

THE MYSTERIES  
OF THE GOTHS



edited

by L. C. BURTON

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The Mysteries of the Goths

Adred

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Edred

Limited First Edition

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## Abbreviations

ch.	chapter
OHG	Old High German
OS	Old Saxon
Go.	Gothic
Lat.	Latin
OE	Old English
ON	Old Norse
PGmc.	Proto-Germanic
PIE	Proto-Indo-European
pl.	plural
sg.	singular

## Note on Phonetic Representations

Spellings which appear in square brackets indicate the approximate phonetic sound of a word, as opposed to its usual spelling in any given language.

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## Preface

This book has had a mysterious fate. It was conceived in the summer of 1977, when I formally studied the Gothic language at the university, it was further developed in the 1980s as new material was gathered on my researches in Europe and finally outlined in the early 1990s. By the dawn of the new millennium, I felt I could bequeath this valuable and precious project to a trusted student and colleague to complete. This idea proved to be misguided on my part, as the student proved untrustworthy and unable to fulfill the vision of the book. The project was soon back on my schedule of works to complete.

Most would-be "magical" explorers of the "inner mysteries of the Goths" simply reduce what they do not already understand to what they already know. The method used for this book requires objective analysis followed up by a form of insight that takes the diverse aspects into account. One can not say, for example, that the Gothic letters are "really" runes and treat them as such. The Gothic letters and mysteries which envelop them are a distinct result of the great cultural synthesis achieved by the Goths in southern Europe. To reduce this achievement to just another example of well-known universal template of "understanding" is a mistake which causes the observer to miss that which is essential. It is a rather odd and ironic trait of the "eclectic mind" that it really desires nothing more than to reduce all the diverse and vibrant forms of the human spirit, to homogenize them, into one universal (and easily grasped) paradigm.

The Goths are a people now lost in the mists of time. Unraveling the mysteries which surround them is a significant challenge, and not one that can be taken lightly. This is not a work of strict scholarship; however, the methods and bases of data used by scholars have been used as the *foundation* of this work. The present book is the result of a subjection of scholarly data to certain spiritual insights which revivify the data as authentic foundations of inner work. In some ways this book is an introduction to more extensive possible works by others who have been initiated into these radical methods. In order to undertake such work, one must first master the objective data — history, languages, cultural studies (including religious and mythological paradigms) — then subject these data to deep contemplation. They must be internalized in order to become the foundations for insight. Once this insight is gained the student is transformed and the student has no choice but to act in the world as a master.

Edred  
Woodharrow  
May 5, 2007

## Introduction

In the annals of great mysteries, in the annals of mythic greatness, there is no people in the history of Europe of greater mystery combined with tragic greatness than the Goths. They are a folk shrouded in a dark mystique linked to a noble past. Their name has continued to evoke mystery and greatness centuries after they disappeared from political history. This book is intended to explore the Gothic mysteries—of which there are many — and bring to their mist-filled world the light of illumination. In the end we will discover that the Goths were themselves a people of light surrounded by darkness— a darkness which eventually enveloped them. Luckily a great deal of literature already exists on the history of the Goths in English. However, this literature is generally only of the most mundane sort, e.g. political histories. This material forms an indispensable foundation for further studies, but the present book seeks to go beyond these limits into matters never before published in English. It is my contention that the Goths, and the heritage of the Goths, preserve a hidden spiritual treasure that has, up until now, remained buried.

When we hear the word “Gothic” a number of connotations probably spring to mind — Gothic architecture, Gothic romance, Gothic horror — just to name a few. How did the name of an ancient Germanic tribal group become attached to all these cultural and literary features centuries after the Gothic language and people had vanished from the stage of European history? By the end of this book you will have some kind of answer.

The aim and purpose of this book is to begin to unlock the mysteries of the Goths. Every question we have about them can not now be answered, but with the beginning forged in these pages, future radically traditional investigators will be able to delve deeper into the dark corners of the Gothic realm and unlock even more of the mysteries found there.

Certainly this is not the first book or study to attempt a deeper reading of this mysterious history. But it is the only one to focus almost entirely on the Gothic tribes and the Gothic times (pre-711 CE) and not on the later 16th and 17th century obsession with the idea of the Goths especially prevalent in Scandinavia and England. This obsession even has a name— *Gothicism*, “Gothicism” or *Storgothicism*, “Megleo-Gothicism.” This movement and its chief esoteric exponent, Johannes Bureus, is the subject of a fine study by Thomas Karlsson, *Adulruna and the Gothic Cabbala*. These early modern Gothic enthusiasts felt that they had discovered the font of all civilization in the ancient Goths. Later in the 18th and 19th centuries Romantics throughout Europe began to identify themselves as “Gothic.” The word was applied to all the Germanic peoples— Germans, Anglo-Saxons, as well as all

Scandinavians. These Romantic speculations and aesthetic exercises are not the crux of our study either, although they are discussed more extensively in Appendix B. We want to examine the Gothic mysteries as real mysteries. Too often an aura of "mystery" is created simply for effect, or as a way to conceal or obfuscate the actual roots of an idea. This can be an effective tool in teaching about mystery— about unfolding the noble substance hidden in one's soul— but it can also lead people astray from the actual sources of ideas. Examples of such pseudo-mysteries are things such as Egyptomania (from Plato to modern times) or the Hebrew Kabbalah. Both ancient Egypt and the Hebrew Kabbalah are repositories of their own genuine and authentic traditions and wisdom, but often those from completely outside these traditions project ideas onto these and other "prefabricated models" in order to 1) hide the actual origin of an idea through misdirection and 2) wrap the idea in an aura of prestigious inscrutability. Similar use was made of the undeniable and real myth and historic prestige of the Goths in centuries past. However, in this book our primary focus is on the actual mysteries preserved within the Gothic elite in ancient times— secrets which formed a hidden body of lore among those few nobles who handed it down in an extraordinarily discreet way. The fact that these secrets were indeed preserved, and that attention was for centuries diverted away from this tradition and focused instead on exotic symbols of "the East," "Egypt," etc., can actually lead us back to the true sources and bearers of the secrets. To see beyond the misdirection one must focus initially on the one who gains by conducting the misdirection. We will discover that because the Goths had for centuries been targeted for destruction by the Roman Catholic Church, the direct spiritual and material heir to the Roman Empire, the only mode of survival for the Goths was for them to form a completely hidden tradition. Much has been written in recent years about the landscape of southern France and the so-called mystery of Rennes-le-Château. Misdirection toward the "Celts," the "house of Jesus," the Freemasons, you name it, has been practiced. The Visigoths, who are the obvious focus of attention, and who physically brought "the treasure," which is so much in question, to the region in the first part of the 5th century, are rarely even mentioned at all. This is one of those "touchstones" for unlocking mystery, for bringing the unknown into conscious focus: When the most likely subject (doer) of an action is seen to be systematically shielded by a complex of misdirections then the observer must redouble his efforts to delve behind the shield. Of course, at this particular point in history, this book could not have been written if it were still in the best interests of the Gothic tradition to remain hidden. One of the earliest books to appear on this subject was the 1976 book *Le mystère gothique* by Gérard de Sède. This book touches on some of the points addressed by Sède, but our study goes well beyond his and

focuses only on those secret traditions which are firmly attached to the legacy of the ancient Goths, not just various Germanic tribes.

