

## h 8 —

The manuscript name *haal* demonstrates the influenced of an English scribe, who might have palatalized the -g- in \**hagl*, as in OE *hægl* [hail]. The old meaning of this name was that of catastrophe, but it also could mean “cosmic order.” This reflected the Pythagorean concepts connected to the octad, both “untimely born” and “harmony.”

## ψ 9 θ

The name of this letter reflects the Gothic word *þiup*, meaning “the good,” or “the good thing.” Greek philosophy teaches that the Good, the Agathon (Gk. αγαθον) is the ultimate abstract power or “thing” from which all and everything else is derived. The fact that *þiup* is an abstract, mathematical concept is further demonstrated by its ninth position in the system and the fact that the signs for 90 and 900 are not letters but purely abstract mathematical symbols. But note too that the abstract symbol for 900 is ↑ the old rune-shape for the word “god” (\**teiw*s).

## I 10 I

The number 10 is a bridge to the next level of numbers and letters. The Old Norwegian Rune Poem calls “ice” a “bridge” (over water). While the Old English Rune Poem emphasizes the jewel-like beauty and perfection of the substance of ice. 10 links or bridges the unity of I in a vertical fashion to a more manifest reality.

## K 20 K

The number 20 is the phenomenon resulting from the dyadic principle. The sore or wound results from flagellation by the birch. Clearly the manuscript name, *chozma*, is related to the Old Norse rune-name *kaun*, “sore, wound.” This is the experience of transformation, the real-life, feeling of undergoing profound change.

## Λ 30 Λ

\**Lagus* can be called “water,” but it refers to fluid or moisture in general. The ordinary word for “water” is *wato*. This is the triad on a more phenomenological level. The gift, God’s grace, is transferred to the phenomenon of fluidity — wine — and made absorbable by man.

## M 40 M

*Manna*, which translates Greek ανθρωπος, refers to human beings in general, or as a class of beings. This is the common mass of humanity which inhabits this world of *midjungards*. This Gothic cosmological term, which answers perfectly to Old Norse miðgarðr, is used to translate Greek οικουμενη, “the inhabited world,” or “the earthly orb.” Here we have the more manifest dimension of the tetrad.

## N 50 N

The Gothic word *naups* translates Greek αναγκη (*anankē*), meaning “necessity” or “compulsion.” This is an important word and concept in Greek magical thought of Late Antiquity. It is the force of compulsion exerted by a superior being on an inferior one. This is the phenomenon behind the pentad.

## G 60 —

Gothic *jer* does not directly correspond to a Greek letter, but as the number 60 it is the manifestation of the hexad. Its Gothic name means “year,” but it is used to translate a number of Greek words, e.g. ενιαυτος, “a cycle or period of time,” καιρος, “exact or critical time,” χρονος, “a long time” (Luke 20:9), and ετος, “a year.” This is a cycle punctuated with critical moments.

## Π 70 O

The Gothic letter Π bears the name \**ūrus*, “aurochs,” but corresponds structurally to the short Greek ο, *omikron*. The *ūrus* was a fierce, wild bovine creature akin to our bison and longhorn. This creature roamed only in the north, and would have been unfamiliar to the Greek world. As the phenomenon of the heptad, it would have corresponded to the idea of being “hard to subdue.”

## Π 80 Π

For structural reasons the old rune-name \**perþrō* can be said to have probably denoted a pear-tree, or the wood from a pear (fruit-bearing) tree. The reconstructed Gothic letter name \**paírþra* was rooted in this symbolism, although the meaning of the name in Gothic is now obscure. Linguistically it can have nothing to do with Greek *pithos*, “pot,” as the -r- remains unaccounted for phonologically.

## ᚱ 100 P

The Gothic letter-name here clearly corresponds to the old rune-name *\*raiðō*. *\*Raida* means wagon, a vehicle used by the Goths in their centuries-long history of migration. The migratory Goths lived in their wagons and they even had temples and later churches transported within wagons.

## ᚱ 200 Σ

*Sauil* is the sun, which translates Greek ἥλιος (*hēlios*). In Gothic the word, normally of feminine gender grammatically and mythologically, is treated as a neuter noun. This may have been a philosophical statement regarding the transcendent nature of the sun as a philosophical and religious concept rather than a simple physical phenomenon.

## ᚱ 300 T

The old rune-name *\*teiws* is retained here. Although it is not recorded as a word for “god” in the Gothic Bible, it must have nevertheless been understood as a universal name of god, corresponding to Greek θεός (*theos*) and Latin *deus*. As a word and name it would then have also included the old Gothic god(s) in this universal category of divinity.

## ᚱ 400 Y

In the Salzburg-Vienna codex the name is given as *uwinne*. This shows the Old High German spelling practice of writing a double-u for the [w]-sound. The old rune-name was *\*wunjō*, “joy.” But the manuscript name does not directly reflect this. Rather it seems to refer to the Gothic word *winja*, “pasture” or “meadow”—which would have been understood perhaps as a heavenly plane. If, however, the old name applied, it would be reconstructed as *\*wunja*, “joy.”

## ᚱ 500 Φ

The Gothic word *faihu* translates Greek ἀργυριον, “money” (Mark 14.11), κτηματα, “possessions” (Mark 10.22), and χρηματα, “riches” (Luke 18.24). To the Goths this concept related directly to the importance of Gothic *treasures*—gold and mobile wealth hidden or stored away for later *higher* use.

## X 600 X

This Gothic letter is unique. Its shape is that of the ancient g-rune (*\*gebō*, “gift”), the concept of which is accounted for in the third Gothic letter. The phonetic value of the Gothic letter is that of the aspirated Greek letter χ, the first letter in the title Christ (Gk. Χριστος). In the Gothic Bible it is practically used only in the spelling of this word, which is usually abbreviated **Xs**. What is unique is that the name of the Gothic letter is *enguz* in the manuscript—reconstructed as *\*iggws* [ingus], clearly a reflection of the ancient rune-name *\*ingwaz* (OE Ing), “the earth-god.” So here we have the clear indication that the name of a *pagan* god has been used to interpret, and give deeper meaning to, the “Christian” god. This at once tells us something of the Gothic conception of their particular Christ, their Christology, and their understanding of the importance of Iggws. This is esoteric evidence that Christ/Iggws was considered a divinity, but one who was terrestrial, or immanent, in nature, not entirely transcendent.

## Ɱ 700 Ψ

Of course, there is no phonetic correspondence between Gothic Ɱ (b) and the Greek Ψ (ps). They do, however, bear the same numerical value. The Gothic letter shape could be construed as the shape of Ψ viewed from above, if the “bowl” of Ψ is seen in three dimensions. This would also give us insight into how letters could be envisioned in ancient times. The Gothic letter-name *\*hwaír*, reconstructed from *uuaer*, means “kettle” or “cauldron.” This may have no runic correspondence, and thus may have been “invented” by Ulfilas. In these times, however, *pure invention* out of whole cloth, especially for a man steeped in tradition, seems unlikely. Coupling this idea with the fact that the concept of *\*hwaír* has no overt Christian meaning or correspondence leads us to believe that the name reflects an older, alternate runic tradition. The Proto-Germanic name would have been *\*hweraz*, “kettle, pot, cauldron,” which might have been an alternate name for the h-rune. Such kettles were of great importance for the domestic life of the ancient Germanic peoples, and even more important to those who regularly migrated across long distances, such as the Goths.

## ᚱ 800 Ω

Here there is a perfect correspondence between the Gothic letter-name and the rune-name, and between that and the Greek sound (long-*o*). The concept of “ancestral property” took on a more abstract meaning for the frequently migrating Goths. *\*Opal* is clearly

transferred to institutions and interpersonal relationships which then can be projected onto any landscape the people possessing these offices happen to be occupying at the moment. This secret of maintaining a high level of social organization and group solidarity while being constantly on the move is an old Indo-European one, but one the Goths practiced very effectively.

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All of these letters indeed remain *runes* in the sense that they reveal and conceal meanings far in excess of their simple phonetic values and that each is part of a larger symbolic context or matrix of meaning. In the case of the Gothic world, however, it is a great and fatal mistake to assume that the system is restricted to being a crude mask of the older runic system. The Gothic set of letter-symbols represents a true synthesis of the Greek and Germanic worlds.

## The Gothic Cabala

### Numerology

The Greeks introduced the idea of using letters as numbers to the Semitic world. Early manuscripts of the Hebrew Bible used Greek letters as numbers in enumerating the chapters and verses of the texts. Originally — in Homeric times — the Greek system used letters to signify the numbers 1-24 only. Somewhat later a system of three rows of nine symbols was developed. This was structurally identical to the system shown in table 3.4 above. Using this system higher numbers could easily be written. As the Greeks called their “letters” *στοιχεια*, “elements” it is clear from early on that the saw that, as Pythagoras was to remark, “number is the foundation of all things.” This included language and its “elements.”

