Codex Theodosianus and, latterly, by the *Breviario of Alarico*, under a territorial application of Roman-Barbarian communities, also known as the *Lex Romana Visigothorum*. It was promulgated in the year 506 to regulate Roman judges in cases brought before the court. This text includes a selection of laws of the so-called *Codex Theodosianus*, as well as others of original production. Regarding the travellers,

² We are mainly referring to clerical men and women, although through their lives, we have also found relevant references to the role of the pilgrims, to whom the vast geography of Christianity offered multiple centers of cultural exchange where they arrived in the hope of finding greater closeness to divinity, the sacred, and physical salvation. From the 6th century onwards, we can find references to travellers assuming a religious-pious condition that leads them to places of veneration, mainly Jerusalem, Rome, Santiago de Compostela, and all the places related to the life of Christ, saints and martyrs, where their relics were to be found (MARIANA, 2012, p. 153-183; DÍAZ, 2010, p. 241-266; DÍAZ, 2001, p. 41-75; VOGÜÉ, 2005; DIETZ, 2005).

it seems that at the times of the Visigothic monarchs, their safety was not always guaranteed (Argüelles, 2020: 143-166; ARGÜELLES, 2021, p. 15-36); despite the great efforts of the Visigothic monarchs to issue laws that punished crime, they were not able to placate the insecurity of travellers. On the regulations of Euric Code and prior to the *Lex Visigothorum*, the *Lex Gungobarda* or Bungurdio Code, attributed to Gundebaldo (early 6th century), literally reiterated the fine of 12 *solidi* for closing public roads and points out the freedom of the traveller to destroy the new illegal limits, either of fences or new crops (LV. VIII, 4, 25, 28). Likewise, riparian landowners were forbidden to place obstacles in the courses of rivers, preventing, or hindering their navigability against the common benefit, denying the possibility of speculating in favor of private interests (LV. XI, 3). Regarding to fences and obstacles in public areas, the possibility of the owner cultivating too close to the river or road without putting up a fence was contemplated, and he would automatically become exempt from responsibility for possible damages caused to pedestrians (LV. VIII, 4, 25, 28). At the same time, unfenced grazing areas were considered “public”, although with a time limitation, since travellers had the right to leave his belongings and graze their animals for a maximum of two days (unless they had permission from landowner to stay longer), and were forbidden to uproot trees, and only cut down small trees for fodder. This thought is reiterated in the Euridician Code law on the right of travellers to bivouac in another land and to make fire (CE. XVIII, 170).³ Remembering, as we have already mentioned, that if the traveller suffered any damage from jaw traps or pits, the owner of the land would be held responsible (LV. VIII, 3, 9; 4, 27).⁴ In the event of fire caused by the traveller in a land where he was resting (and not by the local inhabitants, as is the case of the Rotary Edict), thinking about the possibility that, if the fire spread, the passer-by would be responsible for the damages caused (LV. VIII, 2, 3).

Returning to the main subject of this work, in relation to religious journeys and experiences in Late Antique travels, we should remember that it was in the 7th century that Saint Gertrude became the protector of travellers (O’SULLIVAN, 2004, p. 165; SCHINDLER, SCHAUBER, 2001, p. 29), probably due to the interest she showed in pilgrims and the miraculous rescue of some monks who invoked her during a great danger at sea. It is at the first centuries of the Medieval period, after Gertrude’s miracles were publicised, that a farewell drink was drunk in her honor before setting off on a journey. A goblet used for this purpose is still preserved in Nivelles (Belgium), along with several other relics (BUTLER, 1956, p. 620-621).

³ Novel contribution of the Germanic Legislation, not included in the Roman case.

⁴ It also includes the Euridician law, following the rule of Leovigildus, the penalty regulation for the owner of the farm, in the case of stealing the traveller’s cattle (CE. XXII, 170).

It was common that, before leaving, the traveller, whether he belonged to the clerical order or was just a parishioner, to say a prayer to ask God and all the saints for protection and a safe return. The miracle of divine omnipotence will always be present as a protective element for men and women, and for monks and bishops. Even God's vengeance is represented as life lesson for those saints or their enemies, who did not respect the God's plan, which is the case of several examples in ancient *Hispania* and *Gaul*. The keys to understand the divine role in the traveller's fate will be their faith, and the will led to the depart of God's precept, praising the salvation of these saints in the face of dangerous situations that could occur during their journeys.⁵ We are interested in these religious narratives where God always has the purpose of protecting the holy men and women, either while they were alive or for those already dead, who could become martyrs through the reliquaries. In the same way, we will understand how the roads were also the stage for the saints themselves to pass on the word of the Lord.

The 6th and 7th centuries were, according to the written sources of the time, a key moment in the evolution of the monastic movement in *Hispania* (MARTÍNEZ, 2019, p. 263-288), especially thanks to the impetus given by figures of the stature of Fructuosus of Braga, Leander, Isidore of Seville, Valerius of El Bierzo, Aemilian, etc. Therefore we relate the lives of these saints to the roads as a space for miraculous stories, in which divine omnipotence always appears linked to the cleric. We therefore consider that there is a strong relationship between early monasticism and the first religious travellers.⁶

The selected sources selected for this work name experiences on roads travelled throughout Spain and France, with the purpose of continuing the journeys across the borders of the Visigoth territory which, through the Pyrenees, could come into Europe. Because of that, within the vast scope of High-Medieval hagiographies, we are only interested in the historical sources corresponding to the Spanish and French holy men and women

⁵ It seems that Orosius himself chose to return from Africa to *Hispania* by sea, because in 416 Hispania was occupied by barbarian peoples and travelling by land was very adventurous and dangerous. The danger faced by Orosius made him give up crossing the strait to Braga and he returned to Mahon, (HAP, VII). The sources allude to the danger of travelling by land, but for sure, it was also dangerous by sea, as is narrated in the journey to the East of Saint Leander in the 6th century (SANZ, 1906, p. 80). This event was also named by Severo of Menorca, at the beginning of the year 418. Here it is mentioned that a saint, not being able to cross to *Hispania*, after a long trip from Jerusalem, stayed for a not long time at Mahon; here he left the relics of the martyr Esteban (Ep. Ecc., 4).

