

THE VACCAEI, THE VACETI, AND THE RISE OF VASCONIA

Roger Collins

Late Antique ethnography is generally more of a testimony to its authors' antiquarian learning than to the social realities of the age in which they lived. Thus the Huns could be called Scythians, and the Avars be called Huns, because of the similarity of the geographical, though not the chronological, setting of their activities, at least in so far as these affected Rome. The Romans had never really been very interested in recording accurately the organisation and *mores* of the peoples living beyond their frontiers, and tended only to produce stylised models of such 'barbarian' societies in the interests of making moralising comments on their own¹. This didactic tradition proved peculiarly active in the final stages of Roman rule in the West, when, linked to a specifically Christian ascetic moral code, it manifested itself in the *De Gubernatione Dei* of Salvian². Similarly, the early sixth century British *De Excidio Britanniae* of Gildas probably makes most sense when viewed as a representative of this genre³.

This moralising tradition in Latin ethnography may have survived in such minor productions as the lists of national characteristics, of which some can be found in Spanish manuscripts⁴. The antiquarian tendency, however, was if anything reinforced by the contracting cultural horizons of the centuries following the end of Roman rule in the West. A particular premium could be placed on recording the usages of antiquity in such matters as geographical and ethnic nomenclature. In a number of cases attempts to re-employ supposedly ancient names led the perpetrators into error and modern scholars into confusion. Not least amongst those thus affected by the learned vagaries of early medieval antiquarianism were the Basques, who succeeded in having themselves represented under a variety of names in the literary sources of the seventh and eighth centuries. It may, however, also emerge that, strange as some of its manifestations were, this antiquarian lore was being made to serve a set of more immediate and practical purposes.

For a number of authors of this period the Basques, easily enough recognisable under the name of *Vascones*, as they appeared in the works of the classical geographers and of Prudentius, could also be known as the *Vaccaei*⁵. In a period as sparsely documented as that of the early Middle Ages, it is tempting to try to squeeze meaning out of any evidential statmet, however improbable. However, in the matter of the equating

1. On these tendencies in antique historiography see S. MAZZARINO, *La Fine del Mondo Antico*, Rome 1959, section I, chs 1-4.

2. *Salviani Libri*, ed. C. HALM, *Monumenta Germaniae Historica, Auctores Antiquissimi* (Henceforth *MGH, AA*), vol. I, Berlin 1877.

3. Edited most recently by M. WINTERBOTTOM, *Gildas: the Ruin of Britain*, Chichester 1978, pp. 87-142.

4. See the lists edited by T. MOMMSEN, *MGH, AA*, vol XI, Berlin 1894, pp. 389-90.

5. M.J. PERÉX AGORRETA, *Los Vascones*, Burlada 1986; R. COLLINS, *The Basques*, Oxford 1986, pp. 31-54, 63-65.

of the *Vascones* with the *Vaccaei* no attempt has or could be made to suggest that a kernel of truth underlies this tradition. It is the product of an error, but how that error came to be perpetrated itself throws an interesting light on the intellectual processes of the period.

The synonymous transposing of the names *Vascones* and *Vaccaei* can be found in a number of Spanish and Frankish texts of the early Middle Ages. To the north of the Pyrenees it appears in three saints' lives: the *Vita Eligii*, the *Vita Amandi* of Baudemond of Elne, and the second version of the *Passio Leudegarii*⁶. The first and third of these texts have been accepted as belonging to the middle and the beginning of the eighth century respectively⁷. The second of them, the *Vita Amandi*, which purports to have been written by a disciple of Amandus soon after the latter's death c. 684, has suffered from the critical scrutiny of Bruno Krusch, its editor for the *Monumenta Germaniae Historica*, and for whom it was no more than a later Carolingian confection. However, attempts have been made to restore its credit, and its standing as a work composed in the eighth century, if not the late seventh, must be enhanced by its sharing with two other *Vitae* of the period of this common piece of faulty ethnic labelling⁸. The *Vita Amandi* in fact is the most specific of the three in stating that *Vaccaei* was the older usage and that the alternative form of *Vascones* should be considered *nunc vulgo*⁹.

In Spain the only eighth century occurrence of the linking of the two names comes in the anonymous work known as the *Chronica Muzarabica* or *Chronicle of 754*, which refers to *montana Vaccaeorum*, here implying the Pyrenees, in its account of the expedition of Abd ar-Rahmān ibn Gafiqī against Aquitaine¹⁰. *Vascones* feature in the text as causing problems in the time of the Visigothic king Reccesuinth. The use in the *Chronicle of 754* may seem thus to be more literary than ethnographic, in that *montana Vaccaeorum* is being used as a synonym for the (western) Pyrenees, but if so this still derives from the previous association of the two tribal names. From the Visigothic period proper an explicit equating of *Vaccaei* and *Vascones* can be found in the epitaph of the Gothic noble Oppila, who was killed fighting against them in 642¹¹.

The reason why no attempt has been made to take seriously this identification of the *Vascones* as the *Vaccaei* is that a considerable amount of evidence exists about the real *Vaccaei*, who flourished from at least the third century BC well on into the time of the early Roman Empire. Their geographical location in the area of the middle Duero valley is well attested in sources ranging from Livy and Strabo to Cassius Dio¹². Not only were they thus located at a distance of some four hundred kilometres to the west of the *Vascones*, but the latter are separately attested to in the same or similar sources of this period¹³. The *Vaccaei* and the *Vascones* were also quite distinct peoples culturally and almost certainly linguistically. The question hardly needs arguing in detail in that it has never been controversial.

The blame for the confusion has long rested with Isidore of Seville¹⁴. It was he who, in the ninth book of the *Etymologiae*, stated categorically that *Vacceos invictos a nulla gente obtentos. Idem et Vascones quasi Vaccones, C in S littera demutata*¹⁵. The linguistic

6. *Vita Eligii Episcopi Noviomagensis*, liber I, ed. B. KRUSCH, *Monumenta Germaniae Historica, Scriptores Rerum Merovingicarum* (Henceforth MGH, SRM), vol. IV, p. 631; *Vita Amandi Episcopi*, ed. KRUSCH, MGH, SRM, vol. V, pp. 443-44; *Passio II Leudegarii Episcopi et Martyris Augustodensis*, ed. KRUSCH, MGH, SRM, vol. V, p. 333.