In the course of this book we will first review the general history of the Goths from the time they first step into the historical record around 200 CE to the time of their official demise in western Europe in 711. The history is better and more exhaustively dealt with elsewhere in any of the histories of the Goths found in the bibliography of this book. Therefore, we will concentrate on the historical traditions of the Goths themselves and the cultural, rather than political and military aspects of the secret Gothic tradition. The first of these deals with the mysterious religious traditions of the Goths. The second explores the secrets surrounding the Gothic alphabet invented by Ulfilas to express the Gothic language in writing and its connections both to the ancient runes used by the Goths before Ulfilas and to the Greek mystical traditions linked to the  $\alpha\lambda\phi\beta\eta\tau\alpha$ . The third of these deals with the use of the spear, and more specifically with the symbolic spearheads used as scepters of royal power by the pagan Goths. The fourth delves into several of the mysterious treasures associated with the Goths over the centuries. These include the treasures of Pietroassa, Fuente de Guarrazar, and the greatest of all treasures, the so-called "Temple Treasure" of the Visigoths which disappeared somewhere in southern France. Finally there follows a discussion of various aspects of the legacy of the Goths in the region of southern France related to the people known as the Cagots, and to the so-called mystery of Rennes-le-Château, and all that has come to imply.

At the end of the book there are several appendices which deal with important issues surrounding the mysteries of the Goths ranging from the secret Gothic mission in the world today to the so-called Goth subculture to a short history of the word "Gothic" in English.

The present work unlocks the fundamental secrets of the Goths in a way which will create in the careful and attentive reader a spiritual receptivity to their ancient and timeless message. It is hoped that this book will lead to many others to be written by those who have been able to hear and understand this message. Too often the actual "Gothic gospel" becomes lost in a haze of emotional romance, and the actual secrets stored in the treasure-house remain hidden. Some of the undeniable power of the Goths lies in the fact that after these noble, heroic folk disappeared from the stage of history, suddenly they were transformed into a symbol of the highest aspirations of all of the Germanic tribes. Hence, once there were no more actual Goths, all Germanic peoples — Anglo-Saxons, Germans and Scandinavians — could all become Goths. They were transformed from a particular people into a universal one. The time has come to realize once more the long lost spiritual heritage of the Goths so that its future will be as great and bright as its past.



## Chapter One

# Out of the Womb of Nations

### Historical Frameworks

Historically the Goths emerged from the mists of time and it is into the mist they seem to have evaporated historically. The purpose of our study is to delve into the secrets of the Goths and the mysteries which surround them. But in order to understand fully the context of these more esoteric aspects it is necessary to have some understanding of the exoteric facts having to do with Gothic history, which spanned 700 years and ranged over an entire continent. This history is itself so fascinating and intricate that it would be easy to be swept up in its details. That detailed history is not the mission of this book. I strongly recommend that the serious student acquire and study the texts devoted to Gothic history in order to gain a deeper sense of the historical backdrop of the secrets and mysteries I will be discussing later. However, here I will provide the basic information needed to make sense of Gothic culture and its relations to events in the first several centuries of our era. Many mysteries will be found embedded in what appears to be "ordinary" history.

### Origins of the Goths

No one is exactly sure where the Goths came from. There are definite Gothic traditions about their origins, and archeology has made many inroads into our understanding about their original homeland, but questions remain.

Gothic tradition, recorded in Latin by the 6th century Gothic historian Jordanes, is quite clear about the origin of the Goths. The relevant passage in his *Getica*, or *History of the Goths*, is worthy of quoting:

IV (25) Now from this island of Scandza, as from a hive of races or a womb of nations, the Goths are said to have come forth long ago under their king, Berig by name. As soon as they disembarked from their ships and set foot on the land, they straightway gave their name to the place. And even to-day it is said to be called Gothiscandza.

(26) Soon they moved from here to the abodes of the Ulmerugi, who then dwelt on the shores of Ocean, where they pitched camp, joined battle with them and drove them from their homes. Then they subdued their neighbors, the Vandals, and thus added to their victories. But when the number of the people increased greatly and Filimer, son of Gadaric, reigned as king--about the fifth since Berig--he decided that the army of the Goths with their families should move from that region.

(27) In search of suitable homes and pleasant places they came to the land of Scythia, called Oium in that tongue. Here they were delighted with the great richness of the country, and it is said that when half the army had been brought over, the bridge whereby they had crossed the river fell in utter ruin, nor could anyone thereafter pass to or fro. For the place is said to be surrounded by quaking bogs and an encircling abyss, so that by this double obstacle nature has made it inaccessible. And even to-day one may hear in that neighborhood the lowing of cattle and may find traces of men, if we are to believe the stories of travelers, although we must grant that they hear these things from afar.

(28) This part of the Goths, which is said to have crossed the river and entered with Filimer into the country of Oium, came into possession of the desired land, and there they soon came upon the race of the Spali, joined battle with them and won the victory. Thence the victors hastened to the farthest part of Scythia, which is near the sea of Pontus; for so the story is generally told in their early songs, in almost historic fashion. Ablabius also, a famous chronicler of the Gothic race, confirms this in his most trustworthy account.

Later Jordanes give us a few more details:

XVII (94) From this city, then, as we were saying, the Getae returned after a long siege to their own land, enriched by the ransom they had received. Now the race of the Gepidae was moved with envy when they saw them laden with booty and so suddenly victorious everywhere, and made war on their kinsmen. Should you ask how the Getae and Gepidae are kinsmen, I can tell you in a few words. You surely remember that in the beginning I said the Goths went forth from the bosom of the island of Scandza with Berig, their king, sailing in only three ships toward the hither shore of Ocean, namely to Gothiscandza.

From these accounts we learn that Gothic tradition held that the Goths had their original homeland, or *Urheimat*, in Scandinavia. At the time geographers in southern Europe thought that Scandinavia was an island. This "island" could be identified with the Scandinavian peninsula itself, or with the island of Gotland. The reference to Scandinavia being the "womb of nations" indicates the feeling of southern European commentators that great hordes of humanity were pouring out of the north and swarming (like bees) over the Empire. Under their legendary king Berig they are said to land at the mouth of the Vistula, where they founded Gothiscandza, today called Gdansk (German: Danzig). The idea that they made this original voyage in three ships has the ring of symbolic, mythic tradition. Jordanes has the Goths immediately interacting with the "Scythians." Historically it was certainly the Sarmatians and not the Scythians whom the Goths would have encountered.

The Scythians were a north-Iranian horse-based culture whose empire spread from central Asia across the northern shore of the Black Sea and into east-central Europe from around 700 BCE to about 200 BCE. Their name became immortalized in the work of the great Greek

historian Herodotus. From then on any nomadic horsemen emerging from the steppes were referred to as "Scythians" by the Greek and Roman historians and ethnographers. Beginning around 200 BCE the Scythians were superseded by the closely related (likewise north-Iranian) Sarmatians. These people were dominant in eastern Europe until the coming of the Goths— with whom they sometimes fought and often merged. Another important northern Iranian culture, that of the Alans, was also present on the steppes and enjoyed a long and productive relationship with the Goths. I will return to a discussion of these tribes later.

The most recent archeological findings have cast doubt on the factual basis of this historical tradition. There is little evidence of an archeological kind to support the idea that a definite distinct people migrated from Scandinavia across the Baltic Sea to the area at the mouth of the Vistula around the beginning of our era. It appears more likely from this sort of evidence that the genesis of the Goths was on the continental shore of the Baltic, in present day northern Poland, rather than in Scandinavia.