⁶ The Early monasticism at France can be attributed to the diffusion of Eastern ascetic principles through an aristocratic group of 5th century Romanized Gauls (PRINZ, 1965, p. 489-493). About the early Spanish monasticism, the first reference is to the *monachus* at the Council of Saragossa, which were clearly influenced, in a similar way to the French case, by Oriental texts such as those of Jerome or Anthony. Some groups of monasticism have been located at the end of the 4th century at the territory of the *Tarraconense* (DÍAZ, 1991, p. 138-139).

from 4th-7th Centuries. With this, we intend to chronologically cover the transition between the Roman world and the Visigoth and Frank worlds, which can contain descriptions of journeys, that may go beyond of the mystical value.

For the Visigoth example, we have consulted the main authors whose lives describe their own journeys, as the already named Fructuosus of Braga, Leander, Isidore of Seville, Valerius of El Bierzo, Aemilian, but also Severo of Menorca, Laureano of Sevilla, Leandro or Laureano of Vatan, including other different works like the “*Vitae sanctorum patrum Emerentensium*” or “Santos Padres Españoles II” , who all offer descriptions of itineraries throughout the Iberian Peninsula, as well as the French Southeastern territories. For the example of the Frankish territory, the most relevant descriptions of religious journeys are brought in detail at the fruitful chronicles of Gregory of Tours. But equally interesting are those of Martin’s life, described by Sulpicius Severo and Venancius Fortunatus. The tales of the lives of Felix, Fortunatus, Antoninus of Apamea and Germanus of Auxerres complete the study developed on these pages. Besides, we have been able to include the contribution of the gender with the woman religious traveller, thanks to the miraculous tales described by Radegund about the life of Baudonivia, keeping at the same time the chronological unity proposed for both territories (Visigoth and Frank ones).

1 Travelling safely with God

The experiences that we present below are all related to journeys with religious nature, whether for pilgrimages,⁷ meetings, spiritual or foundational retreats, where the clergyman, and to a lesser extent the pilgrim, is the main protagonist of the events transmitted to us by the sources. The “mystical” traveling experience named at hagiographies, is certainly related to the main message of these pilgrims and the clerical lives, which means the propagandistic word of the Christian God, with prophetic and spiritual prediction, either by the divine *parole* itself or by revelation.

One of the first divine experiences that we are going to narrate is that of Gregory of Tours (ROTMAN, 2021). He exercised his episcopate in the context of the struggles that disintegrated the Frankish kingdom in the middle of 6th century. He fell ill and asked to travel to the tomb of Saint Martin. Gregory began the pilgrimage sick, hoping to be cured, and in

⁷ One of the first pilgrimage routes to be documented is the road from Bordeaux to the Holy Land via Rome and Milan dated in a text from 4th century, which includes distances, cities, and *stationes* or *mutationes*. We are referring to the so-called *Itinerarium Burdigalense*, (IB).

fact,, after walking for two or three days to Saint Martin's tomb, he and his companion Armentarius apparently recovered their health at their destination. The fact is that Gregory always travelled with relics that "protected" him. During another journey from Burgundy to Alvernia, he was caught in a storm with lightning and thunder, and, thanks to the relics he was carrying, it seems that the clouds that were overhanging him parted, and Gregory was miraculously able to continue his journey⁸. The narrative conveys the saint's concern, for the consequence of such an act was that his horse fell and was injured, and Gregory considered that he had tempted the divine power, and that was his punishment. In his own words: "I openly boasted to my comrades on the journey that I had merited by my blamelessness what God had bestowed", (GREGORY OF TOURS, BM- book in honor of the Martyrs, chapter 83, ref.24). Right there, he asked for forgiveness and lived more humbly and modestly. Thus, God manifests himself in the stories both with the ability to both protect and punish the traveller.

Another event occurred at the death of the bishop of Tours, Saint Euphronius, who appointed Gregory as bishop. One day, when he was already a bishop, he was travelling to Burgundy to visit his mother, when he fell into the hands of thieves who left him trembling in fear of losing his life and his possessions. Again, he entrusted himself to Saint Martin, and the thieves' impetus was apparently calmed when the saint, protected by Saint Martin, invited them to eat and drink, leaving them so upset that they decided to flee. It is clear that Gregory was never afraid; knowing that he was safe with God, he had faith and the protection assisted him; because he and his servants also fell ill during the trip and the dust from Martin's grave, mixed with water, were their best medicine (GREGORY OF TOURS, BM — Books of the Miracles of St. Martin. 1, 32-33)⁹.