7. See the introductions by Krusch to his editions of each of these texts (Note 6 above).

8. H. LÖWE, «Die 'Vacetae insolae' und die Entstehungszeit der Kosmographie des Aethicus Ister», *Deutsches Archiv für Erforschung des Mittelalters*, vol. 31, 1975, p. 3.

9. MGH, SRM, vol. V, p. 443.

10. J. E. LÓPEZ PEREIRA (ed.), *Crónica mozárabe de 754*, Zaragoza 1980, sections 80 and 27, pp. 98 and 46.

11. J. VIVES, *Inscripciones cristianas de la España romana y visigoda*, Barcelona 1969, n. 287, pp. 90-91; see also A. BARBERO and M. VIGIL, *Sobre los orígenes sociales de la Reconquista*, Barcelona 1979, pp. 62-63 and note 99.

12. For classical references to the *Vaccaei* see amongst others Strabo III.iii.2-3; Livy XXI.5, XXXV.7, XL.47, 50; Pliny the Elder, *Historia Naturalis*, III.iii.4; Cassius Dio XXXIX.54, LI.5.

13. Strabo III.iii.7, 10; Pliny III.27; COLLINS, *The Basques*, pp. 31-36; PERÉX AGORRETA, *Los Vascones*.

14. E. JAMES, *The Merovingian Archaeology of South-West Gaul*, Oxford 1977, p. 25, note 79.

15. M. REYDELLET (ed.), *Isidorus Hispalensis Etymologiae IX*, Paris 1984, pp. 103, 105.

explanation that Isidore offers is clearly unsatisfactory, and the suspicion must be strong that the bishop of Seville was here having to justify by application of his own etymological principles an identification that had been made on quite different grounds. Thus Isidore had other reasons for believing that the *Vascones* and the *Vaccaeï* were the same people, but had to find a linguistic principle to explain the metamorphosis of their name.

The short passage of book nine of the *Etymologiae* relating to the *Vaccaeï* is also highly instructive of other, perhaps equally unflattering aspects of Isidore's thought processes. On the *Vaccaeï* he added, *de quibus creditur dixisse poetam* «*Lateque vagantes Vacceï*». As the most recent editor has pointed out, although this is intended as a citation of Vergil's *Aeneid* IV, 42, in fact Isidore is using and further distorting the quotation as it was employed by Jerome in his *Commentary on Isaiah* V, xxi, 13-17¹⁶. The mutations to which the three words in a single line of Vergil had been subjected are striking:

Vergil's original: «...lateque furentes Barcaeï»

Jerome's use of it: «...lateque vagantes Barcaeï»

Isidore's version: «...lateque vagantes Vacceï»

In that the use of *vagantes* for *furentes* has no other testimony in support of it, this would have to be put down to a slip of the memory on the part of Jerome. What is both more interesting and more surprising is that Isidore had obviously picked up this phrase from Jerome rather than from the original Vergil, and managed to distort it further in the process. Small as the example may be, it gives rise to wider doubts as to the extent of Isidore's direct knowledge of classical texts in general and of Vergil in particular¹⁷.

Although Isidore's error over the linking of the *Vascones* and the *Vaccaeï* is recognised, its direct source or cause has not been investigated. It is possible that Isidore himself received the information at second hand, but no earlier testimony to this particular error has come to light. It seems more likely that Isidore was led to this belief on the basis of a misunderstanding on his own part. His principal geographical sources included Orosius, who in the first book of his *Historia adversum paganos* of 418 included a brief account of the geography of the known world¹⁸. Its own source is unknown, but probably predates Orosius himself, not least as it treats peoples like the *Vaccaeï* as if they were still in existence, at a time when no other evidence to corroborate such a belief may be found.

Unusually, the *Vaccaeï* make two appearances in the text of this *descriptio terrarum* in Orosius's work, and feature as part of the information delimiting the provincial boundaries of both *Hispania Ulterior* and *Hispania Citerior*. In the first context they are linked with the *Celtiberi*, and in the second with the *Astures* and the *Cantabri*. The *Vascones* make no appearance in the work at this point at all. Thus, for Isidore the difficulty would have been how to make sense of the twofold mention of the *Vaccaeï*, their apparent location in a northern mountainous context in one of them, and the absence of any reference to the *Vascones*. At the same time, unlike the *Cantabri* and the *Astures*, no living representatives of the original *Vaccaeï* would have been known to him in seventh century Spain, and the historical and geographical sources that provide our knowledge of this people were, without exception, unavailable to Isidore. This is the context, it may be suggested, in which he took the step of identifying the *Vaccaeï* with the *Vascones*, and resorting to a piece of linguistic sleight of hand to cover the transformation in the name that such a belief required.

16. *Ibid.*, p. 105, note 144, and pp. 68-9, note 80.

17. J. FONTAINE, *Isidore de Séville et la culture classique dans l'Espagne wisigothique*, Paris 1959, pp. 785-96.

18. OROSIUS, *Historiarum adversum Paganos Libri VII*, I.ii.73-4, ed. C. ZANGEMEISTER, Hildesheim 1967, pp. 27-28.

With the authority of Isidore behind it, it is not surprising that the identification thus made continued in use in the Iberian peninsula, particularly in what may be called literary contexts. Its acceptance in Francia may also be taken as a dimension of the dissemination of the *Etymologiae* north of the Pyrenees from the mid-seventh century onwards. What is perhaps more surprising, though, is the limited degree to which this piece of pseudo-antiquarianism was used by subsequent authors who had to refer to the Basques or the region of their occupation. In practice all such uses turn out to be confined to the eighth century. In this period they were not alone. Another supposed revival of an earlier name for the same people was to be found in the works of some eighth century writers. This took the form of the identification of the *Vascones* with the *Vaceti*.