On the other hand, traditions such as represented by Jordanes, have often proven to have more factual basis than many have thought. Such traditions, if they are not disqualified as typical non-native interpolations, e.g. stories about "Trojan" or biblical origins, should never be dismissed as meaningless. The conscious symbolic or mythic tradition is always more powerful than the forgotten factual events.

### The Name "Goth"

The name of the Goths is shrouded in mystery. This mystery is only enhanced and deepened by the long history of the name. See Appendix B for more details on this history. One of the main problems is that there were in antiquity a number of different groups and subgroups of people whose names were similar, but not identical, to the name of the Goths.

Tradition has it that they are named after their most distant ancestor, Gaut(s). Some might agree that this eponymous name was projected back to a myth, however, the probable meaning of the name *Gauts* is something like "father." There is an Icelandic *heiti*, or byname, of Óðinn— *Gautr*. This element also occurs in the Old Icelandic Rune-Poem in the stanza for *áss* ([god]= Óðinn): *Áss er aldin-gautr*, "God is the ancient father." For more on this poem, see *The Rune Poems* (Rüna-Raven, 2002). This does not necessarily mean that *Gauts* is identical with *Wōðanaz*, because the name only means "father," in the etymological sense of "he who pours out," i.e. the generations or offspring.

From ancient times the name of the Goths appears in a grammatically strong and weak form, *Gut-* and *Guton-* respectively.

Beyond this there is also the fact that the name appears in Greek and Latin as well as Gothic orthographies. Tradition would hold that this name and that contained in the name of Götaland (Götland) in present-day Sweden and the island of Gotland stem from the same source and that these are identical to the Geatas (ON Gautar) in *Beowulf*.

This name later became confused with others. The principal confusion came in connection with the name of a Dacian tribe, the Getae, who inhabited present-day northern Romania at the time the Goths settled there for a short while in the 4th century. These names were then confused by Latin and Greek writers. Through the centuries, as the fame of the Gothic name spread, any similar sounding name came to be identified as "Goth," including the Jutes [yootes] of the North Sea and even the Judaei [yood-ah-ey], "Jews." This confusion with the words beginning with the y-sound came as a result of the palatalization of the letter /g/ in Old English Gēatas [yeatas] and later Scandinavian Götland [yötland]. The link between the name of the Goths and that of the Jews will play a part in some medieval mysteries surrounding the Goths.

Before moving on to the history of the migrations of the Goths southward toward the Black Sea and the Balkans, it is important to discuss the three linguistic or tribal groupings constituting the whole of the Germanic peoples at the time when the Gothic migrations began. From around 700 BCE to shortly after the beginning of our era, the Germanic peoples spoke a more or less single language, called by scholars today Proto-Germanic. These split into three dialect groups called North Germanic (spoken in Scandinavia), West (or south) Germanic (spoken on the Continent roughly west of the Oder) and East Germanic (spoken east of the Oder). Not all of these languages underwent subsequent changes at the same rate. At first the north was most conservative, while change was more rapid in the east. This can be demonstrated with the description of a single well-known word: PGmc. *tīwaz*, the name of the sky-god and the name of the 17th rune in the Older Futhork. In EGmc. (Gothic) this is *teiw̄s*, in NGmc. *tīwaR* and in SGmc. we find Old High German *ziu* or Old English *tīw*. Here we see that the NGmc., or Primitive Norse, is closest to the original—only the *-z* has been "rhotacized" to a more *r*-like sound. This, of course, becomes Old Norse Týr. The EGmc. form has transformed the *-z* into an *-s* and has lost the so-called thematic vowel *-a-*. The SGmc. forms show the most radical variations: Old High German *ziu* has 1) lost all inflection in the nominative (subject) grammatical case and 2) has undergone the second German consonantal sound shift whereby the initial *t-* has become a *z-* [tz]. Old English has likewise lost its grammatical ending, but retains the original *t*-sound initially. These technical linguistic details may seem tedious, but they provide some

important clues for determining the interactions of various tribes in ancient times and help us to identify certain artifacts of esoteric importance.

In the tribal histories of the Germanic peoples these linguistic designations are also important because they show which tribes shared deep common roots. The East Germanic tribes were, besides the Ostrogoths and Visigoths, the Vandals, the Burgundians, the Gepids and the Rugians. The original homeland of the Burgundians was the island of Bornholm in the Baltic. The Erulians, or Heruli, have also sometimes been classified with the East Germanic "tribes," but their classification remains problematic. Runic inscriptions in the Older Futhork show that rune-carvers identifying themselves as "Erulians" did not use East Germanic linguistic form, e.g. **ek erilaR**. It is most likely that the Erulians were an intertribal band of oath-bound warriors made up of members of various Germanic tribes.

Generally for purposes of this study we will discuss matters not only pertaining to the Goths, but also to the closely related East Germanic tribes. The Langobards, or Lombards, were a tribe with North Germanic origins who over time adopted the West Germanic dialect during their southward migration and who were close neighbors with East Germanic tribes throughout their history, until they "inherited" domination of northeastern Italy from the vanishing Ostrogoths in the 6th century.

### Early Migrations

For whatever reason the Goths began a southward migration to the borders of the Roman Empire. From their base between the mouths of the Vistula and the Oder, the Goths began to migrate southeastern direction across the steppes beginning around 150 CE. By 170 CE the first wave of Goths had established themselves on the shores of the Black Sea between the mouths of the Don and Dniester. Other waves followed from the north until about 250 CE.

We have already seen how the Gothic historian, Jordanes, describes some of these early migrations. Clearly Jordanes, writing some three centuries after the events as a classically educated man living in Constantinople, is heavily influenced by classical terminology (e.g. the identification of those the Goths encountered on the steppes as "Scythians"). However, that which is not of classical origin in the writings of Jordanes can be thought to represent Gothic tribal tradition, initially recorded in their heroic songs. Jordanes (IV.28) specifically mentions these songs "...for so the story is generally told in their early songs, in almost historic fashion." Most certainly Jordanes had some of these songs, or summaries of them, at his disposal when writing his history, which was based on an older and much longer one by Cassiodorus.

It is likely that the Goths had been interacting with the horse-riding steppe-cultures from the beginning of their history and that when they moved into the then Sarmatian-dominated region in present-day southern Russia, they were already familiar with that culture themselves, having absorbed great numbers of Sarmatians into their ranks and having learned various skills from them. Generally these north-Iranian tribal groups (Sarmatians and Alans) kept separate existences in the ranks of the Goths and never became fully integrated into the Gothic tribes. There was, no doubt, a good deal of intermarriage between these groups at the leading levels of society in order to forge alliances between clans. The dominant language of all of them soon become Gothic, however.

Around 270 the Goths split into two groups—the Visigoths to the west of the Dniester and the Ostrogoths to the east of that river. From this point on these two sub-tribes lead separate destinies. The names are often misinterpreted as meaning West-Goths and East-Goths, respectively. Actually the Visigoths are “the Good and Noble Goths,” and Ostrogoths are “the Goths Glorified by the Rising Sun.” The element *Ostro-* refers to the “east” only indirectly as the direction of the rising sun. These two peoples of the Gothic tribe also called themselves the *Tervingi* (“forest people”) and *Greutung* (“dwellers of the stepped and pebbly coasts”). (Wolfram, p. 25)

About the division of the Goths into two peoples, and the royal family lines which sustained them and to which they were loyal, Jordanes says of them once they had reached the Balkans:

(V. 42) ...they had now become more civilized and, as I have said before, were more learned. Then the people were divided under ruling families. The Visigoths served the family of the Balthi and the Ostrogoths served the renowned Amali.