Gregory inherited the relics, which belonged to his father. The way the relics were kept on Gregory's family is interesting. When Theodobert gave orders to take hostages in Auvergne, then Gregory's father gave the relics to a bishop, because he could not travel with them. The bishop enclosed the holy ashes in a gold case and placed them around his neck. Gregory's father believed that the relics saved him from many dangers,

⁸ The cult of relics developed in the end of 3rd. and beginning of 4th. centuries, first in the East and then more slowly and moderately in the West. Over time, it multiplied throughout Christian geography, since in the 6th. century ecclesiastical sees considered it essential to acquire the bodily remains and material objects of saints to place them under the altars. Likewise, episcopal centers were the main points of demand for the possession of relics, as they provided the bishop with a fundamental support in the consolidation of his status (GEARY, 1978; CASTELLANOS, 1996, p. 5-21).

⁹ We can relate this trip to visit his mother with the allusion: *in territorio Cavellonensis urbis* where it is believed that this was the place where the woman lived (GAUTHIER, PICARD, 1989, p. 112; Vit. Mart. 4; VAN DAM, 1993, p. 283-284).

so he was able to escape attacks from brigands, the furies of civil war, the rivers... After the death of Gregory's father, his mother began to wear the precious things on her own person, and he later would do the same; see the whole narrative in Gregory of Tours, BM, (Book in honor of the Martyrs, 83). The miracles in the life of Gregory of Tours did not only happened to him, but also to his family, thus transmitting the divine protection to his uncle and brother. The experience explained here is within the context of the journeys that we dealing with, and it happened that Gregory's uncle was the bishop of Auvergne, who had lost all his properties after the punishment of Auvergne by Theodoric at 532. The bishop Gallus of Auvergne used to go on foot with only one assistant to the village of Brioude, where the church of Saint Julian was located. Once, when he was walking, he took off his shoes because of the heat, and as he walked barefoot, he stepped on a sharp thorn. The blood flowed in torrents and, as he could not walk, he begged for the blessed martyr's aid and, after the pain had softened, he kept on his way, with a limp. However, on the third night, the wound began to worsen and there was great pain. Then he turned to the source from which he had already obtained help and fell to his knees in front of the glorious tomb. When the divine vision was over, he returned to bed and was overcome by sleep, while waiting for the miraculous help of the martyr, who finally cured him. A similar history is told on the same passage, when Peter, Gregory's older brother, felt feverish, when travelling to Saint Julian martyr festival. The travellers went to a church and worshipped at the lodging and the fever subsided a little. Lying before the tomb, he begged the martyr's favor all night long. When the vision was over, he asked them to gather dust from the blessed tomb and give it to him in a drink, hanging it round his neck. This was done, and the heat of the fever dropped sharply, so that on the very same day, he took food without suffering and walked everywhere his imagination took him (GREGORY OF TOURS, BM — Miracles of St. Julian, 23-24; ROTMAN, 2021, p. 101-128).

The divine protection of the traveller is reflected in the life of the aforementioned Saint Martin, when he obtains the chair of the church of Tours, after the death of Saint Liborius. The Saint then set out on a journey to visit his parents, who, according to the sources, were still pagans. Before he left, around the year 356, Saint Hilary reminded him that it would be a journey full of difficulties, and indeed, it was. It is Sulpicius Severus who informs us that Saint Martin, on his way to Pannonia, late in the 4th century, encountered robbers (near the Alps), who seem to have hit him on the head, beaten him, tied him up and imprisoned him:

...and when one of them lifted up his axe and placed it above Martin's head, another of them hit the falling blow with his right hand; nevertheless, with his hands tied behind his back, he was handed over to one of them to be guarded and stripped naked. The robber, (...) began to enquire who he was.

Upon this, Martin replied that he was a Christian. The robber, then, asked him whether he was afraid. Martin bravely replied that he had never felt so safe before, because he knew that Lord's mercy would be especially present with him in the midst of trials. He added that he grieved rather for the man in whose hands he was, because, by living a life of robbery, he was showing himself unworthy of the mercy of Christ. (...) he preached the word of God to the robber. Why should I delay stating the result? The robber believed; and, after expressing his respect for Martin, returned him to the road, asking him to pray to the Lord for him. That same robber was afterwards seen leading a religious life; so that, in fact, the narrative I have given above is based upon an account provided by himself (Vit. Mart. 5.4).¹⁰

The suffering and mistreatment that our protagonist endured is evident, after being assaulted, and perhaps this "lack of omnipotent protection" could be interpreted as if the Saint Martin's faith being weak and, for this reason, God not coming to his aid. This fact seems to define the profile of the good Christian, whose confidence on divine power can never be doubted. It was then, that Saint Martin revealed to the bandits that he was a Christian and that he was not afraid of them. They began a theological discussion and the saint told them about the piety of Christ, especially in those troubled times. The thieves apologized, believing in Saint Martin's words, and he returned to the road, praying for the thieves, who, thanks to Saint Martin, apparently turned their lives back to religion. Thus, not only was he protected by divine help, but he also interceded with the word of the Lord to convert new faithful sinners and a new miracle was manifested on his journey to Pannonia. On the same trip, the devil also appeared to Martin, adapting himself to human form. He crossed the road and asked him where he was going and said that he would always be there, but Martin told him: "*The Lord is my assistant. I have nothing to fear from what man does against me*" (BUTLER, 1995, p. 82-83). Thus, the devil disappeared because his spirit was pure and so was his faith. He could also make his mother realize the error of paganism.