This was both an odder and a more limited phenomenon than the misunderstanding concerning the *Vaccaei*. For one thing it was confined to no more than three works, and never manifested itself south of the Pyrenees at all. Also, there never had been a historically attested people called the *Vaceti*. What may be considered as the 'classic' formulation of this equation is to be found in the continuation of the chronicle known as that 'of Fredegar'. In referring to events probably to be dated to the year 763, the anonymous continuator recorded a battle between the Frankish king Pepin and Waiofar, Duke of Aquitaine. The latter was said to come *cum exercito magno et plurima Wasconorum qui ultra Garonnam commorantur, quem antiquitus vocati sunt Vaceti*¹⁹. This, however, is the only occasion on which he uses the name, otherwise employing the supposedly more modern name of *Vascones*²⁰.

The other two references to *Vaceti* depend upon rather than make explicit the identification of this name with that of the *Vascones*. The first of these is the mention in the *Cosmographia* of the so-called 'Aethicus Ister' of some *Vacetae Insulae*. In a study of the passage Heinz Löwe has clearly demonstrated that, both by the internal logic of the work and on the basis of the parallel with the use in the continuation of Fredegar, the only context for these 'Vacetian islands' must be the Biscay coast of France, and that the islands themselves should be identified as those of Oleron and Ré between the mouths of the Garonne and the Loire²¹.

The third appearance of the *Vaceti* is probably secondary to the previous one, in that it appears as an alternative to *Vaccae* in two of the manuscripts of an anonymous work entitled the *Liber Generationis*, a short text, largely comprised of lists, derived from the Latin translation of the chronicle of Hippolytus²². In a number of cases the *Liber Generationis* appears as a borrowed component making up the first section of the *Chronicle of Fredegar*²³. In none of the extant manuscripts in which this occurs does the collection have its final mid-eighth century continuation, but it is possible that such a class of texts may have once existed. What is likely to have happened is that a scribe (at St. Gall?) corrected the *Vaccaei* of his exemplar on the basis of the spurious antiquarian information that firstly the *Vaccaei* were the same as the *Vascones*, and that the latter had in antiquity been called the *Vaceti*.

The argument as to the identification of the author of the work of 'Aethicus Ister' is by no means over²⁴. However, the view forcefully propounded by Löwe that he should be identified with the Irish Bishop Vergil of Salzburg (d. 786) may, for the mo-

19. J. M. WALLACE-HADRILL (ed.), *The Fourth Book of the Chronicle of Fredegar*, Oxford 1960, Continuations, section 47, p. 115.

20. *Ibid.*, Continuations, sections 25, 28, 42-45, 47.

21. H. LÖWE, «Die 'Vacetae insulae'» (see note 8 above).

22. See the apparatus to T. Mommsen's edition of the *Liber Generationis*, *MGH, AA*, p. 98: variants in MSS G and C.

23. See the introduction to WALLACE-HADRILL, *Fredegar* (see note 19 above), pp. x-xi, xxiv, xlvi-l.

24. M. HERREN, «Hiberno-Latin Philology: the State of the Question», in M. HERREN (ed.), *Insular Latin Studies*, Toronto 1981, p. 14.

ment, be said to hold the field²⁵. The southern German context of a number of the manuscripts of the work may reinforce this claim, but on the other hand the existence of a text of it in MS Albi 29, a probably mid to late eighth century manuscript in Visigothic minuscule raises certain problems²⁶. The simultaneous existence of copies of the work in both a Bavarian and a Septimanian context within its presumed author's own lifetime may suggest that the work had been circulating a little longer than Löwe's arguments would allow for. That another manuscript of the text dating to the same period has been assigned a provenance in northern France, quite probably at Tours, further complicates the issue²⁷. As has recently been emphasised, the standard edition of the *Cosmographia* was produced as long ago as 1853, and a replacement is much to be desired²⁸. In its absence it has not been possible for those who distrust the assigning of the work's authorship to Vergil of Salzburg to make positive alternative suggestions, and a belief that its composition should be dated to the period 768 to 784 rests so far unchallenged. The later date is determined by the death of Arbeo of Freising, for or by whom the manuscript of the work now at Leipzig may have been written, and the earlier derives from the probable date of completion of the continuation of the Fredegar chronicle²⁹.

Of the three known contexts in which the equating of *Vascones* with *Vaceti* appear, primacy must be given to that of the continuation of Fredegar. This is the only case in which the identification is made explicit, and it is difficult to imagine how the continuator could have made the deduction he did merely on the basis of the very oblique reference in 'Aethicus Ister' to *Vacetae Insulae*. Moreover, the identification is both so mistaken and so limited in its circulation that it is hard to believe that its appearance in two roughly contemporary works was just coincidental. The greater degree of probability must rest with the author of the *Cosmographia* having absorbed this piece of bogus antiquarian lore from a reading of the continuation of Fredegar. However, a future re-assessment of the question of the date and place of composition of the *Cosmographia* of 'Aethicus Ister' may modify such a view.

The roots of the original error in identification are not as easily disentangled as in the case involving the *Vaccaei*, but might be traced back to the existence in the Pyrenees, on the eastern edge of the Basque region of a people called the *Iaccetani*, from whom the city of Jaca derived its name³⁰. Their existence is well attested in geographical and historical writings of the early imperial period, and *Iaccetania* continue in existence as the name for a *pagus* in the central Pyrenees in the time of the later Roman Empire³¹. Isidore records a story of the *Vascones-Vaccaei* being brought down from the Pyrenees by Gnaeus Pompey, and settled in the new foundation of *Convenae* (St. Bertrand de Comminges)³². If there is a genuine foundation to this story the people thus affected would have been the *Iaccetani* rather than the *Vascones*. Thus, at the heart of this particular confusion may have lain some form of memory of the existence of the *Iaccetani*, however transmitted, blended with the Isidorian fusion of the *Vascones*

25. The case was argued most fully in H. LÖWE, *Ein literarischer Widersacher des Bonifatius - Virgil von Salzburg und die Kosmographie des Aethicus Ister*, Wiesbaden 1951, and was criticised by K. HILLKOWITZ, *Zur Kosmographie des Aethicus Ister*, vol. II, Frankfurt 1973; Löwe replied in his 'Salzburg als Zentrum literarischen Schaffens im 8. Jahrhundert', *Mitteilungen der Gesellschaft für Salzburger Landeskunde*, vol. 115, 1975, pp. 99-143.