(43) ...In earliest times they sang of the deeds of their ancestors in strains of song accompanied by the cithara; chanting of *Eterpamara*, *Hanala*, *Fritigem*, *Vidigoia* and others whose fame among them is great...

### The Hunnic Revolution

It is a mistaken view to place too much emphasis on the invasion of the Gothic territory by the “Huns”—a Turkic group of tribes who was living just to the east of the Alans and Ostrogoths. The Huns were a vigorous, but largely disorganized, people. Reports of them from Roman and Byzantine sources say that they had no real leaders. (Heather, p. 109) They began encroaching on the Ostrogoths in 375 through 376. Although there were significant military struggles, the battle was never one of pure Turkic Huns versus Germanic Goths. The Huns had already become significantly amalgamated with both the

Alanic and Gothic influences. It is most likely that certain Gothic clans or families made early alliances with Hunnic clans, for many well-known Gothic groups, such as the Amal-clan, thrived under Hunnic “domination.” The degree to which the Huns were open to foreign influence is reflected in their personal names. A study of these names by Prof. Otto Maenchen-Helfen (pp. 385-442) shows that a surprising percentage of them are of Germanic and Iranian origin, although, of course, their own native Turkic names predominate. Among the Germanic names are Attila. This is a specifically Gothic name. *Atta* is a familiar form of “father,” as we see the Gothic translation of the “Lord’s Prayer” begins with the phrase *Atta unsar*—“our daddy.” To this stem has been added a diminutive suffix, *-ila*. *Att-ila* means literally “little father.” In Russia this remained a way of referring to the czar—e.g. Russian *batyushka* or Yiddish *tatila*. Other Germanic names among the Huns cited by Maenchen-Helfen include Edekon, *Laudaricus*, *Onegesius*, *Ragnaris* and *Ruga*.

By the time the leader named Attila came to power around 440 the amalgamation of Huns, Goths and Alans or Sarmatians had advanced another three generations or so. It has been noted that in medieval secular literary tradition the royal courts of the Hun Attila (434-453) and the Ostrogoth Theodoric the Great (493-526) are idealized as paragons of warrior-societies—much like that of King Arthur in Britain. (Edward Haymes *Heroic Legends of the North* [Garland, 1996], p. 3ff.). This reflects a historical secret. The great tradition of aristocratic clanic solidarity and idealized heroic and sovereign virtues remained protected and undisturbed in certain specific lines despite the apparently general chaos of the day. That which lies at the heart of this secret is that which is at the root of the mysteries of the Goths through the ages. This “chaos” and “barbarism” is merely nothing more than Roman—and hence Roman Catholic—contemporaneous and historical propaganda against the people of the North.

### The Ostrogoths

The Hunnic movement into the west first affected the Ostrogoths. Their kingdom along the Black Sea coast was disrupted after the death of their king Ermanaric and the majority of them migrated to the west either ahead of, or along side of, the Huns after 375. However, some Goths remained behind and defended the Crimean Peninsula. These Gothic speakers were occasionally mentioned in history, and the language did not fully die out until the 18th century.

After a relatively brief period in the Balkans, where they participated in the battle of Adrianople (August 9, 378) in which the Goths were victorious over the Romans and their Emperor Valens, who was killed in the battle, they were settled as Roman federates in Pannonia along with the Alans and Huns. The region of Pannonia,

present-day Hungary, became an Ostrogothic kingdom from about 451 to 473.

It was there in 454 that Theodoric was born. His father was Theudimir, who ruled the kingdom with his two brothers. At the age of eight Theodoric was given as hostage to the emperor in Constantinople in order to secure a treaty. He remained there for ten years. There Theodoric studied military and political strategy, but ignored his Greek and Latin studies—remaining illiterate. When he was eighteen he was released back to his father. Almost at once Theodoric began gathering and leading his own army. Two years later his father died and the young man was elected king of the Ostrogoths. Although he served the Roman Emperor Zeno in Constantinople well in military affairs, the emperor had reason to fear him. So he gave the Ostrogothic king the mission of conquering Italy, which was at the time dominated by an illegitimate ruler, Odovacer—a Germanic Scirian. Theodoric was promised his own kingdom in what was the heart of the ancient Roman Empire.

In 488 the Ostrogothic people—warriors, women, the elderly and children—began a trek toward Italy. Once in Italy the Ostrogoths under Theodoric allied themselves with the Visigoths and engaged the forces of Odovacer repeatedly in bloody conflicts with Theodoric himself often bravely inspiring his men with acts of courage on the battlefield. Eventually the Ostrogoths laid siege to Ravenna and by the spring of 493 the will of Odovacer has been broken. Theodoric personally killed the tyrant at a banquet he had to which he had invited the vanquished leader.

For several years Theodoric ruled his kingdom peacefully, earning the appellation “the Great.” The Ostrogothic king dreamed of a united Europe in which tribes could all live in peace, each respecting the cultural authenticity and legitimacy of the others. Theodoric the Great attempted to bind the various Germanic tribes together and to him through marriage alliances. The king boasted of his educated daughters—learned in Latin and Greek. He promoted the reformation and restoration of economic and juridical order, as well as cultural and architectural development. Roman antiquities which had fallen into disrepair were restored by him.

Theodoric did practice a kind of apartheid policy with regard to the Goths and Romans. Each group was to remain separate, each fulfilling a certain purpose. The Goths defended the land and the Romans administered it. Such success could not go unchallenged by the Roman Catholics or by the Byzantine Emperor.

Clovis (Choldwig), king of the Franks, converted to Roman Catholicism in 496, although he may not have been formally baptized until 508. He was the first Germanic king to become fully Romanized willingly. He did so in order to form an alliance with the Catholic

Church and the Byzantine Emperor against the cultural foe all of them feared—the Goths. Toward the end of his reign the alliances Theodoric had carefully built up to ensure peace were systematically undermined by Frankish-Catholic-Byzantine interests. Conspiracies were launched in the court of the great Gothic king as well. Eventually it appears that Theodoric was poisoned by agents of the Catholic Church on the day he decided to confiscate their church property in his kingdom. The date was August 30, 526.

Theodoric was idealized by the Germanic tribes well beyond the Goths. But for the Roman Catholics he was a diabolical figure. This dichotomy of attitudes is reflected in the myths which grew up around the circumstances following his death, as his body disappeared from his mausoleum.

Bizarre new legends were then born: for the Catholics, a great black horse (the devil) stole the body and took it to the mouth of Vulcan into which Theodoric fell (inferno); for the Germanic tribes, Theodoric was taken away by a great horse (belonging to Odin) and transported still alive to be with the heroes in Valhalla.

(Salti, p. 21)

The mausoleum which Theodoric's body was initially entombed is itself a Gothic mystery. It stands today in all its pristine and austere glory. Theodoric himself has a hand in its design. It is intended to reflect the Gothic tribal aesthetic in contrast to the Roman-style of his *public* building projects. Soon after entombment, the body of the king disappeared.