More experiences related with journeys on the roads of Gaul and the apparitions of divine presences can be found in the lives of other holy men who venerated Saint Martin, even before Gregory of Tours, such as Saint Felix and Saint Fortunatus, in the 4th. century. While in Rome, they both had severe pain in their eyes, so, in front of the altar of Saint Martin, they rubbed the candle wax that was there on their eyes. Such was the improvement they experienced that Fortunatus left the land of the Lombards to go on pilgrimage to the saint's tomb in Tours (Vit. Mart. 4). During his voyage, he alludes to Saint Martin as the protector of his ship: "*if the star has not sink my boat into the wet sand against the reefs,*

¹⁰ The importance of Saint Martin has reached on the Medieval legendaria, which in the case of the own Martin, remind us of the work of Sulpicio Severo (GIL DE ZAMORA, 2014, p. 568).

it is that I had a powerful protector at the helm, Martin, whose history I, an unworthy servant, intend, and with great difficulty be acquainted with" (VSM, 4; PAULIN DE PÉRIGUEUX, poeme 4). No doubt that Martin seems to be a holy protector of numerous travellers, who come to him in front of dangers. It is relevant the example about the experience of Ammonius, an officer of the holy Church, who under the influence of wine, and the enemy giving him a push, fell headlong over a cliff that bordered the road. This passage is relevant because it alludes to the risk suffered by travellers due the difficulty of the roads of the steep orography (ARGÜELLES, 2021, p.15-36) and on the other hand, because Ammonius refers his miraculous experience when he was flying down and cried for aid from St. Martins. Then, he came down limb by limb and reached the ground without damage, however he suffered a slight injury in one foot, but the Church of the glorious master relieved him of all pain after his prayers (BM- Miracles of Saint Martin, 1, 20). It seems without a doubt that in this miracle Gregory of Tours transmitted us that Ammonius was "touched" by the source of "Good".

If we are travelling through Hispanic territory, we find interesting references in the hagiography of Valerius of El Bierzo, who portrays an isolated man, who gave his soul to God by founding several monasteries, including Compludo in 640. Valerius, a native of Astorga, was a hermit who retreated in the region of El Bierzo. In that remote area of the mountains of Leon (Spain), thieves and highway robbers are once again the protagonists of a fragment that conveys the idea that bandits were not only active on the roads to steal travellers' belongings but could also work as bandits for hire and reward. Valerius had several problems with a priest who wanted to make his life miserable, and this other cleric commissioned "wicked and cruel bandits" to humiliate Valerius (*Item Valeri narrationes superius memorato Patri nostro Donadeo Ordo querimoniae Praefatio Discriminis*, 7), so we can see how this fragment conveys the idea that bandits not only acted on the roads to steal travellers' belongings but could also work as "thugs" for hire and reward.

We find further references to Valerius' travels in another passage where thieves are mentioned. In this story, the protagonist was John the deacon, who had served in the monastery of Rufiana. It seems that this John had a mule, and this was a source of envy for another older monk in the monastery. This text narrates the moment of a robbery: another cleric is said to have hired some thieves to rob John on the road, with the intention of stealing John's mule. The *ultio diuina* appears in the text, because by the grace of God the animal was freed, although it seems that John had a more bitter end, as he died sometime later at the hands of the monks. God's action had consequences for the attempted theft of the mule, which was resolved by the "divine vengeance", that destroyed the crops of those outlaws who, in turn, were assaulted by other criminals, thus making cle-

at the divine power to carry out the protection of its faithful (*Item Valeri narrationes superius memorato Patri nostro Donadeo Ordo querimoniae Praefatio Discriminibus*, 26).¹¹

Let us now look at an event narrated by Saint Fructuosus of Braga, who was a monk and bishop in the 7th century. On his travels, he was confronted with the problem of being mistaken for a fugitive. He tells us that when he was near Merida (Spain), on his way to Cadiz (Spain), a local man did not recognize his habits, attacked him with insults and even inflicted physical violence on him, as he believed he was a fugitive. The text emphasizes the timing of the divine apparition, as God came to his aid with divine mercy, and it is not clear how the possessed attacker ended up covered in blood, but Fructuosus, as a “holy man” helped by God, restored him to health,¹² so that once again God helps the good faithful in any problem.

Leaving behind the terrible experiences of confrontation with thieves and physical violence, we find other problems in travelling, which are also related to the suffering and difficulties of the journey to the traveller, about which the Lord also presents himself in a mystical experience, just as it has been reflected in the lives of all the holy men and women of Late Antiquity. Returning to the life of the aforementioned Fructuosus, we find another story of a journey, in this case with the presbyter Benenatus, travelling along roads from *Lusitania* to *Baetica*. On this occasion, they had to deal with the bad weather when, during the winter, they were continually surprised by downpours and the rivers overflowed their banks. One of the horses carrying sacred books sank in a great flood and it was miraculous that the books appeared dry before the saint once they were recovered from the waters (Vit. Frut. 12).

A similar story at Hispanic roads is the one of the moments when, once the Peonense monastery was founded in the lands of Galicia, the stormy sea swept away the boats in which the disciples had to travel, driving

¹¹ The references, on DÍAZ Y DÍAZ, 2006, to this story are contradictory. Thus, in addition to the account narrated above, in the *Item replicatio sermonum* (23, 24), it seems that John had never lived in Rufiana, but that he coincided with Valerius in Castro Petrense and was forced to separate from him after an attack by bandits. Once he had recovered from the blows inflicted in the attack, he was reunited with Valerius and was killed shortly afterwards by local peasants. In both stories, the bandits are the protagonists of John’s fateful future. Experts propose either the existence of two different persons, i.e., two Johns, or the adaptation by Valerius himself of the same story according to which John the deacon is not a real character, but a literary one created by Valerius after the death of his disciple John (MARTÍN, 2006, p. 331).