By the time the Goths encountered the Greek world in the 2nd century, the Greeks had already developed an elaborate and sophisticated numerological philosophy and esotericism. This was pioneered at the earliest stages by philosophers such as Pythagoras, who lived around 500 BCE. This Greek form of esotericism was absorbed by the Hebrews and became a mainstay of their esoteric tradition known as the *kabbalah*, “tradition.” Because the Jews were so well able to transmit this type of material from ancient times right up to the present day, this sort of esotericism is now often referred to generically by the Hebrew name Kabbalah.

When Ulfilas created his system of Gothic letters he would have had available to himself not only ancient pagan Greek esotericism, but also

a vast, by that time heavily Christianized, body of lore surrounding the letters and numbers represented by the Greek system of the *στοιχεια*. What we have in the Gothic system is a unique synthesis, not a simple transference of older runic ideas and not a slavish imitation of a Greek model. The mysteries of this system are vast and can only be touched on in this volume.

In theory the esoteric meaning of the elements of the system hinges on the hidden link between the three factors of number-sound-shape. Perhaps the relationships among these factors were colored by theology. For example, the orthodox Romans might have insisted on the essential unity or identity of these factors, while the Gothic “Arian” (and pagan Greek) approach might have seen it more as number giving rise to sound, which is then expressed in visible form.

On one level the Gothic system is a matrix of symbolic meaning on its own. It can be studied and meditated upon in ways which reveal deeper significance derived from the interplay of the factors of number (order), sound (name) and shape (form). One example of this emerges from the Late Antique and early Christian focus on the “triple numbers,” 111, 222, 333, etc. This is perhaps most famously known about in connection with the “number of the Beast” (666) recorded in Revelation 13.18. (Note there is an alternate textual tradition which makes the number of the Beast 616.) What is often missed in connection with these triple numbers is that they are really formulas relating to the three letters in each of the *vertical columns* in the system shown in table 3.3. For example, Gothic **·RI·** is  $100 + 10 + 1 = 111$ . Moreover, the Gothic system provides for the possibility of deriving esoteric meaning beyond that of the Greek system simply because the names of the letters invite meaningful semantic speculation which the abstract Greek letter names do not allow. In meditating on this system it should be noted that the numerical reading proceeds from the bottom up:

1  
↑  
10  
↑  
100

On the other hand the semantic reading, *and* the more esoteric numerological understanding proceeds from the top downward:

1

↓

10

↓

100

The latter simply demonstrates the fundamental ancient idea that the numbers 1-9 are root *qualities* from which any and all subsequent numbers are derived. The numbers 1-9 constitute true archetypes of meaning; they are the fathers from whom the other numbers descend and upon whom others are dependent.

Using these principles as our foundation the following meditations emerge:

	Archetype	Phenomenon	Epiphany
111 = <b>AIK</b>	= <i>ahsa</i> (1)	<i>eis</i> (10)	<i>raida</i> (100)
	axel	ice	wagon

The turning or supporting pole of the universe provides the principle for traveling a solid, yet slippery (dangerous) surface (bridge) which is collectively achieved in a vehicle or wagon. The wagon equipped with axles for its rotating wheels crosses the ice.

222 = <b>BKS</b>	= <i>baírkan</i> (2)	<i>kusma</i> (20)	<i>sauil</i> (200)
	birch-twíg	sore	sun

The birch-twíg is the instrument of chastisement and stimulation for change and growth or discipline which inevitably causes pain (and results in a sore or wound) but which ultimately results in the experience of a transcendent and nurturing spirit.

333 = <b>ΓAT</b>	= <i>giba</i> (3)	<i>lagus</i> (30)	<i>teíws</i> (300)
	gift	water	god

The gift from an archetypal level is that of consciousness or the spirit, conveyed to mankind in the ritual form of the ingestion of consecrated liquids. In pagan times this was mead (honey-wine) or beer/ale, while in Christian times it was seen as the consecrated wine of the eucharist. This leads to the presence of god in the world.

444 = <b>AMY</b>	= <i>dags</i> (4)	<i>manna</i> (40)	<i>winja</i> (400)
	day	human	meadow

Day-light is that which shines on all and everyone. The four-fold symbol describes the place of human existence. The light of day distinguishes humanity and rightly seen can fashion a happy existence for the whole—in this world and beyond.

555 = <b>ENF</b>	= <i>aíhs</i> (5)	<i>naups</i> (50)	<i>faíhu</i> (500)
	horse	need	mobile property

The horse is the power of the “other,” the greater archetypal power that completes and expands man’s power. In times of necessity, distress or war this phenomenon of power provides for man winning manifest and tangible power in the form of goods and gold (treasure). This treasury, wisely dispensed, was also an instrument of alleviating distress. For the often warlike Goths the horse was an instrument necessary for their prosperity gained through conflict.

666 = <b>UGX</b>	= <i>qaírpra</i> (6)	<i>jer</i> (60)	<i>iggws</i> (600)
	fire	year	Man

The fire, or instrument for making a friction-fire where no fire existed before the instrument was used, is ceremonially ignited at certain times of the year—especially in the spring when a new fire is ignited. This cyclical fire, brought from heaven to earth, inaugurates the higher Man—**XRISTNS**.

777 = <b>ZNO</b>	= <i>aiz</i> (7)	<i>urus</i> (70)	<i>hvaír</i> (700)
	metal	aurochs	kettle

Metal is the archetypal substance which is so hard it requires a hot fire and great strength to extract it and to forge it into a useful object in the world, e.g. the kettle or cauldron. This in turn becomes an essential tool for the transformation of organic materials into higher substances, e.g. in cooking or brewing.

888 = <b>HPQ</b>	= <i>hagl</i> (8)	<i>paírpra</i> (80)	<i>opal</i> (800)
	hail	pear	ancestral property

Hail is the symbol of great archetypal catastrophe raining down from above—it is the catalyst for sudden *change*. The “fruit bearing



Additional examples of such insight run into the hundreds when the body of numerical values of the Gothic and Greek vocabularies are cross referenced. The archive at Woodharrow contains a complete numeric analysis of the known Gothic vocabulary.

One of the most remarkable discoveries in the field of gematria in the Gothic tradition has to do with the number 616. As noted briefly before, there is an alternate tradition regarding the so-called number of the Beast mentioned in Revelation 13.18. This indicates that the number is 616, not 666. What is remarkable is that the name of the Gothic letter **X** *iggws*, which means Man, or god-man, and is used as the initial letter in the name Christ, has the numerical value of 616. This points to the esoteric identity between the Beast (who is referred to as "a Man") and the Christos (who also became *human*) in the final stage of the apocalypse—a coded reference to the doctrine of universal salvation.

The whole area of Gothic gamatria awaits a master-work to be created by someone who will be able to decode this great Gothic mystery.

## Chapter Four

### The Hidden Treasures of the Goths

In ancient, pagan, times the Goths were accustomed to managing two separate and different treasures, or treasuries. One was the royal treasure, which was derived from monetary fines imposed by the king on the people for transgressions. This was a sort of "taxation." The second was the so-called old-treasure, which was an ever increasing amount derived from tribute paid by foreigners and from booty collected in military campaigns. The royal treasure was used for regular state or tribal expenses, the old-treasure was maintained as a talisman of the kingdom and a guarantor of its continuance and legitimacy. The old-treasure had a magical and holy function, which was not supposed to be tapped into unless the existence of the nation was in danger. Of course, the old-treasure was also the source for funds to be paid to the retinue of the king and to the Gothic nobles.

One of the most distinctive and enduring aspects of the mysteries of the Goths is their frequent involvement with hidden treasures. Often these seem to be metaphysical or symbolic, but more often still they entail actual gold or other valuables. It seems to have been a Gothic cultural trait, in part inherited from the Germanic past, to hide symbols both to transfer them magically into the future or into another realm of reality and to increase their power through this process of *hiding*. Sometimes of course, it also appears that the treasures were hidden in order to preserve them from hostile forces. Only later would they be rediscovered and thus be restored to a place of honor.

#### The Treasure of Pietroassa

In 1837 two farmers from the village of Pietroassa in Walachia, present-day Romania, found a golden treasure hidden under a limestone block in the ruins of an ancient Roman fortress. The objects were gold, some of them decorated with semiprecious stones. At first these farmers hid the treasure at home. Then after a year they sold it to an Albanian stonemason, Athanasius Verussi. There were originally twenty-two pieces in the hoard, but only twelve seemed to have survived Verussi's ownership. There was a torque, a ring with runes, a flat bowl, a canister, a bowl bearing a frieze of figures, a necklace, one large fibula

and three smaller ones, as well as two small basket-like vessels. These eventually found their way into a museum in Bucharest.

