

ЯЗЫКОЗНАНИЕ. ЛИТЕРАТУРОВЕДЕНИЕ

ALANIC CONNECTION IN PORTUGUESE HERALDRY

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Данное исследование выполнено в русле закономерного интереса современных осетин к истории своих исторических и лингвистических предков – средневековых алан, выдвинувшихся на авансцену европейской истории в позднюю Античность. В статье рассматривается содержание известной португальской легенды о создании герба города Коимбра, бывшей первой столицы страны. Согласно записи в первой всемирной истории, созданной на территории Португалии в XVI–XVII вв. «Монархия Лузитания», герб был создан по распоряжению аланского короля V века Аташеса / Аддака, ответственного за разрушение старого города и строительство собственно Коимбры, и изображает его невесту, дочь побежденного аланами короля свевов. По обе стороны от принцессы – геральдические символы, как принято считать, аланов и свевов. Представляется, что можно уточнить данную достаточно историчную легенду и пересмотреть дистрибуцию символических животных, поскольку известно, что важное место в атрибутике ираноязычных сарматов и алан занимал дракон, изображение которого на данном гербе сказание приписывает свевам. Кроме того анализ имен героев и действующих лиц свидетельствует о том, что имя главного женского персонажа, Синдизунда / Чиндизунда, является неисторичным и, возможно, является результатом контаминации с именем вестготского короля Испании VII в. Чиндасвинда. В таком случае несохранение имени принцессы в анналах истории или его искажение в фольклорной памяти согласуется с общей достаточно обычной гендерно-асимметричной практикой в отношении женских антропонимов.

Ключевые слова: Великое Переселение народов, аланы, вандалы, свевы, антропонимы, геральдические символы, герб города.

The present research is carried out in the mainstream of the self-evident interest of the modern Ossetians to the history of their historical and linguistic ancestors – the medieval Alans, who advanced to the forefront of European history in the late Antiquity. The article discusses the content of the famous Portuguese legend about the creation of the Coimbran Coat of Arms, the former first capital of the country. According to the record in the first world history “Monarchia Lusytana”, created in Portugal in the XVI-XVII centuries, the Alanic king of the 5th Century Atashes, responsible for the destruction of the old city and the construction of Coimbra itself, commissioned creating the coat of arms, and it depicts his bride, the daughter of the defeated king of the Sueves. On both sides of the princess there are heraldic symbols generally considered to belong to Alans and Sueves. There are certain ground to presume, that this fairly historical legend mistakenly attributes the dragon to the Sueves, in which case we may reconsider the distribution of symbolic animals, as it is known, what important place in the attributes of Iranian-speaking Sarmatians and Alans was occupied by a dragon, whose image in this coat of arms is attributed to the Sueves. In addition, the analysis of the names of the protagonists shows that the name of the main female character, Sindizunda / Chindizunda, may be regarded as unhistorical and, possibly, emerged as a result of contamination with the name of the Visigothic King of Hispania of the VIIth century Chindaswind. The non-preservation of the name of the princess in

the annals of history or her misrepresentation in the folklore memory accords with a fairly common gender asymmetric practice in relation to female anthroponyms.

Key words: Great Migration of Peoples, Alans, Vandals, Sueves, anthroponyms, heraldic symbols, city coat of arms.

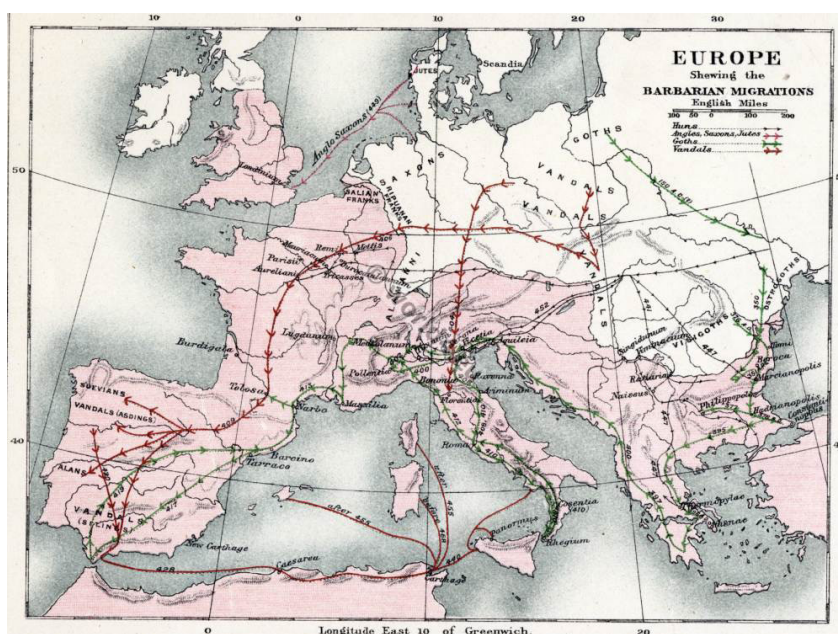
The interest in the Alans and their historical fates on the part of the modern-day Ossetians is quite comprehensible, since the latter are regarded as the easternmost division of the Sarmatians and Alans and their sole survivors. These two parts of the people were dissected from each other by the harsh final stage of the ancient times, which paved a difficult route for the start of the medieval period. Hence, the special interest of different sciences in Ossetia and Ossetians is incited by an unflagging and continual interest in their quite unique pedigree [1, 3].