Wolfram concludes regarding the pagan North's attitude toward Theodoric and his death:

Nobody knows who removed Theodoric from his final resting place. Of course, in the eyes of the barbarian world the Gothic king had never died: fully armed he sat on his charger, ready to lead the demonic army of the dead, or as the god of war, to receive the sacrifices of the warriors. (Wolfram, p. 332)

The Ostrogothic kingdom built by Theodoric would endure twenty-six more years. Eventually the Goths of Italy would fade from history, but they left their legacy in the subcultural stream of prestige which remains to this day.

## The Visigoths

The Visigoths had lived in closer proximity to the Roman Empire for a longer period of time than the Ostrogoths before the latter group was displaced by the Huns. Therefore the Visigoths were dealing with the Eastern Roman Empire in the cultural sphere from the early 4th century. As discussed in more detail in the next chapter, it was among

the Visigoths that Bishop Ulfilas was active as a missionary for his "semi-Arian" form of Christianity. This missionary work was resisted by the leader of the Visigoths, Athanaric.

As the Huns put pressure on the Visigoths, they divided into two camps. One remained north of the Danube under Athanaric, who retreated before the Huns, the other was the one that crossed into the Empire under Fritigern in 375. But after Fritigern's death in 380, Athanaric was named king over all the Visigoths. Athanaric remained a figure of pagan legend because of his general opposition to the Christianization of the Goths on the grounds that it would eventually lead to their Romanization and loss of tribal solidarity. It seems that Athanaric opposed Christianity as a Roman cultural influence on the one hand, and also from a political/religious viewpoint. He saw the separation of religion from the other aspects of life, something implicit in Christianity as a "world-rejecting" ideology, as detrimental to the public good of his Goths.

The Visigoths were slowly pressed from their homeland south of the Dneestr river to an area on the border of the Roman Empire on the north shore of the lower Danube around 375 CE. They were admitted into the Empire by the Emperor Valens the next year, when many moved south of the Danube into the Empire proper. When, in 378, there was a shortage of supplies for the Goths, they rebelled against the Empire and inflicted a great military defeat on the Romans at the battle of Adrianople, in which the Emperor Valens was killed.

After this period they resettled further to the west and came under the leadership of Alaric, who became their king. He subsequently led them on migratory campaigns in the Balkans and on into Italy. During his campaign in Italy, Alaric sacked the City of Rome. The Visigoths entered the city on August 24, 410, and left three days later. Their destruction was light; however, they did plunder the entire Roman treasury—perhaps the greatest mass of gold in the world at the time. Shortly after this historic event, Alaric died in southern Italy. It had been his plan to take his people across the Mediterranean into North Africa.

The successors to Alaric moved the Visigoths back northward into Italy and eventually westward. By 412 they were in what is now southern France, and by 419 they had firmly established their own kingdom based around the city of Toulouse. The Kingdom of Toulouse was powerful and prosperous, and endured from 419 to 507. It stretched from central Gaul (France) to central Spain. This kingdom, which was an enclave of the Arian religious heresy, was defeated at the battle of Vouillé in 507 by the Franks under Clovis. Clovis had forged an alliance with the Roman Church in an effort to defeat his powerful Visigothic rivals.

After 507 the Visigothic kingdom was reduced to its possessions south of Toulouse in what is now Spain and extreme southwestern France. This kingdom, with its capital in Toledo, lasted until the Muslim conquest of the Kingdom of Toledo in 711. One of the most significant cultural events in the history of this Visigothic kingdom was the conversion of king Rekkared to Roman Catholicism in 586. This moment brought to an end the Gothic religious segregation from the rest of Europe, a segregation which had been based on a profound symbolic distinction. It was during this Catholic period that the Visigothic kings had votive crowns made of gold which were displayed in the church. After 711 many of the Goths retreated just to the north. Two more kings were elected by the Visigoths, but they had no integral kingdom to govern.

Despite these events, the Visigothic heritage and legacy in Spain was not wiped out because the Muslim conquest of the Iberian Peninsula was never quite complete. Areas in far northwestern Spain (Asturia) and along the Pyrenees, the so-called Spanish March, including the Kingdom of Navarre and the County of Barcelona, remained free from the Muslim Emirate of Cordoba. It was from these remnants that the long campaign of *Reconquista* took place. This "reconquest" was not complete until 1492.

It is customary to measure the "official" end of Gothic history in western Europe with the year 711. However, the legacy and heritage of the Gothic idea was so powerful that it endured in many places long after that date.

### The Gothic Legacy

Because the Goths made such a profound impression on the history of western and southern Europe — along with many other Germanic tribes from the north — memory of them runs deep throughout all of Europe. Additionally, because their prestige was extremely high among the northern Europeans as well as among certain groups in the south, their historical legacy was persistent well beyond the chronological limits of the political power of the actual Gothic tribes. The Goths were the great conquerors, those who "defeated" Rome (by sacking the Eternal City itself), those who set up the first independent national kingdoms in Europe rising from the rubble of the Roman Empire. The reputation of the Goths was by no means entirely positive, however. By many Roman Catholics, who derived their cultural prestige from their association with the idea of Rome, from *Romanitas*, the Goths were symbolically seen as the spoilers of civilization, as wild barbarians bent on pillage and plunder. The Vandals, an allied East Germanic people, were later saddled with some of these (usually undeserved) negative associations—hence the modern word "vandalism" to describe wanton acts of destruction. In fact, of course, the Goths as well as Vandals generally

had a humanizing influence on the decadent and anomic Roman culture, restoring law and order and closing down Roman arenas where murder and animal cruelty were practiced for entertainment purposes. Again the negative assessment of the "barbaric" Goths stems almost entirely from proponents of Christian *Romanitas* in an effort to secure their own political power and prestige.

These efforts to suppress the Gothic heritage were to a great extent successful when we view them over the broad spectrum of history. But the truth of the Gothic character and its achievements was kept alive like a secret flame in the hearts of certain groups of nobles as well as in secret enclaves of the church from the ancient homelands in the north to Spain, and from Italy to England.

Much of the Gothic legacy is political in nature. The Goths introduced and maintained particular political ideas and structures in certain areas of Europe, and even after several centuries these have left their marks. Already in the late Middle Ages we see clear evidence of the persistence of Gothic political prestige when the records of a Roman Catholic ecclesiastical conference which met in Basel in 1434 reflect that representatives from several nations, e.g. Sweden and Spain, argued for more influence at the conference due to their ancestral connections to the exalted Gothic race. The Swedish representative, Nicolaus Ragvaldi argued that Sweden was the original homeland of the Goths, while the Spanish representative countered that the Spanish Goths more perfectly demonstrated the adventurous Gothic spirit of courage by migrating away from their homeland than the Swedish Goths who stayed behind like cowards. This testimony is the clearest direct evidence of the degree to which Gothic political and cultural prestige was still alive and vital a *full eight hundred years* after the official demise of the Goths in Spain.

After the fall of the Roman Empire the political map of Europe was largely redrawn under the direct influence of the migratory patterns of the Germanic tribes. The later nations of Spain and Italy first took post-imperial shape under the political guidance of the Gothic kings. Other East Germanic tribes, the Vandals and Burgundians, left their names on regions in Europe, Andalusia in Spain and Burgundy in France, receptively. The spelling "Andalusia" is the result of the fact that in arabic no initial *v*- sound is possible. Additional examples of Germanic tribal names which left their marks on southern Europe include France (< *Francia*, "land of the Franks"), Lombardy in Italy (from the tribal name of the Langobards, "long-beards") and Normandy in France (from "North-men").