26. On MS Albi, Bibliothèque publique 29, see E. A. LOWE, *Codices Latini Antiquiores*, n. 705 in vol. VI, Oxford 1953, also *Catalogue des manuscrits de la Bibliothèque d'Albi*, Paris 1849, pp. 6-7; it is item 1 of Repertorio I in A. MILLARES CARLO, *Tratado de paleografía española*, 3rd ed., Madrid 1983, vol. I, p. 323.

27. MS Wolfenbüttel Aug 8° 80 6; see LOWE, *Codices* (see note 26), no. 1378 in vol. IX, Oxford 1959.

28. W. STEVENS in his review of Hillkowitz (see note 25 above) in *Speculum*, vol. 51, 1976, pp. 752-55.

29. B. BISCHOFF, *Die südostdeutschen Schreibschulen und Bibliotheken der Karolingerzeit*, Wiesbaden 1940, p. 63.

30. For early references to the *Iaccetani* see Strabo III.iv.10; Livy XXXIV.21; Pliny the Elder III.iii.22, 24; Caesar, *De Bello Civile*, I.60.

31. M. J. PERÉX AGORRETA, *Los Vascones* (see note 5), pp. 160-67.

32. ISIDORE, *Etymologiae*, IX.11.107, ed. REYDELLET (see note 15), p. 105.

and the *Vaccaei*. As previously mentioned, this piece of fictitious antiquarianism had but a short life and limited influence.

More prevalent, and seemingly representing a widespread eighth century misapprehension was the equating of the name of *Vasconia* with the area of the Duchy of Aquitaine, and as a corollary the possible labelling of all the inhabitants of the latter region as *Vascones*. The references relating to these usages appear to be relatively numerous, and can be found in various sets of annals, in the continuation of the *Chronicle of Fredegar*, in a saint's life, and in the work of the anonymous author generally known as 'the Ravenna Cosmographer'. In at least one of these texts the phraseology is ambiguous. The *Vita Rigoberti Episcopi Remensis* twice refers to *Wasconia*, once to record the saint retiring into eremitical seclusion in *Wasconicam regionem*, and then to report how an abbot Milo, an envoy of Charles Martel, found him there and persuaded him to return to Francia³³. The juxtaposition of *Wasconia* and *Francia* here may indicate that the former is being used to refer to Aquitaine. The composition of the *Vita Rigoberti* has been dated to the period c. 888/94³⁴. If so, and if *Wasconia* is being used here as a synonym for Aquitaine, this is the only instance of such a practice in the ninth century. As will be seen, this is so anomalous that it is possible to suggest that this may either justify some scepticism as to the date of composition of the text, or belief that Gascony rather than the whole of Aquitaine is being indicated.

Eighth century usages are certainly more numerous, but leaving aside the work of the Ravenna Cosmographer, they come only in a number of entries in some of the numerous sets of small annals edited by Pertz in the first volume of the *Scriptores* series of the *Monumenta Germaniae Historica*, and in the continuations of the *Chronicle of Fredegar*. Here the issue is slightly complicated by the question of the interrelationship between the different sets of annals. Less attention has probably been paid to these set of 'minor annals' than they probably deserve³⁵. Certainly, the questions of their origins and mutual interdependence have never been fully explored³⁶. It is clear enough, though, that such borrowings do exist, and that the independent testimony of some of the annals to this particular verbal usage is thereby reduced. On the other hand, deliberate variation in the choice of vocabulary between otherwise related texts can be highly revealing.

Although it would be inappropriate to consider it in detail here, and hard to substantiate merely on the basis of the references in the texts to *Vasconia* and Aquitaine, it is possible to supplement the existing discussions of the mutual interrelationships between the various sets of annals. The references to *Vasconia* as definitely or possibly indicating Aquitaine as a whole can be found only in annals and chronicle entries relating to the period from 731 to 768. This is not necessarily identical to the period in which such annals were being composed, and some investigation of this question is required.

Taking the four decades thus indicated individually, the earliest independent testimony would seem to be that of the *Annals of St. Amand*, which record for the year 731 that *Karlus fuit in Wasconia contra Eodonem*³⁷. Three other sets of annals, those known as the *Annales Tiliანი*, the *Annales Laubacenses*, and the *Annales Petaviani*, generally held to be dependant on those of St. Amand for their earliest entries, repeat this phrase, though with one of them substituting *pugnavit* for *fuit*³⁸. For their entries relating to the year 735 similar harmony exists between the *Annals of St. Amand* and two of the

33. *Vita Rigoberti Episcopi Remensis*, chs 15, 16, ed. B. KRUSCH, *MGH, SRM*, vol. VII, p. 72.

34. *Ibid.*, p. 55.

35. The original analysis of the relationships between the annals was made by Pertz in the introductions to his editions of them in vol. I of the *Monumenta Germaniae Historica, Scriptores (MGH, SS)* of 1826.

36. For short discussions see W. LEVISON and H. LÖWE (eds.) *Deutschlands Geschichtsquellen im Mittelalter*, vol. II, Weimar 1953, pp. 180-192, and F. L. GANSHOF, «L'historiographie dans la monarchie franque sous les Mérovingiens et les Carolingiens», in *Settimane di studio del Centro italiano di studi sull'alto medioevo*, vol 17, 1970, especially, pp. 670-74.

37. *MGH, SS*, vol. I, p. 8.

38. *Ibid.*, pp. 8-9.

three related texts, in reporting Charles Martel as campaigning in *Wasconia*. The third, known from its discoverer, Alexander Petau, as the *Annales Petaviani* seems in its wording to have here followed another early set of annals, the *Annales Mosellani*, which make their first reference to *Wasconia* at this point³⁹. Interestingly, the St. Amand Annals and their two close satellites make no further mention of Aquitaine under the title of *Wasconia* until references start again in the case of the former in material relating to the 760s.