The Alans were not the only tribal confederation, which kept on migrating westwards chased by the tidal waves of the Huns, till they reached «*finis terrae*», the westernmost borders of Europe, the Iberian peninsula. They arrived there alongside with the other tribes reputable for their bellicosity.

The Barbarian coalitions of the time of Great Migration of Peoples were so numerous on the vast territories of Eurasia and

sprang so quickly, that many of the participants of such alliances could have passed unnoticed and unrecorded. But among the main elements of such alloys of different ethnic density and different strategic flexibility the following tribes and peoples are most frequently mentioned: Goths, notorious Vandals, Sueves, Alans. They, “the plague of swords”, could “plunder with lethal force”, in terms of Hydatius, sketching the invasion of Spain [2, 410], which started at the beginning of the Vth century. 409 is regarded as the year when Alans, Vandals and Sueves, invaders of “confused and defenceless Spain” poured into the region “thanks to a momentary lapse of Roman attention” [3, 161].

They are often demonized, since the records were made by their non-Barbarian foes. But they definitely deserved much of their fame, and it was not easy for the enemy propaganda to discredit them or overstate their deeds. Still, often these tribes are labeled negatively, but dissimilarly, testifying to



Pic. 1. Invasion of Alans, Sueves and Vandals into the Iberian peninsula at the beginning of the Vth century

the fact that their ethnic attributes and ethnic differentiations were quite important on the opposite sides of the barricades. Thus, Paulinus of Bezieres refers to ravaging Sarmatians, incendiary Vandals, and speedy plundering Alans [2, 100].

Our focus is on the Alans, “numerous, self-assured, and bold”.

More precisely we are interested to trace Alanic connection with Portuguese heraldry, and this brings us to the period, when “the Alans and their companions had been coursing as robbers over Spain, pausing or bivouacking wherever the opportunity beckoned” [2, 113], and to the town of Coimbra.

Records of these times about warlords and kings are quite scarce and lapidary and mainly contain accounts of their military exploits, power struggles, and heroic deaths in passing. Many more heroes and history makers, left unrecorded, were doomed to oblivion regardless of their actual legacy. Another important tool of keeping memory and passing it on are folklore texts and legends, which preserve history with their due right to artistically interpret it on each and every stage of their existence.

The legend about the coat of arms of the Portuguese town of Coimbra, probably, expands historical context. The arms were officially granted in 1930, but the history of its creation, according to a version told by Bernardo de Brito (1569-1617), is rooted in the beginning of the Vth century [4, 263]. How accurate can be the history preserved for 14 centuries and whether historical accuracy is a merit for a legend?

Historical annals do not refer to any personal relations between the king of Sueves Hermeric and the king of Alans Ataces, while B. de Brito narrates a romantic story about the love of the latter to the daughter of the former.

According to the variant of its origin, the coat of arms as shown in Pic. 2, was commissioned by the king of Alans in order to commemorate the grand event, which he



Pic. 2. The oldest known variant of the coat of arms of Coimbra

rightfully regarded as being not only of the personal character: the king married a Suevi princess, daughter of his adversary. The marriage was a consequence of and project to overcome lasting belligerence between the tribes of the Alans and Sueves. Such royal marriage, or shall we call it a strategic alliance? was quite a common practice in interethnic communication generally, and among these tribes namely, and there was nothing unusual in settling military and territorial disputes this way. But the legend highlights, that the young king was duly enamored “right at first sight” as the princess was expectedly beautiful.

In English the reference to this story is mainly connected with the comments to the poetic lines of R. Southey in his epic poem “Roderick, the Last of the Goths; a tragic poem” of 1814:

Thus travelling on

He past the vale where wild Arunca purs

Its wintry torrents; and the happier site

Of old Conimbrica, whose ruined towers

bore records of the fierce Alani's wrath. –

III.24 [5, 655].

These ruins may have played a decisive role in obstructing erosion of the historical memory of the local residents.

In the comments to this passage, where of two words characterizing Alans both have

negative connotation, the legend is narrated. And this shows, how greatly indebted to history the talent of R. Southey, the English writer of the Romantic school, was, and how this accords with the general predisposition of the school to medievalism.