An additional Gothic political theory which has had some continuity is the segregationist policy of Theodoric the Great in Italy. This policy was not established by the Ostrogothic king in order to exclude Romans from power or to ensure Gothic supremacy, but rather to preserve the

integrity and cultural authenticity of Roman and Goth alike and to maintain the solidarity and survival of the Gothic minority in Italy. This early form of apartheid was successful only during the reign of Theodoric. Eventually the Roman Catholic majority overwhelmed the Arian Goths. But it remains a Gothic idea to preserve the integrity and authenticity of cultural groups through separation within the state in which each group fulfills certain functions for the whole.

Besides these political legacies, the Goths left behind a number of cultural features and patterns which would survive or be emulated over the centuries. Their Arianism would be revisited by theologians many times over the centuries. More will be said about this later. At this point it is sufficient to say that the fundamental principle that Jesus was a man who became godlike, a principle which seems supported by an objective reading of the texts of Christian mythology, opens the door to a more humanistic form of Christianity. The architectural style called "Gothic" was certainly something never practiced by the actual migratory Gothic tribes. However, the general spirit of that architecture does stem from the north of Europe, imbued with Gothic vitality.

The Goths were well-remembered in the poetic and epic literatures of later Germanic peoples. For example, the Old English poem "Widsiþ" (ca. 7th century) records the heroic exploits of the Gothic kings who "with their tough swords had to defend their ancient ancestral homeland seat near the Vistula Forest against the people of Attila." Much of the Nibelung-cycle concerns itself with the interaction of East Germanic Burgundians and the Huns. While the Dietrich-cycle of epics, most extensively recorded in the Norse translation of a Low German original text entitled the *Piðrekssaga*, recounts the legendary court of Theodoric (= Dietrich).

That this literature is no mere frivolous entertainment for kings, but rather is a reflection of deep mythic concerns, is demonstrated by the text of the runic inscription on the Rök stone (ca. 825 CE) in Sweden, which reads in part:

Theodoric the bold	king of sea-warriors
at one time ruled	on the reið-shores.
Now he sits armed	on his Gothic (horse),
the first of heroes	his shield on a strap.

This poetic stanza shows the mytho-magical reverence in which the figure of Theodoric was held, not only among the Goths, but throughout the Germanic world.

The power of the Goths hinges on their tremendous prestige. The power of prestige is the most powerful single factor in the maintenance of cultural continuity and integrity, as well as the process of cultural change. In the south the Gothic brought stability and order to a crumbling, chaotic Empire which had lost its nerve and vigor. Thus

they enjoyed great prestige among a certain segment of the populations of those countries. Their continuing prestige in the north provided an ample measure of cultural continuity in those countries. Additionally, where the Gothic became firmly entrenched, most notably on the Iberian peninsula, where they held sway for the better part of three centuries, the prestige of the Goths provided the mythic strength for the Spaniards to reconquer that land from the Muslim invaders.

The prestige of the Gothic identity was important in royal circles from Spain to Sweden. Such prestige focused both inwardly, where identity with the Gothic provided confidence and solidarity, and outwardly, where it distinguished those who possessed this identity from those who did not possess it. This further intensified the group's sense of solidarity and integrity.

This prestige certainly had a metaphysical dimension as well. Gothic identity was not merely a random or arbitrary thing. It implied a degree of greatness, and bore a whole series of ideological traits as well: *freedom, independence, heroism, individualism within group solidarity.*

Moreover, as will be seen in subsequent chapters, this original Gothic prestige also found its way into lower social strata into which historical Gothic remnants appear to have been submerged. While kings tended to identify with the Gothic heritage in Spain, in southern France, where Gothic royalty had been replaced by a Frankish one, the remnants of the Gothic population increasingly tended to fade into the social and regional "under-classes" — peasants and craftsmen — who were thus greatly influenced by Gothic traits.

Much of this Gothic prestige is clearly traceable in the degree to which Gothic and Germanic *personal names* are found among the Spaniards and Italians. The Spanish surname Rodriguez is derived from Rodrigo/Roderik, the last Gothic king of Spain. Many first names are of Germanic and even specifically Gothic origin, e.g. Alberto, "bright nobility," Adolfo, "noble wolf," Alfredo, "elven-counsel," Alfonso, "noble and ready," Amalia, "work," Anselmo, "helm of god," Armando, "army man," Enrice, "home ruler," Geraldo, "brave spear," Carlos, "man, farmer," Hermenegildo, "great sacrifice," Ildefonso, "battle ready," Matilda, "strength in battle," Rosendo, "path of fame," Tancredo, "counsel of thought." These lists of names show the degree to which Gothic and Germanic names either survived, or were revived in areas where the Goths held sway in the early Middle Ages. The fact that the names are so *popular* indicates again how prestigious the Gothic and Germanic heritage was in these areas.

The history of the Goths is fairly well documented. However, this documentation can be deceptive in that it is almost entirely written by non-Goths. It also focuses on military and political affairs and pays little attention to cultural matters and the actual living values of the people.

As the Goths slipped away from the historical record in the 8th century, they and their values and principles increasingly became part of a secret European tradition which carried forth the Gothic ideal. Only occasionally during the next millennium would the Gothic ideal become conscious in the societies which inherited their lineages. This book is not so much a history of the revival of the Gothic ideal as it is a delineation of what those Gothic ideals actually were and what they perennially continue to be.

## History of the Gothic Tradition Exoteric and Esoteric

The Gothic spiritual or mythic tradition exists in the world on two levels, an exoteric one — which is the documented history of the Goths and their practices and beliefs as they existed in history — and an esoteric one — which is the secret tradition surrounding the Goths. The latter is only sporadically documented and exists as a sort of shadow of the visible exoteric tradition.

### Exoteric

Historically we see that the Goths, an East Germanic tribe, emerged out of the north around 150 CE and began to migrate through present-day Russia bringing with them a pagan religious tradition. Some of them converted to Christianity beginning in the middle of the 4th century, but this process of Christianization was conditioned by two factors: 1) the form of Christianity was not orthodox and thus it remained independent of certain non-Gothic influences, and 2) the secular court-culture of the kings and warriors remained largely aloof from this influence. This latter point is the key to the continuation of the esoteric tradition beyond the limits of historical constraints. The Gothic Christian tradition was maintained and promoted externally by Gothic kings in the 5th and 6th centuries. The exoteric tradition died out in Italy in the 6th century, but continued until the 8th century among the Visigoths in southern France and northern Spain. The official conversion of the Visigoths to Roman Catholicism in 589 fundamentally transformed this tradition. The Islamic invasion of Spain in 711 displaced the Goths to the far northern parts of the country, where, by the mid-700s they seem to have lost their distinctive culture as far as any outward signs are concerned.

### Esoteric

The Gothic royal families maintained, from the time of their origins in Scandinavia and the Baltic, secret tribal traditions. It is these secrets which account for their success and the immortality of their name. These traditions hinged on the continuing secret cult of *divine*



*ancestry*— the hidden cult of the *anseis*. The formula *divine ancestry* must be understood *both* its parts. First the idea is that there is a divine — immortal, perfect and wise — component or element or substance which is not bound by time or place. This transcends the mundane world— stands above it. Second is the idea that this substance can be transmitted or transferred from person to person, or from generation to generation, through historical time and over natural space. We know that this ancestral portion could be transmitted genetically (through the blood), or through symbolic initiations (blood-brotherhood, adoption, reception into warrior-bands, guilds, etc.). Although these latter methods were well-known to the pagans and well-documented among them, it appears that under the influence of the Christian tradition of “apostolic succession” these latter methods grew to be more and more prestigious over the centuries. This increasingly became the method whereby the threatened esoteric of the Goths could be secretly transmitted— and thus protected from an ever more hostile world.