Among the items “lost” before the first transfer to the museum was another ring bearing a runic inscription.

In 1875 the items were stolen from the museum, but were rediscovered a few days later. The rune-ring had by that time been largely destroyed by a goldsmith, but luckily the inscription survived—even if what was left of the ring was broken in two, thereby damaging one of the runes. The treasure was stolen once more and rediscovered before being looted by the Russians in 1916 and taken to Moscow as the Romanian army retreated during the First World War. There the treasure remained, lost and ignored for forty years until it was returned to the National Museum in Bucharest in 1956. (Krause 1966, pp. 91-92)

It was widely thought that this treasure represented pagan religious relics and that here we are dealing with a pagan Gothic temple-treasure. However, it clearly seems that the treasure relates more specifically to the symbolism of Gothic royal authority. Of course, the concepts of “state” and “religion” would have been closely intertwined among the pagan Goths. One theory has it that the hoard was deposited by Athanaric as he and his army retreated before the Huns in 376 or 380. This is unlikely on two counts. First, the treasure was perfectly transportable and would not have impeded the mobility of an army. Second, some of the items in the hoard have since been more positively dated to sometime in the fifth century.

The fact that the treasure was deposited in a fortress — a stronghold of chieftains — and appears to have been concealed or hidden rather than *sacrificed* indicates that it was intended to be recovered later by those who deposited it. As it turns out, the treasure proved to be a message to the world to come.

We can know a good deal about this treasure as it was actually provided with a *voice*, i.e. the runic inscription which miraculously survived on the simply designed neck-ring. For the Goths and the Germanic peoples in general at this time, the symbol of royal authority was not a *crown*, but rather a neck-ring. In a magical sense this might seem to indicate that the importance of the throat and voice of the king as a cultic speaker.

An old drawing of the ring preserves for us the general shape and design of the object, shown in plate 4.1. This reveals that the runic inscriptions was carved to sit across the throat of the wearer. It is unclear as to whether the runes would have been visible to observers when the ring was being worn. I would guess that the inscription was made to be hidden, as an operative message to forge a sacred link between the king/chieftain and the gods and the people.



Plate 4.1: The Ring of Pietroassa

The runes on the inscriptions read:

**gutaniowihailag**

*Gutanī ō(pal) wihailag*

“The Goths’ ancestral property, sacrosanct”

This would mean that the first word *Gutanī* is a genitive (possessive) plural of the tribal name of the Goths, and that the seventh rune is an ideogram or *Begriffsrune*, where the single rune  $\mathfrak{A}$  stands for the rune-name *\*ōpala*, “ancestral property.” The use of this particular rune as an ideogram for its name is also well known in Anglo-Saxon manuscript practices, where, for example,  $\mathfrak{A}$  is made to substitute for Old English *apæl*, “country, native land” in *Beowulf* and other works. Finally, the complex *wihailag* is most likely the composite of *wih* and *hailag*, following the usual runological rule of not doubling runes. These are the two forms of the “holy” known to the ancient Germanic and Indo-European peoples. The Roman philosopher Cicero combined the equivalent terms in Latin *sacer* and *sanctum* into the compound *sacrosanctum*.

Evidence also shows that there was originally a swastika or triskelion inscribed on the ring about where the 7th and 8th runes are. This might have been an older symbol, which the runes made more explicit. Because  $\mathfrak{A}$  indicates ancestral property or even real-estate or homeland in a more abstract sense, it is not likely that the  $\mathfrak{A}$  in any way is intended to indicate the treasure itself. The runic symbol  $\mathfrak{F}$  indicates mobile property and even gold, so clearly there would have been a symbol to designate the treasure if that is what was intended.

Rather, I believe, the inscription refers to the king's (or other chieftain's) function of keeping the "homeland," i.e. the community of Goths *sacrosanct*, i.e. set apart as holy or consecrated and invulnerable to harm. This was the sacred duty and function of the king, and this ring, a symbol of his sovereign power, would have clearly been seen as a tool to aid him in the exercise of this essential function.

As a treasure this ancient Gothic message impresses upon us the necessity of group identity and solidarity in a hostile world and that the true leaders are responsible for providing for and leading us toward these noble ends, which, when preserved, ensure our continuity and security. Such treasures exceed all gold in value.

### The Visigothic Treasure of Alaric

This treasure, certainly the most famous and storied of all Gothic treasures, is also sometimes falsely called the "Temple Treasure." This misdirection is understandable from the point of view that Europeans, once they had been Christianized, began to focus their interest on aspects of Jewish myth and history and at the same time began to ignore their own indigenous traditions. The treasure in question is actually the *Roman Treasure*—the contents of the Imperial treasury of Rome. This treasure had been built up for centuries by the Romans, and was without doubt the greatest single collection of wealth in the world known at that time. When Alaric sacked the City of Rome in 410 CE it is explicitly stated that he removed the entire contents of the treasury and placed it in wagons—which some say make a train requiring a whole day to snake its way out of the city. The Visigoths left for the southern part of Italy, where Alaric died. It had been his plan to cross into northern Africa to establish a new Visigothic kingdom there. Of course, some portion of the treasure would have been buried with the king in the royal custom of the Germanic peoples. Although the Visigoths were nominally Arian Christians, the old, originally pagan, traditions continued unabated in the royal clans. This treasure has been the object of treasure hunters—although it is likely that the grave was looted in antiquity, since it would have been in an area subsequently unprotected by the Visigoths.

It is well-known that the Roman treasury at one point contained the contents of the Jewish temple in Jerusalem, taken by Titus from that city in 70 CE. Some of it is even explicitly shown on the Arch of Titus in Rome, where for example the *menorah*—or seven-branched candlestick—can be clearly made out in the sculpted image on this arch of the Triumphal march celebrated in Rome for Titus after his subduing of the rebellious Israel.

Writing in *The Jewish Wars*, the Jewish historian Josephus relates:

Most of the spoils that were carried were heaped up indiscriminately, but more prominent than all the rest were those captured in the Temple at Jerusalem—a golden table weighing several hundredweight, and a lampstand, similarly made of gold but differently constructed from those we normally use...After these was carried the Jewish Law, the last of the spoils...Vespasian made up his mind to build a temple of Peace...There too he laid up the golden vessels from the Temple of the Jews, for he prided himself on them; but their Law and the crimson curtains of the Inner Sanctuary he ordered to be deposited in the Palace for safe keeping. (Josephus, pp. 385-6)

This description cannot be substantiated. Vespasian was emperor when Israel was subdued by Titus and the temple destroyed. Titus became emperor in 79 and ruled to his death in 81. The general Roman attitude toward the Jews and their religion was one of disdain. Writing in the first decade of the second century, the Roman historian Tacitus refers to the religious practices of the Jews as "sinister and revolting" (*Histories* V.5) and he showed no reverence or awe with regard to the temple of the Jews or its traditions. Given that the actual Roman attitude toward the Jewish religion was so negative and disdainful, it is most likely that eventually the sacred objects taken from that temple were melted down and used for other purposes by the Romans, long before the Visigoths arrived to transport the treasury away.

Also, speculation that the Roman treasury contained the Ark of the Covenant seems unfounded. The ark was likely looted from the temple in antiquity by the Egyptians, Babylonians or Greeks. It must be remembered that the temple treasure of Jerusalem, as magnificent as it might have been, would have been a modest one as compared to those of other more powerful neighboring countries, as Israel was in fact a small and relatively poor country.

Alaric's sacking of Rome was not a particularly violent act. The Visigoths simply took possession of the city and in an orderly fashion excised the Roman treasury. A certain amount of the wealth of this treasure would certainly have been immediately divided among the chieftains and princes of the Visigoths. It was the greatest virtue of a Germanic king to be the "ring-giver," i.e. distributor of wealth to his fellow nobles within the tribe and especially to his retainers. After Alaric's untimely death the bulk of the treasure would have eventually made its way with the Visigoths back northward from Italy into southern Gaul under the leadership of Athaulf sometime in 412. There the Goths formed a stable kingdom centered around the cities of Toulouse and Carcassonne. The greatest king in the history of this

particular Gothic kingdom was Alaric II (484-507). This kingdom endured intact for nearly a century. It was greatly reduced in size after the defeat of Alaric's Visigoths by the Franks at the Battle of Vouillé. Wolfram notes that after the battle with the Franks nevertheless "the greater part of the Visigothic royal treasure was saved." (Wolfram, p. 243) But parts of the kingdom near the coast continued to carry on as a Visigothic realm into the 7th century.