Roman Conimbrica, mentioned by the poet, stood not far from the present Coimbra and was its predecessor. The city of Coimbra knew the times of its war prime as a battlefield; of its political prime as the first capital, when Afonso Henriques, Portugal's first monarch, made it his capital.

Ataces, king of the Alans, won it from the Sueves, and, in revenge for its obstinate resistance, dispeopled it, making all its inhabitants, without distinction of persons, work at the foundation of Coimbra where it now stands. Hermerico, the king of Sueves, attacked him while thus employed, but was defeated and pursued to the Douro. The clichéd poetic formula gives an idea of the scale of the events: "The fight was so bloody that the Mondego river water became red".

Peace was then made, and Sindasunda, "daughter of the conquered, given in marriage to the conqueror". In memory of the pacification thus effected, Ataces bore upon his banners a damsel in a tower, with a dragon on one side, and a lion rouge on the other, the bearings of himself and his marriage-father, and this device being sculptured upon the towers of Coimbra, still remains in the city arms.

So, Ataces, who, on the one hand, is chargeable for the destruction of the old city, on the other hand, is also responsible for its resurrection, this tunes with the general spirit of reconstruction, which after 417 was experienced by the "careful proprietors who quickly set to work repairing the damage and picking up their former lives, complete with inveterate sins [2, 100] and was suggestive of their long-term plans in this region.

Consecutively hard-hearted, Ataces was tyrannical at the stage of construction as well: reputed to be an Arian, he "therefore

made the Catholic bishops and priests work at his new city, but his queen converted him" [5, 295].

Back in Coimbra for the wedding, Ataces ordered that the coat of arms of Coimbra have a reference to this marriage.

The legend timely ends at this stage of the plot development, because in reality (if there actually existed such a princess, gained as a war trophy, if there actually was such a war) Cindazunda had little time and few chances for personal happiness, at least in this marriage with Ataces.

Unfortunately for the Alans, they could not hold the provinces they obtained in the feud with Vandals and Sueves – "Lusitania and Carthaginensis; the Alans acquired two whole provinces (the entire center of the peninsula)" [2, 102]. It is noteworthy, that Hydatius refers to the agreement among these tribes and says they were casting lots [6, 18], this casts doubt to the legendary account of a bloody feud between the Sueves and the Alans. Awarded Carthaginensis as well as Lusitania, an enormous two-province package, "they took charge of lands with coastlines on the Atlantic and Mediterranean as well as an interior connecting them – a vast plateau with extensive grazing for a nomad people whose fearsomeness and mobility on horseback were well suited. It may have been hoped to be responsible for an immense territory" [2, 104].

As the Vandals and Sueves were "located at the western edge of the Ocean sea" [3, 161], this also reduces the possibility of their territorial disputes with Alans.

Anyway, whether through mere luck in lots or due to military superiority at this stage of their history the mighty Alans were spinning the wheel of fortune. But the order they established was abolished by the even mightier Goths. In W. Goffart's opinion, the Alans could have lost their battleworthiness in 10 years, when they did not have qualified foes [2, 106].

Ataces's successors were no longer Alans, more precisely, he had no immediate suc-

cessors: the Vandal king Gunderic accepted the Alan crown after Ataces was defeated and killed in the battle with the Visigothic king Wallia in 418:

Alani, qui Vandalis et Suevis potentabantur, adeo caesi sunt a Gothis, ut extinct Addace rege ipsorum pauci. Qui superfuerant, abolition regni nomine Gunderici regis Vandalorum, qui in Gallaecia resederat, se patrocinio sunjugarent [6, 19].

The analysis of the names can also yield some interesting results.

Our focus on the names of the protagonists shows that even within this limited space of the world history we can find illustrations for identifying different kinds of problems, which arise while analyzing proper names.

It is with profound gratitude that we must pay tribute to the chroniclers of the past, storytellers and minstrels, who passed on the names of historical figures, thus preserving their legacy. And names themselves are an invaluable source of information, yet there are many questions in this field.

– The records were often made by non-native speakers.

– Hence, for the scribes these names were just unmotivated sequence of sounds, which resulted in deviations from the original.

– Besides in different spelling traditions the names are recorded differently, thus, many recorded forms of the same name can hinder its proper analysis.

1. All this above-said can be applied to the name of the young Alanian king. And here lies the first problem – the question of choice: which of the 9 variants of his name to prefer to introduce the hero. Probably *Aces*, as in Portuguese sources, or *Attaces*, as the name more popular with historians, or *Atace* as in Italian sources, where his image becomes dimensional:

– *Atace, re degli Alani, divenne in breve il principe piu possente. Era giovane, audace, ma violent ed ambiziosissimo* [7].