For the 740s, however, the *Annales Mosellani*, and the late eighth century *Annales Petaviani*, which drew both on the *Mosellani* and on the St. Amand annals, continue to employ this formula⁴⁰. In fact there are good grounds for suspecting that the *Annales Mosellani* were at this point being kept up more or less contemporaneously with events, as they accord a prominence to the activities of Carloman, whose political fortunes were to be abruptly terminated by his abdication from the office of Mayor of the Palace in 747. Nothing was to be gained from stressing his role as opposed to that of his brother Pippin, the first Carolingian king, after that year.

The only other sources to be found employing the name *Wasconia* as a synonym for Aquitaine in respect of events of the 730s and 740s are the continuations of the Chronicle of Fredegar. The original chronicle, whose precise composition is still a matter for dispute, ended with its record of the year 642. At a subsequent point an anonymous compiler added to this the concluding section of another historical text, the *Liber Historiae Francorum*, which had been augmented by a continuation covering the years from 724-735. This continuation of the *Liber Historiae Francorum* was almost certainly written in 736/7⁴¹.

The compiler who added the ten chapters plus the continuation of the *Liber Historiae Francorum* to the original Fredegar chronicle is probably the same man who added another continuation to the resulting composite work, covering the years from 737 to 768. Various suggestions have been made proposing a further subdivision of this continuation into at least two parts, but this should probably be regarded with some scepticism⁴². The original Fredegar chronicle that terminated in 642 made no use of the name *Vasconia* in any context in which it could mean Aquitaine. The continuation of the *Liber Historiae Francorum* that was subsequently transferred to the composite Fredegar does not use either form of regional name, but does twice refer to *Vascones*. In the first instance he does this in such a way as to suggest that he was applying the name indiscriminately to all the inhabitants of Aquitaine south of the Loire⁴³. His second use of the term can only be interpreted in the light of the view taken of the meaning in the previous passage⁴⁴. Although almost certainly implied in the first continuation, it is not until the work of the final continuator, probably writing c. 768, that the unambiguous equation of *Wasconia* with all of Aquitaine is to be found in this chronicle.

For the 760s, the final decade in which such a use is found, a much larger number of independent sources can be seen using the name *Wasconia* for Aquitaine. Comparisons make clear that by this time a number of the sets of annals that had once had no independent value were by now being written on the basis of direct and contemporary information. Thus, the *Annales Laubacenses* no longer just copy those of St. Amand⁴⁵. By the end of the 760s the Murbach annals, now only represented by three subsequent

39. *Ibid.*

40. *Ibid.*, pp. 27 and 11.

41. See WALLACE-HADRILL, *Fredegar* (note 19 above), pp. xxv-xxvii, and also the introduction, pp. 3-18, of the edition by A. KUSTERNIG and H. HAUPT, in *Quellen zur Geschichte des 7. und 8. Jahrhunderts*, Darmstadt 1982.

42. *Ibid.*, p. xxvii; such a division involving belief in a first section of no more than four short chapters is hard to credit.

43. *Ibid.*, Continuations, section 2, p. 82.

44. *Ibid.*, Continuations, section 10, p. 89.

45. Compare their texts for the years 761 and 762: *MGH, SS*, vol. I, pp. 10 and 11.

versions, ceased to depend on the *Annales Mosellani*⁴⁶. In so doing they became less well-informed or interested in events in the western parts of Francia. In general there must exist a strong impression that from the later 760s onwards several new centres of annal production came into being in the Frankish territories, culminating in the compiling of the first set of court annals, the *Annales Regni Francorum* c. 787⁴⁷.

What is very striking about these 'Royal Frankish Annals' in relation to the inquiry being pursued here is that, with the one exception of an entry for the year 753, the annalist always changes the *Wasconia* he found in his source, usually the continuation of Fredegar, into *Aquitania*⁴⁸. What is more he also changes the *Vascones* of his source into *Aquitani*⁴⁹. For the first compiler of the *Annales Regni Francorum*, who was writing c. 787-93, as for all of his successors, *Aquitania* and *Wasconia* were no longer synonymous and interchangeable names for a single region. The same phenomenon can be detected in some of the other late eighth century sets of annals. The three extant versions of the Murbach annals depended until their entries relating to the mid 760s on the information contained in the *Annales Mosellani*. Even so, when two of them, the *Annales Alamannici* and *Annales Nazariani*, were written their scribes altered the *Wasconia* the found in their source, the Moselle annals, into *Equitania* or Aquitaine⁵⁰. Thus for them too the identification of *Wasconia* with the whole of Aquitaine was no longer valid. Unfortunately, it is not as easy in the case of these two sets of minor annals to get as close to the precise period of their compilation as it is with the *Annales Regni Francorum*, but their common ancestor, the Murbach annals, seems to have extended no later than the year 781⁵¹.

By at least the end of the 780s the equating of Aquitaine and *Wasconia* seems no longer to have been acceptable. At what point it first came into being is, however, less easy to determine. As has been mentioned, there are no seventh century cases of it. The ethnic labelling of the inhabitants of Aquitaine as a whole as *Vascones* was probably employed by the author of the continuation of the *Liber Historiae Francorum*, who wrote c. 736. Whether he was the first to do so depends upon the question of the date of compilation of the first versions of the two earliest independent annalistic collections, the *Annales Sancti Amandi* and the *Annales Mosellani*. In their present form they exist only as the opening sections of longer and more substantial compilations of annals that look to have been started in the 770s. Thus, it is not easy to determine the previous compositional history of their texts. Both in practice began their accounts with the death of Drogo, the son of the Austrasian mayor of the palace in 708, but it is unlikely that contemporary year by year recording began at this point. It is rather the case that when the compilations were first undertaken certain past events or episodes in Carolingian family history were included to provide an introductory section for the annals. The prominence attached to the demise of Drogo, who was buried at Metz, helps justify the location of the centres of production of these annals in the region of the Moselle.