Another important factor in the esoteric tradition is the well-known constant interaction between the Gothic realms of the south and the ancient homelands in Scandinavia and other points in far northern Europe. Cultural and economic contact was maintained and on occasion marriage partners were exchanged between the northern and southern realms as well.

The high-points of the secret tradition are two: 1) the kingship of Theodoric the Great and 2) the Visigothic kingdoms of Toulouse and Toledo.

Up until the time of the general demise of the Gothic kingdoms, the esoteric aspects of Gothic culture are extremely difficult to trace simply because these cultural features were so well concealed within an established and secure tradition. But after the eventual collapse of the external, or exoteric, Gothic social order, the directions in which these esoteric features went in order to preserve themselves make the picture a bit clearer. It must be remembered that the ancient Gothic traditions had had centuries of survival in relatively hostile environments, so its practitioners were well-versed in the arts of concealment and secret transmission.

The traditions in question were reestablished — imperfectly and in some cases only temporarily to be sure — in three different areas of society: the nobility, the church and the peasantry (or other “outcast” groups).

Somewhat ironically, the nobility, where the ancient traditions had customarily been preserved most assiduously, proved to be the most fragile matrix for their continuation after the disestablishment of the Gothic hegemony. The reason for this is that the houses or families bearing the tradition — ones with real political, economic and military power — were obviously constantly the targets of aggression by other

forces desirous of their power. Therefore these progressively dispossessed families were either annihilated entirely, or, once they had lost their noble status, carried on as (often fairly well-to-do) farmers or tradesmen. A similar process occurred with the Anglo-Saxon nobility after the the Norman Conquest.

In Italy the Ostrogothic remnants attached themselves to the Langobards, who invaded and settled in the very heartland of Ostrogothic Italy in the last half of the 6th century. That region is still known by the name “Lombardy”— the land of the Langobards. The Goths and Longobards had, of course, long been familiar with one another as fellow migratory tribes from the far north. In Spain, following the (partial) Islamic conquest, the remnants of noble Gothic families established themselves for a while in far northern Iberia and around the Pyrenees on the border between Spain and France. There the kingdoms of Castile (later divided into Aragón, Navarre and Castile) was established, but it eventually fell under French domination in the 13th century. As a general rule, the royal houses proved to be unreliable repositories of the Gothic tradition, as their main interest after the conversion to Roman Catholicism was increasingly one of mere political expediency.

Again ironically, it was the matrix of the Roman Catholic Church itself which proved to be the more stable conduit for Gothic traditions in the Middle Ages. This is simply because the church was an institution based on some tradition, and if a secret enclave could establish itself in certain localities (almost parasitically) within the church, it could survive for a long period. The secret Gothic traditions tended to gather themselves around the towns and cities in southern France which were sites of Visigothic churches— such as perhaps Rennes-le-Château.

At this point a preliminary note should be added about the whole craze surrounding southern France in general, Rennes-le-Château in specific, and the whole “holy blood, holy grail/Da Vinci code complex.” One glaring reality must be confronted: The region is most marked by a Visigothic heritage. If a great treasure existed in the region, it is the wealth of the Roman treasury brought by the descendants of Alaric which is the only candidate which explains the enormity and persistence of the legends. Celts had inhabited the region in antiquity, but it was not a thriving center for them. Neither was it extremely important to the Romans. With the arrival of the Visigoths, however, the landscape and populace were impressed with certain special properties. Visigothic churches and fortresses and their arrangement were parts of the complex, as were the traditions carried in families, secret enclaves within the churches as well as in the peasantry. The idea that this region has much to do with Frankish Merovingian tradition, as proposed most famously in the book *Holy Blood, Holy*

*Grail* and in subsequent literature, is almost absurd. First of all, the Merovingians are latecomers to the region, which had been established as the Kingdom of Toulouse by the Visigoths. It will be recalled that the Franks became Roman Catholics in order to enter into an alliance with the Roman Church against the Goths and were the chief opponents of the secret ancestral traditions of the Goths. The founder of the Merovingians, Merovech, probably flourished around 450 CE, long after the establishment of the key Gothic traditions in question. One book, *The Templars' Secret Island* (Barnes and Noble, 2002) shows supposed similarities between the sacred landscape around Rennes-le-Château in southern France and the island of Bornholm in the Danish archipelago. The patterns may be legitimate, but the underlying theory of the book appear to be a misdirection, as are all of the *Holy Blood*, *Holy Grail* theoretical offshoots. In fact there were no Templars ever recorded on the island of Bornholm at any time. Bornholm, as we have seen, was the ancestral home of the Burgundians, an East Germanic tribe closely allied with the Goths. The Burgundians have left their name on the southern French landscape in the region known today as Burgundy. It is this ancestral and organic connection which is ultimately responsible for the patterns on the landscape — not some farfetched theory which as farfetched as it seems nevertheless serves conventional reality — that there are connections with “Old Testament” mythology or that of Egypt, etc.

Within the Roman Catholic Church, at the level of the local parish churches, the old Visigothic traditions were sometimes preserved in secret. These traditions, along with the actual church buildings which housed them, slowly deteriorated over the centuries. By the 19th century most of these churches had been rebuilt or were in ruins. This is perhaps the source of the famous “Visigothic pillar” which was set up at the Church of Ste Marie Madeleine at Rennes-le-Château, and which is now in a local museum. Enclaves within the local church carried on secret traditions largely unrelated to any church dogma or doctrine— as it had to do with the sacred layout of the landscape, the location of certain treasure hoards, and the core of the mystery— the fact that a royal blood flowed in the veins of certain families— the blood of the *anseis*, the divine ancestors. This idea was perverted by the adherents of the Roman Church, most usually for *monetary* gain, into the notion of the “royal blood” of Jesus, etc. The idea that Jesus never died, but lived on as a teacher and secret king would appeal to an Arian (Gothic) Christian in ways it would not to an orthodox Roman Christian. In fact such an idea negates Roman Catholic dogma in every respect. For Roman Catholic dogma, linked as it is to Old Testament “prophecy,” Jesus must die (be sacrificed) in order to fulfill his mission. However, for the Goth the power of the Lord (*Frauja*) to save mankind was not in his death, but in his living teaching which has remained secret.

The whole literature on the “Holy Blood, Holy Grail” mythos and the mysteries of Rennes-le-Château is in need of revalorization with closer attention to historical facts, and with an eye toward the unknown, rather than various hoaxes and mere propaganda for the “conventional mysteries.” Our present study is not focused on this, but such a study would be most welcome.

Finally, the esoteric legacy of the Goths in the peasants and commoners in southern France and northern Spain must be addressed. The old nobility, as it was displaced over time in the 8th-10th centuries, was submerged into the local population of commoners and even peasants. Some were displaced into families of Jews— with whom the Goths had sometimes been confused by the Romans and by Roman Catholic Christians. As they ceased being the warriors they had been, these Gothic cultural refugees took up various crafts, such as stone masonry. In chapter 6 we will return to specific instances of possible Gothic survivals in the subcultures of southern France and in connection with the Knights Templar.