¹² A vaguer testimony of the described account of Fructuosus about the insecurity of the surroundings of Merida, can be found in the account of bishop Fidel in the 7th century: “*Fidel walks with the Saints*”, when he narrates the journey of a servant whom he sends to Caspiana (17 miles from Merida), who, arriving in the city at night, could not enter because the gates were closed. The protection of the city and the closing of gates can be associated with the security of citizens and the existence of crime outside the city walls (VSPE, IV, VII).

them to the depths of despair, only contained with God's help (Vit. Frut. 7). The storms, the cold and the harshness of the winds were also suffered by Aemilian himself, as Braulio of Saragossa also tells us, when Aemilian suffered a severe physical attack on the middle of a road. Itso happened that one day that the enemy of mankind appeared on the road to our protagonist, and said to him: "if you want us to experience the strength each one of us has, let's start a fight" (Vit. Frut. 7). And he had just said that when he had already attacked him with visible and bodily aggression and continually shook the saint, who was almost staggering; but as soon as he directed his prayers to Christ, with divine help he reaffirmed his hesitant steps and instantly the bad spirit vanished in the air (Vit. Aem., 14). All those histories showed, with theological empowerment, how God was always by the clerical men and women's side and offered them a way out of any difficulties. In fact, the stories about the trip itself are scarce, because the narratives deep on spiritual details, and there are few, although very relevant for the study, references to the landscape, the type of road, the reason for the journey, the pre-departure preparations or the belongings brought with them.

Fructuosus' life seems to be a constant risk, as there are plenty of them in his stories. On the occasion to which we now refer, his life was in danger when he met a hunter on the road. This episode describes the moment when Fructuosus, dressed in goatskin, stopped to say his prayers. A hunter mistook him for an animal, and it seems that it was divine providence that, by raising his arms high in the fervor of prayer, stopped the archer, who recognized him as a human and not an animal (Vit. Frut. 5; PÉREZ DE URBIEL, 1933, p. 377-428). He tells another interesting anecdote when some hunters were chasing a doe that had been torn in the flesh along the path where Fructuosus was walking and, once again, bad luck made him cross paths with the hunters. The prey then hid under the cleric's sackcloth and Fructuosus rescued the animal from certain death at the hands of the "evil" hunters, and he was able to cure it in the monastery. This animal followed him wherever he went, and it seems that one day a hunter wounded it, and it was the saint who healed it in spirit, giving life to its soul, thus manifesting another miracle. The story alludes to the miracle itself, only detailing the holiness of the protagonist, as well as the divine presence. In this narrative the adjective "evil" defines the opinion Fructuosus had of hunting in areas close to the Castroleon monastery (Vit. Frut. 10).

2 *Miracles on the road*

In this section, we not only refer to the presence of divine omnipotence on the roads, but also to the path as a physical space, in which various miracles often took place. The following narratives have as their protagonists

a holy man and a holy woman, who in the middle of the road experience a miracle, guided by God, thus representing an authentic advertisement, probably idealized by early Christianity.

Protection and miracles go hand in hand in the story of Laureano of Vatan, Bishop of Seville during the 6th century, who fought against the Arian faith. This ecclesiastic was forced to leave the city because of Arian slanders. His hagiography tells us that God accompanied him all the time, protecting him first from the Seville city guard, who apparently “did not dare” to ask him where he was going or who he was. In addition, on one of the journeys, Laureano met a blind man and, picking up the little piece of string tied around his neck, took him as a companion to protect him. However, God through Laureano as a messenger, provided protection and the blind man’s eyes opened, and he regained his sight.

...but if you want to come with me, give me your little piece of string, and be my companion on my way; I will guide your steps (...). And without having strayed far from the same hut, his eyes opened, and he said: I pray thee, father, who is this beautiful young man, who walks before thee in garments white as the candid snow? Blessed Laureano then noticed that the blind man could see... (LAUREANO, 1758, p. 64-67).

This is how blessed Laureano arrived at the port of Huelva and from there to Marseille and Rome. Another miracle performed during a journey was that of Isidore of Seville on his return from Rome to Spain. Apparently, when he arrived in France, he learned that Spain and France were plagued by deaths and epidemics, due to storms and lack of water. The saint did not take his eyes off the sky as he advanced through French lands towards *Hispania*. He wept and sighed with sadness so loudly that the whole entourage could hear him. However, the villages through which he passed were filled with joy and excitement, wanting to meet the saint, who celebrated mass in their churches and promised them rain from God. On the day he arrived in Narbonne, after the end of the mass, a whirlwind of downpours, lightning and sparks started, so strong, never seen by those people before. Moreover, the lame could run, the one-armed had hands and the blind could see (MANZANO, 1732, p. 34-35).

Bon of Auvergne, a contemporary of Isidore in the 7th century, set out on a journey when he was assaulted on a road by two desperate individuals, who urgently needed this holy man to confirm them. So, Bon, unaware that they were possessed by demons, laid his hands on them and prayed for them. The retinue accompanying this saint said that the men spurted blood from their mouths, were freed from the demon, and were able to continue walking (GENEVAUX, 1972, p. 26).

Continuing our account of events in the 7th century, with the death of Masona, it was Innocence who succeeded him in the church of Merida. It is said that he was a man of such holiness that whenever there was

a lack of rain and excessive heat, he would walk along the roads being acclaimed by the locals who joined in his prayers. Innocence begged for divine justice for those people. This is how the rain was granted and the land was satisfied (VSPE, V, XIV).