It is possible that the regular compilation of the St. Amand annals began as early as the second decade of the eighth century, but this does not guarantee that regular contemporary recording was preserved thereafter. The Moselle annals look to have been grafted on to a set of annalistic obituaries produced in a continental monastery of pro-

46. For the *Annales Mosellani* see the edition by PERTZ in *MGH, SS*, vol. XVI, Hanover 1859, p. 495; the three sets of annals derived from a lost Murbach original are the *Annales Alamannici*, *Guelferbytani*, and *Nazariani*: *MGH, SS*, vol I, pp. 30-31 for the late 760s entries.

47. On the origins of the *Annales Regni Francorum* see *Deutschlands Geschichtsquellen im Mittelalter* (see note 36 above), pp. 245-54.

48. *Annales Regni Francorum*, ed. F. KURZE, *MGH, Scriptores Rerum Germanicarum*, Hanover 1895, s.a. 753, p. 10; the meaning here could be Gascony rather than Aquitaine more generally, or that be what the compiler of the *Annales Regni Francorum* thought his source, the continuator of Fredegar, was indicating.

49. *Annales Regni Francorum*, ed. Kurze (see note 48) s.a. 742, 760; cf. *Continuations of Fredegar*, ed. WALLACE-HADRILL (see note 19), sections 25, 41.

50. *MGH, SS*, vol. I, pp. 28-29.

51. For the date of the Murbach compilation see Kurze's preface to his edition of *Annales Regni Francorum* (note 48 above), p. v.

bably Irish origin⁵². Their first secular record is entered under the year 715, but the Irish obituaries continues as late as 729. It is possible that contemporaneous annal making did not begin in this series until the 730s or 740s. Thus, certainly by the latter decade, if not necessarily the former, this use of the name *Wasconia* to indicate the whole of the Duchy of Aquitaine had become established for at least two separate annalists working in the north-eastern regions of Francia, as well as for the author of what became the first continuation of the Fredegar chronicle. Within half a century at the most this practice had ceased to be considered appropriate, and became obsolete. From that time on the name of *Wasconia* was reserved for the area of the duchy of Gascony, south of the Garonne.

This perspective gained from the Frankish annals is valuable when the only other source that makes such an identification comes to be examined. This is the so-called *Ravennatis Anonymi Cosmographia*. From the contemporary politics of the annals this seems to take us back into the realms of antiquarianism with its affirmation: *Guasconia que ab antiquis Aquitania dicebatur. Quam Guasconia plurimi descripserun phylosophi, ex quibus ego legi praenominatum Athanaridum (...text here lost...) Gothorum phylosophos*⁵³. It is not absolutely clear from the text, which depends only on four late medieval manuscripts, if the author's supposed source, Athanaridus, the *Gothorum phylosophos*, also made the verbal identification of Aquitaine and *Guasconia*, though this seems to be the implication.

The Cosmographer also refers to the region of *Spanoguasconia*, the area of Basque occupation to the south of the Pyrenees, and this time he claims the autohiry of another Gothic savant called Ildebad⁵⁴. The impossibility of a *Spano*-... form of prefix in an early medieval context need not be particularly disturbing, in that this represent the orthography of the late medieval Italian manuscripts. One of them, which unfortunately only consists of extracts rather than the whole work, does, however, retain the correct *Hispano*-.. prefix, and its testimony in general may command more weight than the most recent editor afforded it⁵⁵.

Where, though, real anomaly may lie is in the attempt to put back into the age of Theodedric the Ostrogoth (493-526) a quite unsubstantiable distinction between the Basque heartlands (*Spanoguasconia*) and a supposed northern extension of them (*Guasconia*). Such an extension of Basque settlement does not look to have become a reality before the beginning of the seventh century at the earliest⁵⁶. There has been a general tendency to accept the anonymous Cosmographer's claim that he was working on the basis of his reading of otherwise lost texts containing the geographical writings of a number of (Ostro)gothic scholars. Schnetz, his most recent editor, placed the time of the Cosmographer's own activity into the opening decades of the eighth century⁵⁷.

Although, as in the case of the eighth century Frankish annals, it would be inappropriate to try to base a full re-evaluation of this text just on its author's remarks on Aquitaine and *Vasconia*, but in these areas at least his Athanaridus and Ildebad look to be very strange witnesses. There may, indeed, be some suspicion that the work, like the *Cosmography of Aethicus Ister*, is a product of the pretentious antiquarianism that occasionally flourished in the eighth century. The probability of its origin being Italian remains strong, but it is reasonable to suspect in the light of the above discussion of the

52. See the entries for the years 704-707, 713, and 729 in the *Annales Mosellani: MGH, SS*, vol. XVI, p. 494. The entry for 706: *mors Cellani Abbatis* can be paralleled by the record under the same year in the *Annals of Ulster: Cellan m. Sechnusaigh sapiens obiit* (ed. S. MAC AIRT and G. MACNIOCAILL, Dublin 1983) p. 164. Some of the others are not so easy to identify, but the entry for 713 recording the deaths of Aelfled and Aldwulf testify to links with Whitby. The reference to the Lombard king Aripert II under 712 probably also belongs to this original source.

53. *Ravennatis Anonymi Cosmographia*, ed. J. SCHNETZ, Leipzig 1940, ch. 40, p. 77.

54. *Ibid.*, ch. 41, pp. 77-78.

55. *Ibid.*, p. ix for the MSS; see especially MS Vatican Ottobonianus 2072, containing excerpts of the work made in the 14th century by Riccobaldo Ferrariensi.

56. COLLINS, *The Basques* (see note 5), pp. 82-98.

57. *Ravennatis Anonymi cosmographia*, ed. SCHNETZ (see note 53), p. v.

other uses of the name *Vasconia* for Aquitaine that its information on this score came from a Frankish source, and was received sometime in the period c. 735-780. Other indications of a later rather than an earlier eighth century date for the Ravenna cosmography might be sought.