During this long period of relative stability and localized settlement, the Visigoths must have dealt with the enormous wealth of the Roman treasury in various ways. The fact that the wealth was not used to pay tribute to potential enemies, in order to avoid conflict, the way the latter-day Romans had often used their wealth, speaks to the fact that the gold was not valued in the same way by the Goths as it was among the Romans. In Germanic tradition gold is seen as a potential cause of dissension among kinsmen and something which must be distributed and circulated within the tribe in order not to exercise a destructive influence. Alternatively, or perhaps additionally, such gold can be buried or hidden more or less permanently and secretly concealed in a hoard— apart from the world of men.

Archeologists have noted the great influx of gold that came into Scandinavia around the middle of the 400s. The source of this influx does not appear to be local mining. It must therefore have come into Scandinavia from the outside. The logical source for this would be the Visigothic reserves.

A certain portion of the treasure — that part of it not hidden away — would have been removed to the Ostrogothic capital of Ravenna when Theodoric the Great became king of the Visigoths by right of conquest after the battle of Catalonia around the year 512.

So when we consider the fate of the great Roman treasure, we see that it was largely redistributed over at least a hundred year period— largely melted down and refashioned into objects appealing to the tastes of the Germanic peoples. This includes, for example, the many bracteates formed in Scandinavia between 450 and 550 CE. The design of these was most often modeled on Roman coins. The Roman gold paid Visigothic leaders and their allies and over time seeped back into the usual repositories of such wealth. However, a good deal of the treasure must have also been hoarded within the territory of the Kingdom of Toulouse. Most likely this was in the city of Carcassonne, although some like to think it was deposited in the area of Rennes-le-Château. We will come back to this question in chapter 6.

For the ancient Germanic peoples such gold — or any symbol of wealth — had two proper or right functions: 1) circulation and 2) separation. It was to be circulated among the people for practical reasons— to pay for services and to reward their loyalty (especially in battle). But because it was seen as something of an extraordinary

nature— something ultimately derived from beings beyond the realm of *Midjungards* — a good part of it was to be "sacrificed," given over into the transcendental worlds whence it came. This is why it was often secretly buried and "forgotten"— transferred to a higher place.

Clearly the Germanic idea of a "golden treasure" exists on two levels— a historical/practical and a metaphysical/transcendent one. As with the mythic treasure of the Nibelungen — perhaps inspired by the historical Visigothic treasure — it can become a curse and obsession if *too much* of it is brought into mundane availability at once. The treasure may exude more value from a hidden realm than in a historical/ mundane one. What is truly valuable is the tradition and the idea of unlimited power *just beyond the reach* of mortal man.

In the next chapter we will discuss the role of the Visigothic treasure in the modern mystery of Rennes-le-Château.

## The Treasure of Fuente de Guarrazar

The Visigothic Kingdom in the west extended across the Pyrenees well into the Iberian peninsula, into what is today Spain. After the demise of the Kingdom of Toulouse it was in Iberia that the Goths maintained their main stronghold in the west. This became known as the Kingdom of Toledo, for it was there that they had their capital. Of course, some of the old treasure was at these kings disposal.

As we know, the Goths were later pushed back toward the Pyrenees with the Islamic conquest of most of Spain in 711 CE. In the Arabic chronicle of Al Kazradji it is reported that Tariq, the Muslim commander, found twenty-five gold crowns of the Gothic kings, crowns encrusted with jewels, when he took the city of Toledo. It was further reported that it was the custom for each of the kings to have his own crown, each bearing his name.

Of course, it was thought that these crowns would have been melted down by the Muslims, which they probably were. However, there were in fact a total of thirty-three kings of Toulouse and Toledo from Athaulf in 411 to Roderich (Rodrigo) in 711— spanning three hundred years of Gothic rule in the west...

The summer of 1858 was turbulent in central Spain— heat waves alternated with great downpours of rain. On the morning of the 25th of August a group of farmers set out from their homes in the village of Guadamur just outside Toledo to work in the fields. As they passed the area of the spring of Guarrazat at the head of the rivulet which feed the small river of Guarajaz they noticed that some of the large slabs of rock had been displaced by the floodwaters. The shift of one of them had revealed an open space below it. It was a chamber which had been sealed with "red cement," or Roman cement. When the farmers looked inside they could see the glints given off by golden objects encrusted

with semiprecious stones. At first they kept their discovery secret. Later they came back under the cover of darkness to remove the objects.

These turned out to be seven large golden crowns inlaid with stones, fourteen smaller but similar crowns, a golden dove, various vessels, candlesticks, brooches, and spindles for wool, all of which weighed a total of over three hundred pounds.

About six months later the French journal *L'Illustration* reported in its February 1859 issue that the French government of Napoleon III had acquired a treasure which had belonged to the Visigothic kings of Toledo. How did this Spanish treasure get into the hands of the French?

It seems that the farmers sold the golden objects to two goldsmiths in Toledo. These goldsmiths melted down most of the objects other than the crowns. Through some work of espionage the French government learned of this treasure. One day a French artillery officer, whose name remains unknown, but who is known to have had ties to Achille Fould, the Minister of Culture under Napoleon III, presented himself at the goldsmiths' shop and bought the remaining objects. This officer then secretly crossed the Pyrenees into France with the priceless treasure into. The crowns were eventually displayed in the Cluny Museum in Paris.

One of the original farmers who found the treasure seems to have been more clever than the others. His name was Domingo de la Cruz. He secretly returned to the place where the treasure was found and looked around some more. He found another treasure chamber and removed the contents. This smaller treasure consisted of the magnificent crown of King Swinthila, several smaller crowns, a golden belt with jewels and several crosses. De la Cruz sold some of the pieces but hid most of the objects in flower pots. The Spanish government sent investigators to the region in 1861 to discover whether more treasure could be found there. The farmer was questioned by Don Antonio Flores, the Secretary of the Royal Government. The farmer was convinced it would be in his best interest to give up his treasure to the Queen, Isabella. De la Cruz received a reward of 40,000 reales and an annual stipend of 4,000 reales. Now at last the Spanish could display at least a part of the treasure of Fuente de Guarrazar on Spanish soil.

During the Second World War, the Spanish Fascist leader Francisco Franco petitioned Marshal Pétain, the leader of Vichy France, for the return of the crowns. Vichy France was the southern part of France which more or less willingly cooperated with the Nazi occupation of the northern part of the country. Pétain returned the crowns to Spain.

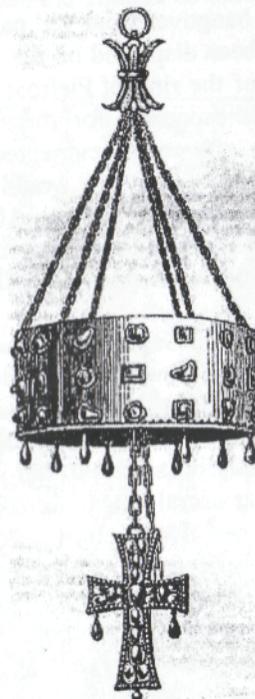


Plate 4.3: The Crown of Sonnica from Fuente de Guarrazar

The most interesting aspect of these crowns is the function they served. Originally they were displayed in the cathedral of Toledo. When a king was underwent his coronation he would then donate a crown to the church. Many of the crowns indicate by means of an inscription the king who donated it. Sometimes this inscription is in the form of bejeweled letters hanging on golden chains from the rim of the crown. A typical example of these inscriptions reads:

RECCESWINTHUS REX OFFERET  
King Recceswinth offers (the crown).

Note the crown is not given to the king, but rather the inscription indicates that the crown is given (to the church?) by the king. The fact that the crown is meant to be *displayed* (hanging from golden chains) indicates that the object was probably valued more for its symbolic (spiritual) qualities rather than any monetary worth.

Since such practices of donating crowns by kings to be displayed in churches appears to be unknown elsewhere, we can only assume that

this practice reflects an ancient and particularly Gothic belief of some kind. Semiotically the display of the king's crown in a church (or temple) is probably a hangover from the pagan times when the king's neck-ring might have been displayed on the altar of the temple. This is the probable function of the ring of Pietroassa. There it would be used in religious rites—and especially for the swearing of oaths. For the Visigothic kings, who are well documented to have still had pagan leanings, such a donation of a crown would have served his symbolic purposes, and the church would claim some benefit of prestige as well. The fact that an extraordinary attempt was made to save these symbolic objects from falling into the hands of the Muslims also speaks to their deep cultural meaning.