Another illustration from Gaul is the sea journey to Britain made by Bishop Germanus of Auxerre in 429, together with Lucus of Troyes, who were entrusted with the task of curbing the Pelagian doctrine (GARCÍA, 2010, p. 61-68). On their way from Nanterre to the coast, it was here that the devil appeared to them in the form of a storm:

Then it was not long before the ocean was attacked by the violence of demons, haters of religion, who were livid with malice at the sight of such great men hastening to bring salvation to the nations. (...). The sailors were powerless and abandoned their efforts (...). At last, the blessed Lupus and all the excited throng aroused their chief, to face him against the furious elements. He, even more steadfast for the very immensity of the danger, in the name of Christ chided the ocean, pleading the cause of religion against the savagery of the gales (...) And there was God! The enemies of souls were put to flight, the air became clear and calm, the contrary winds were turned to aid the voyage, the currents flowed in the service of the ship (BEDE, EHEP, XIX).¹³

Thanks to a miracle, they were able to arrive safe and sound on the shores of Britain, but this did not happen to be the only miracle of the journey. Complications were no less on their return to France, so Germanus himself performed a miracle when he escaped a fire and restored his own health despite a broken leg, not being able to walk:

As they were returning, a demon, lying in wait, planned an accident that caused Germanus to fall and injure his foot. Little did he realize that this bodily misfortune, like those of blessed Job, would advance him in holiness. The bishop was detained by his injury in one place for a considerable period, in the course of which a fire accidentally broke out close to where he was staying. It burned several houses, (...), and it was being carried by the wind to the one in which he was staying. Everybody rushed to the prelate to carry him out of danger. But he rebuked them and, strong in his faith, refused to be moved. The crowd in desperation ran to meet the flames. But to better demonstrate God's power, everything the crowd tried to save was burned and what the injured man on his bed guarded was preserved. (...), one night he saw before him a shining figure in snow-white garments, who stretched out his hand to him while he was lying, and raised him up, telling him to stand firmly on his feet. From that moment, the pain left him, and he so completely recovered his health of his limbs that, when day returned, he resumed the toil of his journey without a qualm (CONSTANTINUS OF LYON, XIII-XVI).

The last example, for the sake of brevity, since, as mentioned, there are many allusions to the miraculous power of God in journeys, exceptionally

¹³ But, about Germanus and the British missions, see BARRET, 2009, p. 197-212.

has two women as protagonists. In this case, we refer to the life of Saint Radegund, who founded a monastery at Poitiers in 552-557.¹⁴ Radegund travelled to a number of pilgrimage sites around the Touraine, and, during this Gallic *itineraria*, she saw her martyrdom and miraculous activities increased. In eleventh passage of the narration of her life account, the story of the traveller Mamezza is told, who had been ill for several days while a journey, because of some unpleasant dirt in her eye. Her pain would not stop day or night. Such was the desperation of this traveller that she was recommended to visit the monastery of the famous saint, who was not present at that moment. It seems that “full of pain, supported by the hands of her servants, she could be led to her oratory with difficulty, suffering, as she was, a very strong pain” (Vit. Rade.), she threw herself to the ground and implored the saint to restore the sight of her eye and take away her pain. She recovered her sight, although she continued to feel pain, and “on her own feet, without help from anyone, she returned, unharmed, to her home, giving thanks to the Lord until the present day”.

3 Relics and travels

The relics of these blessed names are also protagonists of Late Antique journeys. Within Christianity, relics have their own historical value. They were a compelling reason for attracting the piety of the faithful to the graves that guarded them. It was Pope Saint Sylvester during the Council of Nicaea who instituted the so-called ‘martyr relics guardian men’, who were the ‘custodians of martyrs’ or ‘mansionaries’ (BROWN, 1980; DELEHAYE, 1927; MOLINA, 2014, p. 49-55).

The possession of a relic gave prestige to the church, hermitage or abbey that owned it and was a great source of wealth in donations, especially if it managed to become a place of pilgrimage. Clear examples would be Santiago de Compostela with James (URÍA, 2006, p. 361-362; CASTILLO, 2013, p. 367-378), and Rome with Peter and Paul (LAVARINI, 1997, p. 167-169). There is no doubt that those who died for the cause of faith became privileged intermediaries with God and were designated as partakers of some divinity. Thus, their physical remains, and personal objects became objects of veneration (GRABAR, 1946; PÉREZ- EMBID, 2017, p. 42; ARGUELLES, PIAY, 2023, p. 64-80).

The cult of saints began to develop at the Christians throughout Late Antiquity. It consists of the veneration of a holy person (BROWN, 1980). It is relevant that one of their attributes, besides regarding the religious

¹⁴ For more about holy women in Late Antiquity hagiographies in Gaul territories, see COON, 1997, p. 145-167. See also FRANK, 2023, p. 19-32.

authority, accomplishing feats, was performing miracles in life and with their own relics. That situation developed many cults around living holy men and women, so, the cult of saints was a spectacle that took place mostly around the dead of those clerics.

Continuing with Radegund's life, we find a miracle related with her relics. Coming from Burgundy, Abbot Abon arrived at Poitiers, where a severe toothache had afflicted him. Such was the pain that he wished only to die. Therefore, by divine inspiration, before the holy sepulcher of the saint, he took the veil that covered her with his teeth and fell into a deep sleep; when he regained consciousness, the pain had disappeared, and he was able to return to the inn to continue his journey. Thanks to Radegund, he was recalled to life from the door of death (Vit. Rade. 26; PEJENAUTE, 2006, p. 313-360).