This leads to the question of why the identifications of *Vasconia* with the Duchy of Aquitaine and, less explicitly, of all of the inhabitants as *Vascones* came to be made. The context in which it occurred is Frankish, and confined to a period of no more than four decades. It is possible to be slightly more geographically precise, in that its main manifestations in the two leading sets of mid-eighth century annals and in the continuations of the *Chronicle of Fredegar* point directly to the region of Austrasia. The home of the St. Amand annals has been located somewhere in the region around Cologne and Trier, and Metz is the suggested place of origin for the *Mossellani*⁵⁸. The second continuation of the Fredegar chronicle was almost certainly carried out in Austrasia, though no more precise location can be supplied. In that the decades in question saw almost continuous conflict between on the one hand the Mayors of the Palace and then the kings of the Carolingian house and on the other the line of independent dukes of Aquitaine, it would be possible to suggest that some form of propaganda is being reflected here. In other words the Frankish rulers were trying to portray their Aquitanian opponents as being little better than savages. Earlier Frankish references to the *Vascones* had always been hostile and prejudiced⁵⁹.

Certainly, the use of such historical 'disinformation' in the portrayal of their opponents can be found elsewhere in Frankish historical sources, and the Aquitanians in particular had been singled out for such treatment at an earlier point in the eighth century. In the continuation of the *Liber Historiae Francorum* that came to be attached to the composite Fredegar chronicle, the author, who was only writing c. 736, presented the Arab invasion of Aquitaine in 733, which culminated in the battle of Poitiers, as being the product of Aquitanian 'treachery'. The Arabs were represented as having been invited in to assist the Aquitanians in their war with the Franks. That this is a complete travesty of the reality of the events is easy enough to demonstrate, and the fact that the author in question was writing within three or four years of the episode indicates the strongly distorted but contemporary nature of the picture that he had either received or wished to disseminate⁶⁰. However, such an explanation is not entirely convincing as far as the question under consideration here is concerned. In the matter of the battle of Poitiers the allegation was made absolutely specific, whereas no overtly prejudicial significance is applied to the use of *Vasconia* as a name for Aquitaine in any of the Frankish sources of this period. Nor can it be seen who the intended audience of such a presentation might have been.

When all of the different pieces of evidence that have been considered here are put together, it turns out that, with the exception of Isidore and one definitely seventh century Spanish inscription, and one possibly ninth century saint's life, all of the texts relating to the *Vascones* as *Vaccaei* and *Vaceti*, and using *Vasconia* as the name for Aquitaine are to be dated to the eighth century, and particularly the middle decades of it. Some form of propagandist presentation of the conflict between the Frankish rulers and the dukes of Aquitaine may seem to explain some of the usages, but it is, for example, significant that it is the strongly pro-Carolingian and Austrasian continuator of the Fredegar chronicle who not only makes the *Vasconia*/Aquitaine substitution, but is also the originator of the mistaken antiquarian labelling of the Basques as *Vaceti*. He was, in other words, interested in the past of the people about whom he was writing.

58. LEVISON-LÖWE, *Deutschlands Geschichtsquellen* (see note 56), pp. 183-85.

59. See note 20 above.

60. WALLACE-HADRILL, ed., *Fredegar* (see note 19), Continuations, section 13, pp. 90-91. M. ROUCHE, «Les Aquitains ont-ils trahi avant la bataille de Poitiers», p. 1, *Le Moyen Age*, vol. 1, 1968, pp. 5-26.

The years from c. 720 to c. 778 were crucial ones in the history of the whole region of Aquitaine, as well as for the ducal dynasty that ruled it⁶¹. The first decade was marked by serious conflict with the Arabs in the south, commencing with their failed bid to take Toulouse in 720, and culminating in the defeat of the Aquitanian forces early on in the campaign in 733 which ended with the battle of Poitiers⁶². If the latter terminated the Arab threat as far as the northern regions of Aquitaine were concerned, the appeal for assistance to Charles Martel opened the way for increasing Frankish aggression in the course of the years that followed. This eventually led to a series of destructive invasions of Aquitaine on the part of the Frankish king Pippin in the 760s and the termination of Aquitanian independence early in the reign of his son, Charlemagne.

This sequence of events is generally presented within the context of the survival of a distinctive Aquitanian ethnic identity⁶³. Thus, the question of the use of the name of *Vascones* to label all of the inhabitants of the Duchy of Aquitaine becomes one of whether or not the Frankish sources were deliberately lampooning their opponents or were themselves here being misled. The impression normally given is that in reality there were just two ethnic groups that ought to have been distinguished: the *Vascones* (Basques) and the *Aquitani*⁶⁴. What is striking, though, is that none of the Frankish sources written in the eighth century before the late 780s make any mention of *Aquitani*. Turning back to the seventh century sources, only reveals that they do not appear there either. Only the name of the region may be found⁶⁵. Very surprisingly, for those committed to a view of a continuous Aquitanian ethnic identity, they are equally absent from the pages of Gregori of Tours as well⁶⁶. He, unlike the Austrasian chroniclers and annalists of the eighth century, was living just across the river Loire from Aquitaine.

This is not, of course, to say that no mention is made of the region or of its inhabitants. A number of references to the *provincia* of Aquitaine, and those entrusted with office in it can be found in sources ranging from Gregory of Tours's *Decem Libri Historiarum* to the second continuation of the Fredegar chronicle and the eighth century annalists. At no point, though, do they give the impression that a distinct and homogeneous population was to be found in the region. A sharp distinction comes, however, with the first compilation of the *Annales Regni Francorum*, begun no earlier than 787. For this annalist, as has been mentioned, the *Aquitani* exist, and he twice alters his sources in his account of the years 741-768 to mention them. In the first of these, relating to the year 742, he transforms the *Vascones* of the second continuator of Fredegar into *Aquitani*⁶⁷. In the second, under the year 760, he changes a regional name into an ethnic one, altering the *Waiofar princeps aquitanicus* of his source into *Waiofar dux Aquitanorum*⁶⁸. At the same time, it should be noted, the recent confusions of terminology involving *Vasconia* as Aquitaine, the *Vaccae* and the *Vaceti* all disappear from current use.