The treasure of Fuente de Guarrazar is more than gold. It consists of the idea of royal sovereign power and its inexorable linkage with the idea of the sacred. The fact that each king has his own crown and that he donated his crown in a repeated symbolic act as a part of a continuing sacrificial tradition speaks to the idea that the Gothic kings thought of themselves as sacral kings—not for any Christian reason, but rather because they had always considered themselves as such. The donation of the crowns reflects the mystery of the transmission of the royal sacrosanct power from one generation to the next. If anyone doubts the validity of the idea of symbolic values being passed over generations by the Goths, one only has to learn of the “Tower of Secrets.”

### The Visigothic Treasure-Tower of Secrets

To this point the treasures discussed have all been a combination of gold and the symbolic qualities attached to the golden treasure. The Goths always seem to have had a high appreciation for the symbolic qualities of their treasures which exceeded the mundane value of them. Nowhere is this attitude more explicitly revealed than in the legend of the Visigothic Tower of Secrets.

Contemporary chronicles report that the Visigothic kings had for generations preserved a certain “House of Secrets,” also referred to as a “Tower of Secrets,” or the “Enchanted Tower.” It was a structure in the old fortified city of Toledo with a chamber at its highest point guarded by a locked door. This door did not simply bear one lock, it was locked with a lock for each of the kings of the Visigoths throughout history. For it was the custom of the Visigothic Kings of the Kingdom of Toledo upon their coronation to go to this House of Secrets and instead of opening it, they would place yet another lock on its door.

When, in 710, the Visigothic King Witiza died, the Kingdom was divided in its loyalties. The Muslims were already dangerously

advancing on the southern coasts of Spain. As was, and had always been, true Germanic custom, the council of elders was gathered to *elect* the new king.



Roderich (Spanish: Rodrigo) was elected. His qualifications included an aggressive bellicose nature, which seemed to be a necessity in the coming period of warfare. He underwent the royal coronation according to Visigothic custom. His crown now hangs with the many other crowns of the Visigothic kings in a museum in Toledo. But shortly thereafter he proved his aggressive nature would lead to disaster immediately when he went to the House of Secrets. Instead of providing the door with another lock, he broke the locks off the door and stepped into the chamber—unseen for centuries by the eyes of the kings. He opened what appeared to be a treasure chest in the center of the room—on it was written words which indicated that his kingdom would fall and that the reign of the Visigoths would come to an end in Spain. The document referred to images which came alive on the walls of the room—showing the invasion of the Muslims and the ultimate defeat of the Visigothic army.

Also among the treasures supposedly contained in the House of Secrets was the legendary "Table of Solomon," which was thought to be part of the loot from the Temple of Solomon in Jerusalem brought to Rome by Titus. As we have remarked, it is most likely that the greater portion of the items taken from Jerusalem were probably melted down by the Romans themselves. Other items may have survived in their original forms. Among these might have been the fabled "Table of Solomon."

Rodrigo's violation of the sacrosanct tower was a violation of the principle of the Mystery itself, which the ancient Goths would have known and preserved as *rūna*. This violation constituted the mythic act which brought an end to the reign of the Visigoths in Spain. The Mystery, which the *symbol* of the "Tower" represented, was to be sought not in violating the symbol but in *respecting* it, by adding another lock to protect her. Perhaps this tower was also a dim cultural remembrance of a myth similar to that of the Norse *Hliðskjálf*, the tower of Óðinn. Through the symbolic act of adding another lock, the true King demonstrates his understanding of the Mystery which dwells both within and without himself. With his Understanding the exercise of true sovereignty is possible, without it disaster will strike— whether it is in the life of a Nation or of an individual.

## Chapter Five Spears of Destiny

Among the splendid objects of the imperial regalia now housed in the Hofburg in the heart of Vienna, Austria is the by now infamous "spear of destiny." A good deal of myth, both ancient and modern, has built up around this object. The sheer amount of mythology and its often sensationalistic character requires us to turn a more careful and sober eye to the actual history of the object in order to allow the more traditional mysteries surrounding it to reemerge once more. In ancient, pre-Christian, times a spear was the most typical weapon used in the Germanic world as a sort of royal scepter. It was a great symbol wielded by freemen in the Germanic world. In the assemblies men would often cast a "yea" vote by lifting their spears aloft and shaking them— hence the names Shakespeare (English) and Notker (German). A king's spear was not only a sign of his own status, but also one of the protection and solidarity of the folk he represented. As was the case with many another significant object or symbol from pre-Christian traditions, Christian apologists simply looked into biblical texts to discover a formal similarity upon which to create a "scriptural" basis for the continuation of the use of the symbol or object. It would have been fruitless for the apologists to demand the discontinuance of these usages, they simply had to re-sacralize them within Christian mythology. Then with enough passage of time the actual origins would be forgotten. In the early centuries of the Christianized Germanic world the spear remained an important symbol of royal power.

### Ancient Gothic Spears

Many centuries before the ancient Goths had heard of Jesus, the spear was of tremendous importance. We have already mentioned some of these objects in connection with the story of the syncretism between the Goths and north Iranian cultures, especially the Sarmatians and Alans (ch. 2). Here we wish to delve deeper into the actual meanings of these objects. Previously we noted that all of these spears, but especially those of Kovel and Dahmsdorf, show clear symbolic syncretism between the Germanic and north-Iranian worlds as they combine Germanic runic inscriptions (and linguistic forms which show them to be of East Germanic origin) with the typical "heraldic" devices of the

Sarmatians called *tamgas*. All of these spears were clearly ceremonial or ritual objects— not ones intended for actual physical combat. They are all more or less richly ornamented and show no signs of ever having been used in combat.

Now let us turn to a full description of each of these four spearheads:

The spear of Kovel (plate 5.1) was found by a farmer plowing his field in the village of Suszyczno near Kovel, Poland in 1858. It came into the possession of a private collector, Alexander Szumowski. After his death the spear vanished. In the fall of 1939, shortly after the German invasion of Poland, it mysteriously reappeared still in a special box created for it by Mr. Szumowski. Soon thereafter it was transported from Poland to Germany, where it again disappeared at the end of the war.

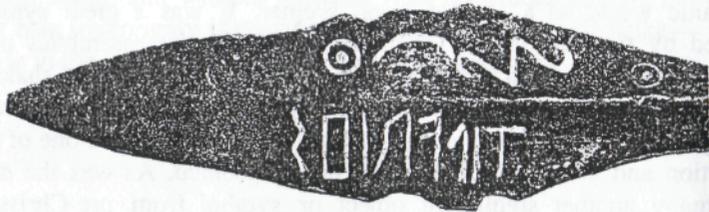


Plate 5.1: The Spearhead of Kovel

The iron object dates from around 250 CE. It is decorated with silver inlay. These symbols appear to be both solar and lunar, coupled with a *tamga* and a runic inscription:

s d i r a l i t

This reads from right to left: *tilarids*, which is clearly an East Germanic or Gothic form grammatically. This is the noun agent name of the spear itself, the literal meaning of which is something like “target-rider,” or more generally, “attacker.” (Krause 1966, pp. 77-80)

The spear of Dahmsdorf (plate 5.2) was discovered in 1865 during the construction of the train station at Dahmsdorf-Mücheberg near Lebus, Germany. The area contained a number of cremation graves, to one of which this object belonged.

This spearhead, like that of Kovel, dates from around 250 CE, and is made of iron with silver inlay. The decorations include solar and lunar signs, with a *tamga* and the runic inscription:

a j n a r

Again, reading from right to left, we have a noun-agent name of the spear *ran(n)ja*: “the runner,” or “the one which causes (them) to flee.” In the case of “the runner,” it is meant in the sense of “to run someone, or something, through.” This is also probably an East Germanic form, but the archeological and art-historical context make the Germanic origin of the piece more certain. Its location indicates that it might have belonged to a Burgundian.



Plate 5.2: The Spear of Dahmsdorf

The spear of Rozwadów was found in 1932 by workers in the suburb of this town. The find was in the archeological context of an East Germanic horseman’s cremation grave. Again the object is made of iron with silver inlay. It was brought to the regional museum in Sambor. A drawing of the object appears on plate 5.3.

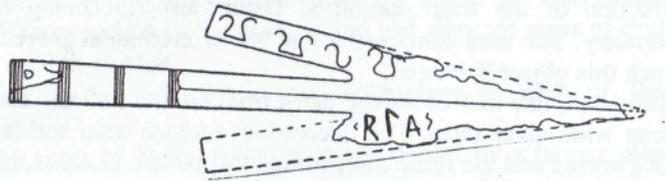


Plate 5.3: Spear of Rozwadów

The possibly fragmentary runic inscription appears to read: **kr̥lus** from left to right. The generally defies interpretation, although Krause boldly ventured (*i*)k (*e*)ruls, “I, the runemaster.” The final *-s* form clearly shows this formula to be an East Germanic linguistic form. The other decorations may also be *tamgas*.