In the text of the life of Saint Alvin from the 6th century, the martyrdom and death of the good martyr Antoninus in 674 (who lived one century after Alvin) in Frankish territory is narrated (FERNÁNDEZ, 1679, p. 194-196). The story tells how the martyr's head was thrown into the river, but angels protected it and placed it in a mausoleum on a ship that was taken across the *Pamiers*, *Garonne*, *Tarn* and *Aveyron* to the site of Noble Val, where Prince Feito became aware of the miracle. The *translatio* of the saint's head took place, which God guided through a "little ship" into the hands of this prince, who placed it in the main church for the veneration of all. The interest of this story is related with the narration of a journey from Spain to France. The story is still full of miracles and symbolism when it tells us how stonemasons from Toledo (Spain) travelled to Cahors (France) to carry an altar for Saint Stephen to Spain. We have no further information about the means of transport, as they only travelled with a chariot. And we do not have information about the road's infrastructure or any other travel difficulties. However, we know that the divine providence appeared and fortuitously caused the chariot, in which the altar was carried, to stop, and remain petrified in front of the church that guarded the head of Saint Antoninus. This event had to be narrated to Feito, who concluded that "*it may be that God, almighty, wants to manifest his will to us. Let two untamed cows join the cart and leave them without a guide so that they can follow the path where God wants to guide them*" (FERNÁNDEZ, 1679, p. 195). So, it happened that the cows went to that very same place of the church. In that place where the saint rested, people went on pilgrimage to recover their sight, their ears, their feet, or any other "healing" matter. Thus, the "journey" in question, that of the head of Saint Antoninus of Apamea (or of Pamiers), acquired a special meaning in order to increase his cult, to spread his devotion and miraculous capacity.

Vincentian grew up in Aquitaine and ended up as a hermit performing extravagant miracles in Frankish territory. The transfer of his relics in 672

is remarkable, as a cart pulled by two oxen transported the saint's relics to the place they would become famous. On the way, a bear killed an ox, but one of Vincentian's disciples ordered the bear to take its place, and it docilely obeyed and began to pull the cart (BUTLER, 1956, p. 22).

Laureano of Vatan complained about the problem that had existed for some time, given the insecurity on the roads, which were infested with bandits.¹⁵ It would seem that he himself died at the hands of these 'Hispanic thieves', who slit the saint's throat, and whose head returned to Seville, in the words of the Bishop of Arles "*a latrunculis Hispaniae ibidem decollatus est. Caput ejus, me jubente, Hispanim deferent*" (FLOREZ, 1777: 390) in the year 546. The head relic was magical, as it freed Seville from hunger and plague. The fact is that he suffered martyrdom and died in Vatan by order of the Ostrogothic king Totila. In this case, we find how this holy man was killed on the journey. This narrative is different from those analyzed in these pages, where divine fortune always comes, when these travellers are in danger, and finally saves their lives. Besides, in most cases, it heals their wounds and leaves them unharmed. In the case of Laureano, his death constituted a martyrdom which sanctified Laureano (LAUREANO, 1759, p. 267; SANZ, 1906, p. 53). In fact, the risk of being killed on a trip by highwaymen seems to have been common in ancient times (ARGÜELLES, 2021, p. 23-24).¹⁶

The miracles of the relics not only had an effect among holy men and women, but also among believing partisans as well. Consequently, Braulio of Saragossa tells us the story of a sick girl whose parents took her on a pilgrimage to the tomb of this saint. The little girl collapsed on the way and died without reaching their destination. Her parents carried her inert body to the tomb of Saint Aemilian so that she could rest next to the saint, and then, once again, this deceased saint worked a miracle when three hours after being in the tomb the girl revived (Vit. Aem. 31).¹⁷

¹⁵ During the year 440, when wars and enemy incursion made ecclesiastical meetings difficult: "*due to the difficulty of the roads, the meetings of the Bishops began to be rare, and secret perfidy found freedom, due to the public disturbance, and also the perversion of many souls proliferated...*", (LAUREANO, 1956, p. 307). On the dangers of travel in Late Antiquity in *Hispania*, see in particular, ARGÜELLES, 2021, p. 15-36; SZABÓ, 2007, p. 51-66.

¹⁶ We found another example on travel murders related by the already named Gregory of Tours, about whom, we have introduced his life, full of mystical journeys. In the 6th century, when Sylvester received his tonsure and was ordained bishop at Langres (replacing the deceased Tetricus), he prepared a journey to Lyons to receive the blessing of other bishops there, but he died by epilepsy before it. Sylvester's son blamed the deacon Peter about the death. Two years later, Silvester's son followed Peter the deacon and killed him on the middle of a road with a lance wound. After that, the killer, during his travelling to a certain place, hiding from the power, he drew his sword and slew a man who had done him no harm, see GREGORY OF TOURS, BM- 5, 5: The bishops of Langres.

¹⁷ The miracle did not always take place, as the opposite is the case in the life of Isidore of Seville, where he tells us that a father set out on a journey to pray for his son's health to the "Sanctuary of Zepeda". It seems that he did not have enough faith and hope and so, the miracle did not happen (MANZANO, 1732, p. 393).

In short, miracles and the transfer of relics have gone hand in hand in historical sources throughout history. They are represented as a resource to construct a solid narrative that justifies the historical and social importance of churches or monasteries, thus offering us numerous stories, but in this case, we have only focused our study, in relation to journeys and physical communications (both terrestrial and maritime), where miracles, faith, rivers and roads (both of them as scenarios of territorial mobility) are the protagonists.