In view of the size and diversity of the Duchy of Aquitaine at its greatest extent, when it stretched from the Auvergne to the Bay of Biscay, and, in theory if not always in practice, from Toulouse and the foothills of the Pyrenees to the Loire, it is much harder to believe in the existence of an underlying sense of distinctive ethnic unity than

61. M. ROUCHE, *L'Aquitaine des Wisigoths aux Arabes, 418-781: naissance d'une region*, Paris 1979, pp. 111-32.

62. The question of the date of the battle remains controversial, but a further case for dating it to 733 rather than the more popular 732 will be found in R. COLLINS, *Spain in the Eighth Century: An Age of Opportunism*, Oxford, forthcoming.

63. This is the basic argument of ROUCHE, *L'Aquitaine* (note 61).

64. *Ibid.*, pp. 87-109.

65. Fredegar IV.57, *provinciae Aquitaniae*: WALLACE-HADRILL, ed., *Fredegar* (see note 19 above), p. 48.

66. In the only reference in the *Histories* of Gregory Aquitaine is rather strangely called *Germania: Historiarum Libri Decem* II.25, ed. R. BUCHNER, Darmstadt 1977, vol. 1, p. 110, and note a.

67. *Annales Regni Francorum*, ed. KURZE (note 48), s.a. 742, p. 2.

68. *Ibid.*, s.a. 760, p. 18.

to doubt its existence⁶⁹. The formidable presence of the Basques, as the dominant element in the population south of the Garonne from early in the seventh century onwards, inevitably compromised such unity, but there are few grounds for believing that the inhabitants of the Auvergne in the seventh and eighth centuries would have thought of themselves as *Aquitani*⁷⁰.

What is being suggested here, albeit tentatively, is that for the period in question Aquitaine was little more than a geographical expression, and that the attempt to create an Aquitanian ethnic identity was actually an artificial and short-lived Frankish imposition of the time of Charlemagne⁷¹. This has to be seen as the underpinning of the latter's proclamation of his son Louis as *Rex Aquitanorum* in 781. Again, the change in the character of nomenclature is interesting here. The line of independent dukes only feature as having a regional title, as *princeps aquitanicus* or *dux Aquitaniae*, in contemporary sources, whereas in retrospect they are given an ethnic or 'national' one, paralleling the royal title of Louis.

Where then do the *Vascones*, *Vaccae*, and *Vaceti* of the mid-eighth century sources fit into this picture? As has been mentioned, a large scale Basque presence can be detected in the south of Aquitaine from the early seventh century onwards⁷². It is not possible to be too precise, but it is unlikely this extended much beyond the Garonne. For the author of the mid-eighth century Aquitanian saint's life, the *Vita Pardulfi Abbatis Waractensis*, a clear geographical distinction existed between *Wasconia* and the *Partes Aquitaniae*⁷³. The latter certainly included Limoges, and a division along the line of the Garonne may well have been indicated. This is also the perspective of his contemporary, the Austrasian Frankish second continuator of the Fredegar chronicle, who confined his application of the name *Vaceti* to just those *Vascones* who lived south of the Garonne. In other words he distinguished between two groups of *Vascones* in contemporary Aquitaine, and this again militates against the idea of his using this terminology as a deliberate insult to the non-Basque population of Aquitaine.

On the other hand, the dukes of Aquitaine used Basque mercenaries in their long and increasingly bitter conflict with the Franks⁷⁴. The *Vascones* whom Pippin found and removed from Bourges after his capture of the city in 762 were clearly not indigenous⁷⁵. A Basque role in the wars of the period rather than further expansion may explain the traces of their presence north of the Garonne at this time. One consequence of the Carolingian conquest of Aquitaine was the termination of such employment and the permanent limitation of the area of Basque cultural and linguistic supremacy to the regions south of the Garonne and west of Toulouse⁷⁶. At the same time the Carolingian rulers were to try to foster a sense of a wider 'Aquitanian' identity amongst the non-Basque subjects of the child king Louis.

The Franks in their various wars with their neighbours in the seventh and eighth centuries always thought of their opponents in ethnic terms. They were always seen as a distinct people or group of peoples, as the Franks saw themselves to be. Aquitaine, however, was different. The wars of Charles Martel and Pippin were against the inhabitants of a region, who, however, lacked an overall sense of ethnic unity. Added to this

69. For the geographical extent of Aquitaine in the eighth century see ROUCHE, *L'Aquitaine* (note 61 above), maps on pp. 107, 296-97.

70. In the fifth century the *Arverni* are as much attested to as the *Aquitani*: e.g. Sidonius Apollinaris, *Epistolae* VII.v.3. The existence of numerous such names in the Late Roman period by no means indicates that any of them should necessarily be expected to survive for the next three or more centuries.

71. This is discussed in R. COLLINS, eds., *Charlemagne's Heir New Perspectives on the Reign of Louis the Pious*, Oxford 1988.

72. For this argument see COLLINS, *The Basques* (note 5 above), pp. 82-98.

73. *Vita Pardulfi Abbatis Warractensis*, ed. B. KRUSCH, *MGH, SS*, vol. VII, chs 1, 11, and 13.

74. For the arguments about mercenaries see ROUCHE, *L'Aquitaine* (note 61 above), pp. 350-361; COLLINS, *The Basques* (note 5), pp. 106-10.

75. WALLACE-HADRILL, *Fredegar* (see note 19 above), Continuations, section 43, p. 112.

76. See COLLINS, *The Basques* (note 5 above), pp. 111-12.

that the dominant role in much, if not all, of the fighting was being assumed by basques in the service of the dukes of Aquitaine, then it is less surprising than it may seem that Frankish authors came to present the conflict increasingly in terms of one against the *Vascones*. At the same time, and this also argues against the view that this was merely a matter of Franks directing literary abuse against their foes, some of these authors were interested in and deliberately sought out information about the antiquity and origins of these *Vascones*. Some of this they found in Isidore, and some they ended up by inventing themselves on the basis of having misunderstood their few sources. There was, indeed, not a great deal of such information available to them as far as the previous history of the Basques was concerned, a problem they share with modern scholars interested, for less immediate purposes, in the same question. However, they were in practice to be the last people to interest themselves in such issues for nearly nine hundred years ⁷⁷.

77. Their first real successor in these matters was Esteban de Garibay (d. 1592): *ibid.*, pp. 257-59.