The spear of Moos was excavated from a cremation grave on the island of Gotland. It is now in the State Historical Museum in Stockholm. This spear is somewhat older than the others, dating from the as early as 200 CE. Its silver inlay work shows it belongs to the same general context of the other weapons considered here. The symbols on it cannot, however, unambiguously be identified as *tamgas*. It would not be surprising if the symbols were not *tamgas*, as Gotland would probably not have been in any way directly effected by Sarmatian interaction. No completely satisfactory explanation of the runic inscription has been established. It appears:



Plate 5.4: Spear of Moos

The runes can be read: **///gaois**. This seems to be inscribed right to left *sioag-*, which makes no sense. Damage to the metal immediately to the left of the *g*-rune makes it unclear as to whether there was another

character following (or in front of) the *g*. The reading **gaois** could be interpreted as Gothic *gaujis*, “the bellower.” Krause says: “The name would then allude to the widely held belief in the ancient northern world, that a spear which emits a loud tone as the army marches into battle will bring its owner good luck and ruin to the enemy.” (p. 81)

These spears are magical — highly symbolic — objects which acted as talismans in battle, as well as functioning as royal scepter— signs of the sovereign power of the king or chieftain. The spear, like other symbolic weapons, would become the focal point of the solidarity of the group— clan, tribe, or royal retinue. Without question such symbolic weapons would be handed down from generation to generation. Often such objects were buried for a time and then recovered by the family or heir to the previous owner. The object would thus gain in power for having been for a time in the other-world.

Most readers will not have to be reminded of the role of the spear as an attribute of the god Wōðanaz/Óðinn. He is depicted with a spear in northern art; the “Völuspá” (st. 24) has him inaugurating the “first battle in the world” by throwing his spear over the enemy army; he himself is said to be wounded by a spear (*geiri undaðr*) in his initiatory self-sacrifice by means of which he discovers the runes (“Hávamál” st. 138-139). Certainly, however, the spear is not entirely limited to being an attribute of Óðinn in the Germanic world. It can more generally be seen as the typical “royal scepter” of the Germanic king— which customarily bridges the first (sovereign) and second (warrior) functions.

### The “Holy Lance”

The “spear of destiny” is an object about which a good deal of nonsense has been written. This moniker was first given to the holy lance found in the imperial regalia in the Hofburg in an article in the *Sunday Dispatch* (Nov. 6, 1960) by Max Caulfield many years before the publication of Trevor Ravenscroft’s scurrilous book on the subject. In general works on the lance range from understandable medieval re-mythologizing to modern obsessions with “occult Nazism.” The purpose of what I write here is to bring to bear upon this mysterious object a factual and objective foundation of understanding, so that a truer sense of the original spiritual importance of the object can be grasped.

When the Germanic peoples were first Christianized their kings and chieftains typically carried spears as symbols of their sovereign power— a power ultimately derived from their own “divine blood.” This divine blood stemmed from their god-like ancestors— called *anseis* by the Goths as we have seen. With Christianization apologists cast about in scripture to find a notable spear in biblical mythology, and

found reference to the one used by the Roman soldier, identified in later Christian tradition as Longinus, to pierce the side of Jesus as he hung on the "cross."<sup>†</sup> Due to obscure passages in the Old Testament later interpreted as dealing with the signs of the true Messiah which imply "not a bone of him shall be broken" (John 19.36)<sup>††</sup> it was essential in this mythology for Longinus to prove that Jesus was dead by thrusting the spear into him— otherwise his legs would have been broken to hasten his death so that the body could be taken down before the beginning of the Jewish Sabbath. It was therefore said that the spear of Longinus proved that Jesus was the Messiah, that at that moment Longinus held the destiny of the world in his hands and that subsequently he who possesses the spear similarly holds the destiny of the world in his hands. All this makes for a fine medieval Christian myth to syncretize the use of a spear by the kings with Christian symbolism— but it, like the "shroud of Turin," cannot have had anything to do with the life and death of the historical Jesus. The "spear of destiny" is a spear-blade of Germanic manufacture dating from the 8th to 10th centuries. In other words, it was forged some six hundred to eight hundred years after the death of the historical Jesus. Therefore all legends surrounding it before this time have no basis in fact. It could not have been connected with St. Maurice, Constantine the Great, or even Attila.

If the *sancta lancea* could not have belonged to a Roman soldier, what can we learn about its origins from its art-historical and other physical characteristics? It could have been forged among the Alamanni, Franks or Langobards, as early as the 8th century, but no later than the 10th century— most probably it comes from around 800 CE. (Paulsen, p. 301) As a symbol, the spear clearly has its origins in pre-Christian usage. Albert Brachmann, writing in *Deutsches Archiv* 6 (1943), pp. 407-09, clearly outlines the development of the symbolism of the spear of Wodan into a spear of supposed Christian significance.

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<sup>†</sup> Jesus is not described actually hanging on a cross in scripture. He is said to have dug a *στυρος*, "pole, stake," to his place of execution. This was actually a crossing beam for the arms which was then hoisted up onto a scaffolding. The use of a cross as a sign of Christianity only comes later in Europe due to syncretism with pagan symbolism.

<sup>††</sup> One more of the countless fabrications found in Ravenscroft's *Spear of Destiny* (pp. xi-xii) says "Issiah had prophesied of the Messiah, 'A bone of Him shall not be broken.'" Issiah contains no such passage. The text is from the New Testament, John 19.36, which obscurely refers to Exodus 12.46, Numbers 9.12 and Psalms 34.20. Christian apologetics often deceptively use the techniques of either fabricating events on paper to fit prophecy or projecting tortured interpretations back onto murky passages to "prove" obscure theological points.

It appears most likely that the spear in question was of Langobardic manufacture. The transference of a spear is known to have taken place as a part of the Langobardic "coronation" ceremony for kings. According to Howard Adelson in his article "The Holy lance and the Heredity of the German Monarchy" [*The Art Bulletin* 48 (1966), pp. 177-191] this transference was more important than the actual reception of the crown by Langobardic rulers.

Through several centuries of the first millennium the Langobards, originally called Winnili, were geographically in close proximity to the East Germanic tribes as they migrated southward. The Winnili ("winners, strivers") migrated from Jutland to Pannonia (present-day Hungary) and then into the northern part of the Italian peninsula along the River Po around 558— after the official demise of the Ostrogoths in Italy. The Langobards then dominated northern Italy for the next two hundred years until they were defeated by the Franks of Charlemagne in 773-4. It is thought by some that Karl took a certain royal spearhead as a sign of his conquest of the Langobards and that it was this spearhead that became the *sancta lancea*. It is well-known that Charlemagne carried a spear, or even simply a spearhead, which functioned for him as a "talisman of royal power." It is said he never let it leave his possession, that he slept with it, it was the source of clairvoyant visions, and that when he fell from his horse one day shortly before his death the fact that the lance flew away from him some twenty feet was seen as an ill-omen. Despite their defeat by the Franks the Langobards continued to exert cultural dominance in northern Italy for centuries to come.

Another account of the *sancta lancea* says that a certain Langobardic Count Samson bequeathed such a symbolic spear to King Rudolf I of Burgundy (888-912), who subsequently lost it in battle to the German monarch Heinrich (Henry) I ("the Fowler"). It seems unlikely that the spear of Charlemagne and that of Heinrich I were one and the same object due to their variant origins. However, it is possible that both have symbolic origins as Langobardic royal scepters which had retained the Gotho-Germanic significance of being signs of royal power derived from an ancestral blood-line. The orthodox Christian myth would insist on the spear of Longinus being singular and unique, of course, while Germanic myth would encourage the existence of many spears of Wodan, or royal scepters. Although such men as Charlemagne or Heinrich would never have overtly identified themselves as being anything but Christians, nevertheless they also knew full-well that their independent power to rule was based on ancient, pre-Christian, ideas and customs. Their pagan customs and traditional beliefs were their only protection against becoming nothing more than dependent appendages of the Roman church. It was originally for this reason that symbols such as the royal spear were so important.

Eventually, the original pagan rationale behind the symbol was forgotten, for this pagan mythic basis to be lost entirely it had to be replaced by a Christian one. This underlying necessity for *ersatz* myths for established practices and customs or symbolic objects, times or places is the driving force behind the syncretizing of pagan and Christian traditions.