Conclusions

As the selected examples show, most of the journeys documented for this period were undertaken by holy men and women, pilgrims... Travelling was therefore presented as a necessity rather than a pleasure. Reading the lives of these saints has allowed us to redefine the image of Christian power in the fate of the *ultio diuina* and the protection of the travelling saint. During the odysseys experienced by these travellers on their journeys, there is always a “miraculous event” that protects the protagonist’s life, thanks to divine omnipotence (GARCÍA DE LA BORBOLLA, 2000, p. 335-351).

These saints were no exception to travellers who fell prey to pillage and banditry, very common from centuries and, as we have already shown, documented in numerous examples in the sources of Late Antique.

Religious journeys have always been present since the Ancient Grecia, keeping their relevance in Late Antiquity, not only with pilgrimages but also with religious monasticism, transmitted in the lives of holy men and women. It was common, therefore, to find monks travelling around the Spanish-Gallic territory for religious needs, but it also seems that it was not uncommon to find clerics wandering along the roads after having been expelled from their orders or having voluntarily fled (SPE, II, RC XX, Conc. Tolet. IV, c.53.54). So much so that, in 683, the XIII Council of Toledo took measures against those who gave shelter to these religious who were seeking new opportunities (Con. Tolet. XIII, c.9; ANDRÉS, *et al.* 2010: 171).

Furthermore, thanks to these sources, which were literary propaganda for Christianity, we can analyze the fortunate divine revelations to these clerics, in the midst of their journeys, which certainly protected travellers and pilgrims, who strengthened their spiritual journey through preaching, visions, and apparitions. Analyzing the narratives, it seems that they were, undoubtedly, guided by the hand of God, who helped them face a myriad of earthly difficulties: from storms, to attacks by wild beasts, diseases, or bandit-infested roads. Certainly, the complications of the journey for

various religious reasons and the harshness of this experience conferred spiritual benefits, given the suffering and penance of the clerics (CLARK, 2004, p. 149-158). The facts presented are sometimes implausible and difficult to believe, which leads us to doubt their reliability and the distortion of reality to achieve that propagandistic purpose of the omnipotent and protective God of the faithful. For the historian, it is important to concentrate mainly on "historical facts", and ignore their role as sacred fictions, as documents providing spiritual direction for ancient and diverse audiences. Regarding the wonders revealed in these Christian sources, they are different sorts of miraculous manifestations of an eschatological type linked to "visions", "apparitions", "heavenly visitations", and "signs or indications from beyond" were part of these particular types of "journeys" that represented for different forms of divine intervention in the world with the universal hope of a salvific message. Journeys were, therefore, fundamental components of religious phenomena that expressed the divine will to ensure contact between heaven and earth, and in that sense, they fulfilled a specific purpose or function. The authors' purpose is clear: on the one hand, they served to endorse the legitimacy of the relics and therefore of the saint to whom they belonged and, on the other hand, to favor the expansion of Christianity through these saints themselves: hermits, monks and founders of early monasteries offered cohesion among local communities.

The religious were the true articulators of the symbolic-religious relationships that took place in churches, monasteries and convents. The fact is that, with their "journeys", they were able to establish a new type of mobility and exchange, bringing sacred spaces into contact with each other and elevating them in dignity and hierarchy through their tangible presence, to a certain extent, thanks to the relics and their own capacity to work miracles. In addition, undoubtedly, the texts transmit the Christian perception of a world full of demons, where good and evil exist (VÁRCARCEL, 2003, p. 133-156), which is evident in all the experiences these saints had during their journeys. Thanks to their struggle with the devil, the "heroic" role of the holy men and women, helped by God, can be revealed.

Without a doubt, holy men and women have become a defining feature of the Late Antique culture. The goals of these extraordinary and assorted texts are to reinforce the theological questions which feed into the meaning of Christian values, trying to reinforce the perception of the Christian "heroes" (usually martyrs or ascetics), with histories that reconcile the historical and "idyllic fiction" literature. With these sources of "sacred fiction" we can offer more details about social behaviors than about any kind of organization, techniques and characteristics of the journeys, which is what really interests us in this work. However, with the routes travelled and the experiences lived by the protagonists, we can review the religious

“tourism” of the Late Antiquity and the High Medieval period, recognising the roads, the episcopal cities, the geographical points, almost always described in rural contexts. All of this would confirm the predominance of a rural habitat during Early Middle Ages, as well as the lack of a “leisure” journey, but only for “spiritual necessity”, accessible to all social classes.

Abbreviations

BM	= <i>Books of Miracles</i>
CCLS	= <i>Corpus Christianorum Series Latina</i>
Con. Tolet.	= <i>Concilium toletatus</i>
EHEP	= <i>Ecclesiastical History of the English People</i>
Ep. Ecc.	= <i>Epistula ad omnem ecclesiam</i>
HAP	= <i>Historiarum adversos paganos</i>
HWR	= <i>Historia Wambae Regis</i>
IB	= <i>Itinerarium Birdigalensis</i>
LV	= <i>Liber Iudiciorum</i>
SPE	= <i>Santos Padres Españoles</i>
Vit. Aem.	= <i>Vita Sancti Aemiliani</i>
Vit. Mart.	= <i>Vita Martini</i>
Vit. Rade.	= <i>Vita Radegundis</i>
VSM	= <i>Vie de Saint Martin</i>
VSPE	= <i>Vitae sanctorum patrum emeritensium</i>

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