In order to appreciate fully the degree and level to which the Gothic tradition was able to survive as a highly esoteric teaching throughout hundreds of years of history, one must realize that it purposefully was projected into three functional streams: 1) priests, 2) warriors, and 3) peasants/craftsmen. Those who are aware of the three functions of the archaic Indo-European religious and social system will at once recognize the meaning and utility of this projection.

It is now time for us to turn to the deeper substance of the esoteric traditions as they were preserved in practical forms in different vehicles within the established Gothic culture.

## Chapter Two

# Mysteries of the Gothic Church

The greatest mysteries and esoteric lore surrounding the Goths stem from their tribal ideology and its various forms of expression throughout history. To understand these mysteries to any degree it is most necessary to cast our gaze into the origins of the Goths and to their tribal, pre-Christian, traditions. These remain obscure due to the fact that no autochthonous pagan Gothic source has survived, other than a runic inscription or two. Some scholars in the early 20th century, however, believed that the bulk of Eddic mythology actually stemmed from the Goths. It is certainly true that much of the heroic material in the *Edda* rises out of the Gothic cultural milieu. Beyond this it is imperative to grasp the history and tenets of the unique form of Gothic Christianity which so marked and distinguished them throughout most of their history. This leads us to discover some of the esoteric aspects of the Gothic legacy. It is most likely that much of the modern-day mythic lore surrounding the southern French (Provincial) landscape — most notably Renne-le-Château — actually has roots in the legendary past of the Goths and that other more “far fetched” explanations or theories are merely more culturally acceptable affinities. Realizing this opens a whole new door to investigation.

### The Ancient Gothic Religion

Because there is no “Gothic Edda,” it is difficult to unravel what the finer details of Gothic pagan tradition was. However, enough clues have been left behind in various scattered sources to make a good reconstruction possible. To this must also be added the comparative evidence of what we know about the general proto-Germanic world out of which the Goths migrated and in which their roots still lie.

Perhaps the most complete and thorough exploration of what could be called Gothic paganism was offered by the German historian of religion, Karl Helm, in the third volume of his *Altgermanische Religionsgeschichte* (1937).

After the Goths were nominally Christianized, the nobility still held onto the old traditions for a much longer time. Christianity first developed in the Gothic realms among foreigners and slaves, just as it had among the Romans. Therefore the kings embraced it only slowly and kept many aspects of it at arms length, simply because it theoretically diminished their power.

## The Spiritual World

To understand the spiritual universe of a people one must understand some essential parts of it and from these parts synthesize the whole in some inner way. Otherwise we just collect isolated and virtually meaningless facts with which we have no empathy, and hence no real understanding is possible. One of the most important areas of life which must be understood, especially for archaic or traditional peoples is their *soul conceptions*. Modern man has largely lost any intuitive knowledge of this part of himself. He has had to rely on the reconstructed discipline of "psychology" to recover (haphazardly) a small portion of what our ancestors knew and used intuitively on a daily basis. These conceptions are best rediscovered through a detailed structural and etymological analysis of the words making up the terminology for this area of life. In connection with this we can examine the funerary rites of the Goths to see how, at the end of life, these parts of the whole person are dealt with.

## Soul Conceptions

In the case of the Old Norse terminology for the soul we have the advantage of thousands of pages of text which provide authentic context for the various terms in question. We have humans motivated by, and interacting with, these concepts in a variety of situations. In the case of Gothic we have a much more archaic level of attestation, however, the whole of the material is recorded entirely within a Christianized context. This has its advantages and disadvantages. Its disadvantages are obvious, however, we do get in the case of the Gothic terms clear and definite Greek translations of the terms, which open another door to the understanding of the concepts.

Gothic *ahma* (Gk. πνευμα [pneuma]) is derived from the Proto-Germanic root \*ah- with the suffix -ma, which makes it into a collective and abstract meaning. \*Ah- by itself relates to the idea of "reflecting, pondering." This root is also found in OE *eaht*, "deliberation," OHG *ahta*, "thought," and in the ON verb *ætla*, "to think, mean, suppose." Clearly it originally had a cognitive, thinking component, but the use of it to translate Greek πνευμα, "spirit" indicates that for Ulfilas it had connotations of "spirituality" for him that went beyond mere cogitation. Originally this would have been the breath of life and divinity breathed into the human being by the gods.

A second Gothic term, *aha*, is used to translate the Greek νοϋς, which clearly indicates the original cognitive, thinking aspect of the root concept \*ah-. In Greek the νοϋς (*nous*) is the mind proper. Although other Germanic languages have psychological terms also derived from the root \*ah-, Gothic is the only dialect which has developed this root into a true soul conception.

The Gothic word *hugs* is also used to translate the Greek νοϋς, and it is this root, \*hug-, which is the most widely attested Germanic term for the cognitive aspect of the human soul. We see it also in ON *hugr*, OHG *hugu*, OS *hugi*, OE *hige*, all meaning "mind, spirit, hear, etc." The ultimate etymology of this word is uncertain, but it most likely goes back to the Proto-Indo-European root *keuk-*, "to shine." Hence we still say of a person who we think is intelligent, that he or she is "bright." The cognitive part of the soul is that part of us which processes data, especially data which is seen to emerge from the outside world, in a logical or rational manner.

A contrasting concept is denoted by the Gothic words *gaminþi* or *gamunds*, which translate variously the Greek terms μνεια, μνημοσυνη, ἠναμνησις, all of which indicate "memory." This part of the soul indicates that faculty which reflects on the internal, subjective contents of the mind. This is reflective, rather than cognitive. To the traditional Germanic mind this suggested that the things contemplated by the *gamunds* were, or could be, things received from deep inside the mind or spirit originally breathed into man by the gods, or to be the contents of a "divine mind." Hence, in the Norse *Hávamál* (st. 20) we read how the god Óðinn, who has two ravens named after the two mental faculties of mind (*Huginn*) and memory (*Muninn*), fears more for the loss of *Muninn* (memory) than he does for *Huginn* (mind). The *hugs* is more conscious, the *gamunds* more unconscious.

Another part of the conscious mind, *wilja*, "the will" is used by Ulfilas to translate the Greek term θελημα (*thelēma*), which is largely a New Testament term. Gothic *wilja* was originally a strong desire, a force of focus and direction to the human mind to make plans and see them through to their completion. The older, pre-Christian, term for this faculty of the human mind in Greek was βουλη (*būlē*). Interestingly enough, βουλη is also one of the Greek words Ulfilas translates with Gothic *rūna*, "secret, mystery."

The Gothic word *saiwala* is used to translate the Greek word ψυχη (*psychē*) which is used very frequently in the New Testament. In Greek it originally referred to the "breath," and to the "departed soul" of a person. In specifically Christian terminology *psychē* was translated as "soul," while *pneuma* denoted "spirit." In pre-Christian terms the *saiwala* was the part of the person which departed after death and took on an independent existence, either in the realm of the dead (e.g. ON *Hel*) or in a higher realm (e.g. ON *Valhöll*). In the former case the soul was likely to be reborn in to the clan naturally, whereas in the latter case the soul would take on a more or less permanent existence in the higher world.

These various soul-conceptions are laid out in a structural format in figure 3.1. Such formats are intended to suggest the relationships of the various concepts one to the others, but in fact, of course, these