The deepest secret borne by the “spear of destiny” has nothing to do with the later superficial mythic overlay, but rather with the essential original meaning of the spear as a sign of the direct blood-line relationship between the gods and the tribal aristocracy who bore such spears as signs of their nobility, leadership and freedom.†

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† The whole mythology expounded in the books *Holy Blood, Holy Grail*, and *The Da Vinci Code*, that Jesus did not die on the cross but escaped to the south of France where he sired a bloodline of “secret kings” is itself merely a syncretic Christianization of the Visigothic (as well as Frankish and all other Germanic) tribal traditions about the gods’ engendering of noble bloodlines. The idea that Jesus was a “mere mortal” — if rather an *Übermensch* — fits well with the Gothic, Arian Christology. It is therefore most likely that if there is *any* merit to this tradition at all, that it was originally a Visigothic and Germanic one that was progressively Christianized over the centuries as its original message and purpose became lost to those who bore the tradition.

## Chapter Six

### Notes toward the Esoteric Gothic Legacy

As Appendix C shows, the image of the Goths has great resonance through the centuries. Their histories and traditions taken up later and discontinuously by their spiritual inheritors is one thing, however, we wish in this study to concentrate entirely on the direct and continuous legacy of the Goths in the centuries immediately following their official “disappearance” from history. This study cannot hope to cover all of the possibilities of this largely esoteric process. Certainly the area of the world where this legacy hung on for some time was in the Pyrenees mountains and in the foothills of these mountains on both the French and Spanish sides of this particular mountain range.

Historically the Visigoths were pushed southward by the Franks from the early sixth century onward, and, of course, the Muslim conquest of much of Spain in the year 711 forced them northward into the same general region. Therefore the Goths geographically retreated into the mountains, but they also slowly faded into the surrounding populations, where their traditions were often heavily disguised as these were carried on in new forms.

On the one hand the Gothic traditions were absorbed into the local church culture — where for example we see the reflected in the famous pilgrimage route known as the “Way to Compostela” and its attendant lore and symbolism. On the other hand we also see how certain groups of Goths insinuated themselves among the local population, changing their obvious identities (or having them changed for them) while not losing their distinctiveness from the people around them. Curiously, these two apparently divergent directions — the church and the local subculture still found key ways to interact with one another productively.

#### The Cagots

Up until the 18th century there were people living in southwestern France and northwestern Spain called the *cagots*. The word *cagot* [kagō] in modern French means “bigot” or “hypocrite.” But it is clearly derived from what the dictionary calls “a party of outcasts in Béarn in the Middle Ages.” On the surface the etymology of the word is unclear.

The Cagots lived in ways segregated from others. They lived in ghettos, could not enter the front of churches, could not be buried in the churchyard, received the Eucharist from the end of a long pole, could not intermarry with non-Cagots, and had to wear a special sign—a red patch on their shoulders in the shape of a hand.

It is often explained that the Cagots were tolerated in southern France, or in the province of Occitania, because this was a region which was accepting of alternate cultures — heretics, Jews, etc. — in the Middle Ages. The Cagots were identified as “*gavots*,” which is sometimes taken to mean “lepers,” although every record shows them not to be leprous and in fact to be exceptionally healthy. They were described as being short, blond and most often having blue eyes. Religiously the Cagots were described as being pious, and one text recommends giving them alms “in thanks for their piety and separation.” (De Séde 1980, p. 247)

The Cagots were first mentioned in writing in the late 1200s, by which time they had long been established in the region. The theory that they were actually the cultural remnants of the displaced Goths was first forwarded in 1625 by Oihenart who said that their separation stemmed from their foreign origin as well as their laxness in religious belief. One French dictionary, the 1935 edition of Quillet, forwards the etymology of the word *cagot* deriving it from the phrase *canis Gothi*: “dog of the Goths.” The Occitanian dialect word for dog is *can* (← Lat. *canis*) rather than the standard French dialect form *chien*. Although the term *cagot* is used negatively in standard speech, the historical Goths are remembered honorably and positively among the peoples of far southern France, so if the etymological connection with *canis Gothi* is correct, the term was not originally one of insult. Rather it was possibly connected by analogy with a similar well-known medieval formula *domini canes*, “the lord’s dogs,” as a nickname of the Dominican Order. As such the terms would refer to the idea of dogs as “loyal servants.”

The Cagots are seen as a group of people who were part of the Gothic migration into southern France after the Muslim invasion of Spain. There is even an Occitanian poem which reads in part:

The land in which they were born  
Once upon a time was burned  
By a horde of Saracens,  
Whom God despised.  
Those who remained behind among us  
Are the last of an army  
Which could no longer advance.

In general it seems that their segregation amounted to a sort of *sacralization*. They were different, and maintained their status as a separate group. It also appears that the Cagots supported themselves and made themselves extremely useful by plying their trade as masons, stonecutters and carpenters. They were especially adept at constructing church structures—the very structures the main doors of which they could not enter. Cagots are said to have founded the town of Cauterets, to have built the Montaut-quarter in Toulouse, and the abby of Saint-Savin near Argelès. In general they built many churches in the region from the 8th through the 12th centuries.

It is widely believed that the Cagots became the chief architects for the Order of Knights Templar, and that when this order was brutally and criminally suppressed by the king of France and the pope, some Cagots went underground to form the *Campagnons du Devoir de Liberté* (“Companions of the Duty of Liberty”). This was a craftsmen’s guild for the construction trades and is an important root of French Freemasonry. They, like other masons, indulged in the typical “twilight language” codes to conceal their real origins. They were said to be “sons of Solomon,” and to have participated in the building of his temple, etc. Here again we have the usual transference of esoteric codes to more familiar or conventional forms in order to render them more *acceptable* to the conscious mind. The esoteric meaning behind this tradition is a reference to the supposed Gothic possession of the treasure of Jerusalem (of “Solomon”), which was brought to southern France by the Visigoths after it was taken from Rome in 410 CE. The basic grade system of the *Campagnons* betray a Gothic origin:

1. Fox
2. Wolf
3. Dog

The initial grade is that of the Fox—a wild, wily, yet still uncultured beast. This is the grade of the apprentice. The second degree is that of the Wolf—a highly socialized beast, hungry for the completion of the hunt. This is the grade of the fellow or journeyman who has to travel far and wide and has five years to complete his master-piece to become a Master of the company, or a Dog. The grade of Dog is that of the Master. It signifies someone who is fully attuned to higher things, to the tradition, and loyalty to that tradition—just as the dog is joyously loyal and obedient to its own higher master.

This tradition is closely tied to the esoteric origins of the practice of making pilgrimage along the famed Way to Compostela. Esotericists say that this pilgrimage route, initiated by the Visigothic abbot Witiza (750-821), is linked to the location (or former location) of the temple treasure of Jerusalem. This treasure, as we have seen, can definitely be

traced from Jerusalem to Rome and from Rome to southern France, where it "disappears." This "treasure" can also be interpreted to encompass all sorts of special powers and abilities which are hidden and handed down from generation to generation. In the case of the medieval Cagots, the ability to build buildings. This was not an old Gothic ability, but one that was acquired after the fall of the Visigothic Kingdom.

### The Visigoths and the Mystery of Rennes-le-Château

Several times during the course of this book we have mentioned the mystery surrounding the village of Rennes-le-Château in the Languedoc region of southern France. This is because 20th century legend has brought this village and events which took place there into the mythic sphere of the lost treasure of the Visigoths, or the "Temple Treasure." These events were also brought to bear on the generation of the modern legend reflected in the books *Holy Blood*, *Holy Grail* and *The Da Vinci Code*.

Succinctly put, the legend is this: Jesus of Nazareth was married to Mary Magdalene and did not die on the cross, but escaped to southern France where he sired a bloodline which was connected to the Merovingian Franks. This continuing bloodline represents the royal blood (the *sang real* ~ *san graal*) or "holy grail." What is more, this bloodline continues to this day, and has since the Middle Ages been persecuted by the established Roman Catholic Church as a heretical institution— thus forcing its secret continuance. This secret was rediscovered in the late 19th century by the priest of Rennes-le-Château, who became rather wealthy in gold either through, it is said, his discovery of the lost treasure of Jerusalem or through payoffs from the Roman Catholic Church to keep silent about his discovery of the bloodline of Jesus. (The truth is more mundane, as we shall see.)

One of the glaring shortcomings of this legend is that the Merovingians, as we have seen, formed the first alliance with the Roman Catholics. It was the Merovingians who initiated the centuries long alliance between the royal house of France and the Pope, an alliance which most famously persecuted and destroyed the Knights Templar. The modern legend, for its own good "reasons," as we shall see, misses the whole point that it is the Visigoths, the enemies of the Merovingians, who possessed a secret tradition about the power of a special blood line. Most of the secret traditions ascribed to the Franks, actually belong to the Goths. The Merovingians are known as those who betrayed Germania to Rome, and caused Germania to lose the advantage gained by the hard-won victory of the Goths. The Franks are the friends of Rome, the Goths are the eternal anti-Romans— at least as far as actual esoteric tradition is concerned.

Certain facts have been established about the "mystery" of Rennes-le-Château. These have been objectively researched and reported in the book *The Treasure of Rennes-le-Château: A Mystery Solved* by Bill Putnam and John Edward Wood.

There is no ancient evidence that the present site of Rennes-le-Château was named Rheddae in Roman times, or was later a stronghold of the Visigothic king Alaric II. The treasure of the Visigoths was preserved in the environs of the present day city of Carcassonne, not Rennes-le-Château.

The idea that the treasure was to be found somewhere around Rennes-le-Château was first concocted by the local parish priest, Bérenger Sauniere, who served there between 1885 and his death in 1917. This was apparently an elaborate hoax meant to disguise the fact that he was selling masses through the mail for a handsome profit. He used the money he got through this disapproved practice to renovate the church and its environs, as well as finance some of the luxuries of the life he enjoyed. The rumor was spread that he had discovered some of the gold belonging to the treasure of Jerusalem.

To this hoax another was added. A certain French eccentric named Pierre Plantard created the Priory of Sion (registered as a legal entity in May of 1957). Paper trails were fashioned which could be discovered in ways that showed that Plantard was a descendant of the Frankish king Dagobert II, one of the last Merovingians, and that the Merovingians were in fact the repository of the "royal blood" of Jesus. The "payoff" for this hoax, as far as Plantard was concerned, was that he could fancy himself a descendant of Jesus, and be the rightful and secret king of France.

Material from these two independent hoaxes were drawn together in the late 1960s, first by the French writer on esoteric topics, Gérard de Sède, and then by the British actor, television producer and writer, Henry Lincoln.

The 20th century hoaxes perpetrated by Bérenger Sauniere and Pierre Plantard and their willing accomplices actually had the effect of obfuscating the true myth of the lost treasure of the Visigoths— a treasure that was not only material but also spiritual. The myth is this: The treasure, a material and spiritual substance, was obtained by the Visigoths in the pursuit of an act of supreme symbolic power. This is proper to their esoteric and ancestral tradition. This treasure was distributed and circulated in order that it could live and be vital. Symbolic parts of the treasure were preserved in the area of the town of Carcassonne, the last stronghold of the Visigoths in southern France. Various esoteric traditions grew up around the spiritual qualities of the treasure. These were intended to convey special spiritual powers to those who discovered the secret. It had nothing to do with the bloodline of Jesus, but rather everything to do with the spiritual tribal ancestry of

the Goths. To believe that the bloodline of Jesus is preserved in a certain family in France goes nowhere for the individual living in our world today— other than to imply, in a preposterous fashion, that we should acknowledge the patriarch of that family as the “king of France”(!) The Gothic secret, however, mandates that we should recognize the inner and secret sovereign kingship of ourselves. Knowledge of this secret, once truly understood can transform the life of any individual who perceives it.

## Appendix A The Pronunciation of Gothic

As we see in chapter three, Gothic was written in an alphabet probably invented by Bishop Uliflas for the purpose of translating the Bible. A more or less regular and consistent system of transliterating these letters into Roman letters was developed over the years by philologists. The question, however, remains as to how these words are to be pronounced correctly. The following is a general guide, although those who want greater details on this are referred to William H. Bennett's *An Introduction to the Gothic Language* (pp. 2-5) or Joseph Wright's *Grammar of the Gothic Language* (pp. 4-16).

The Gothic alphabet is transcribed as shown in table 3.3. Here we will discuss problems of pronunciation of those transcribed forms and their special combinations.

Of course, we have no recording of a native Gothic speaker. This system of pronunciation has been reconstructed by linguists based on comparative evidence within the Germanic family of languages, coupled with comparisons to Greek and Latin loan-words and representations of Gothic words and names as heard by Greek and Latin speakers, whose writing systems are more well-known as far as the sounds they represent are concerned.

### The Consonants

The letters *h, k, l, m, n, p, t, s, z* were pronounced as in modern English. *X*, used almost exclusively to spell the name/title *Xristus*, was pronounced as a [k].

The single letter *q* was pronounced as our modern combination *qu-* [kw-], so that *qens* was pronounced [kwens].

The *r* was lightly tongue-tip trilled [r], as in Spanish or southern German.

Both *b* and *d* had two values. After a vowel or diphthong (double vowel) these were pronounced as *fricatives*. The *b* in such positions was pronounced in a way similar to our *v*, but using both lips, not the top teeth and bottom lip. The *d* in such a position was pronounced as our modern English *th* as in *father*. In all other positions the *b* and *d* were pronounced as *stops*, i.e. as our *b* and *d* in “birch” and “day” respectively.

The *f* can be pronounced as in modern English, however, it is likely that it, like the fricative *b*, was bilabial— performed with both lips, not the teeth and lip.

In most positions the *g* can credibly be pronounced as the hard *g* in “gift,” however, it was actually also a fricative, which is properly performed by making the *ch* sound heard in German *ach*, while

vibrating the vocal chords. When coming at the end of a word or before a final *s* or *t*, the vibration of the vocal chords was dropped. If *g* occurred before another *g* (*gg*) it represented the *ng* as in modern English "finger." This double *g* spelling follows Greek orthographic practice. If a *g* came before a *k*, the *g* also got an *ng* pronunciation, as in our word "ink," and this pattern extends to the combination *gq*, which would have sounded like our *nkw* in "inkwell."

The Gothic  $\Theta$  letter was pronounced as a combination of *h* and *w*, a perhaps more exaggerated variation of our orthographic representation of a similar sound *wh-*, as in "what." It is transcribed with the special character *hw*.

As in other Germanic languages, *j* was pronounced as in or modern consonantal *y*, as in "year."

The Gothic letter  $\Psi$ , transcribed using the common Germanic thorn letter (*þ*), always represented a voiceless *th*, as in the word "thorn."

Although *w* usually represented the same sound as it does in modern English (i.e. the common Germanic *w*), when it occurred after long vowels, diphthongs, or consonants not followed by another vowel, e.g. in Go. *snáiwš*, *waústw*, and *skandujan*, meaning "snow," "work," and "to overshadow" respectively, the *w* had the value of a short *u*. So these three words would be pronounced [snayus], [wostu] and [skaduyan] respectively.

### Vowels

The written Gothic vowel system consists of five simple letters *a*, *e*, *i*, *u*, *o* and four digraphs, or two-vowel combinations, *ai*, *iu*, *ai* and *au*. These latter combinations were not all diphthongs, but some represented simple vowels as well.

The *a* could be either long (as in "father") or short (as in modern German *Mann*). Vowel length was never marked in Gothic spelling.

Long *e* almost sounded like the modern English long *a*, as in "late." There was no short form of this spelling (the short *e* was written with the digraph *aí*).

Short *i*, as in English "bit," was written with the single letter *i*, while the long *i* (pronounced "ee") was written with the digraph *ei*.

The *u* had both long and short versions, the long *u* was pronounced as the vowel in modern English "boot," the short version as the vowel in "put."

The written *o* ( $\Omega$ ) was always a long vowel, close to the vowel in English "goat." It was pronounced farther back in the mouth than the vowel in "go."

Etymologically, the spellings *au* and *ai* could represent three different sounds each. Modern scholars have often added diacritical marks to distinguish these, as in the following table:

Spelling	Phonetic Values
au	aú = short o as in "not" au = long ō as the "au" in English "aught" áu = the diphthong "ou" in "house"
ai	aí = short e, as "a" in "hat" ai = long open ā sound ái = diphthong with the sound of modern English long ī as in "mine"). Modern German <i>ei</i> .

There is some evidence that by the time of Ulfilas these sounds had fallen together so that *au* can conventionally be pronounced as the diphthong "au" and the *ai* as the diphthong in modern German *ei*.

To this we must add the diphthong *iu*, pronounced "ew."

In conclusion to this rough and ready description of the sounds of Gothic I append a phonetic transcription, using *English* indicators as seen in most modern dictionaries, of the Lord's Prayer found in chapter 2.

[At-ta unsar thu in himinam, wēhnī namō thēn. quimī thewōinassus thēns. werthi wilya thēns, swā in himina yah ana erthī. hlif unsarana thana sintēnan gif uns himma daga. yah aflāt uns thatē skoolans sīyma, swaswā jah wēs aflātam thīm skoolam unsarīm. yah nee bringīs uns in frīstubnyī, ak lousē uns af thamma uvilēn; untay thēna ist thewōangarði yah mahts jah wulthus in īwīns.]