Atace, king of the Alans, became in a short time the prince more powerful. He was

young, daring, but violent, and highly ambitious.

The name of this “conquistador barbaro” is recorded as *Aces*, *Ataces*, *Attaces*, *Athaces*, *Atace*, *Attak*, *Addak*, *Addace*, *Addax*. The latter three forms even caused certain confusion, since in some chronological tables there are two kings consecutively listed after Respendial – Addak till 416, and Ataces after 416. Respendial, who is also named as *Respendal*, *Resplendal*, *Respendialus*, *Resplendiano*, still remains recognizable due to the specificity of his name. Not so with his successor.

Yet, we believe that these are rather different spelling variants of the same name, since historical records contain no information that there were two kings after the king of Alans Respendial and before they lost their autonomous rule:

– *Morto Resplendiano sall sull' Alano trono Atace il quale conquisto gran parte della Lusitania e pose la sua sede in Merida* [8, 102-103]

“*Atace cadde in campo, e gli Alani si confusero cogli Svevi, I quali posero ogni loro studio in edificare nuove citta, fra cui Albuherca*” (Atace fell in the field, and the Alans became confused with the Swabians, who put each in building new cities, including Albuherca) [8, 103.]

And Hydatius refers to *Addace*, when he narrates the massacre of the Alans by the Goths, as the last king of Alans after whose death “the name of their kingdom was lost” (“*abolition regni nomine*”) [6, 19]. F.Gutnov also refers to the king of Alans in his fatal confrontation with Wallia using the form *Addak* [9, 193].

The only existing etymology of this name is based on the variant *addak* and traces this form to the Ossetian word *æddag* “outer”, “an outsider” [9, 205].

2. Isidor in his *Historia Gothorum, Wandalorum, Sueborum* records that “Suevi principe *Hermerico*” entered Spain with the Alans and Vandals [10, 300.]

The problem with the king of Sueves Hermeric (died 441) is that his name resembles the name of another and even more famous king Hermenerico, who “ruled over all the Goths, more cunning than all in guile, more generous in gifts” (*Eo tempore Ermenricus super omnes Gothos regnavit, astutior omnibus in dolo, largior in dono*) [11, 29], and whose notoriety casts evil shadow on him.

Hermeric / Hermerico / Hermenerico / Hermanrich not reputed that negatively, was the king of the Suevi in Galicia from perhaps as early as 406 and certainly no later than 419 until his retirement in 438 [15, 406]. It should be noted that, there is a reference to his son only in different kinds of his biography.

So far no record of a daughter of the king of the Sueves has been identified, which seriously undermines credibility of the legend, since the royal marriage of a princess strongly enhances the chances of her being referred to in written sources, at least as to a daughter of Hermeric or a wife of Ataces.

3. There is one very “suspicious” moment in this legend. Not that kings overcame bloodshed and united their efforts sealing peace with a matrimonial bond. Nor excessive virtues of a would be Queen of Alans: “*Consequenza di guesta furono le nozze di Atace con Cindazunda, figlia di Ermenérico, principessa dotata di rara bellezza, di preclaro ingegno, e piissima*” [8, 103] (As a consequence was the wedding of Atace with Cindazunda, daughter of Ermenérico, princess of rare beauty, outstanding talent, and the most holy). Nor the grand feast worthy being commemorated in the coat of arms, as the chalice is believed to symbolize the wedding feast. Nor even the ambition of the quite an ambitious hero to immortalize his romantic infatuation. We have too limited information to counterclaim all these, but in the legend there is the name of the princess, and this fact might veil certain mysteries.

Cindazunda of the legend, the daughter of Suevi king and bride and wife of the king

of Alans, or rather her name is the most intriguing part of the story. The very fact of the female being remembered by her own name is quite interesting, since in early history and in folklore texts too often even very “important” women’s names were obscured or they were called after the most “important” male relative they had – father, husband, son, or according to their ethnics or countries they were from.

Standard phrase in the nearly each Old Germanic king’s biography runs: “The name of ...’s wife or concubine is not known.”

With very few exceptions, probably one of them, *Sisegutia/Siseguntia*, it took this lady two royal husbands to be named, (if this is her real name after all) Mirón (-583) and Audica (-585). Audica’s first wife’s name is quite typically unknown: Gregory of Tours records that Audica, a relation of Euric, married the sister of the latter and deposed his brother-in-law, before marrying the widow of his father-in-law [12, Gregory of Tours VI 43, p. 376].

Could *Cindazunda* be a female name? It could, at least there were other women, whose early Germanic names contain the same postpositional element – *zunda /-suntata /-suntha*. That gives argument to regard this form as a compound Old Germanic name and parallel the name *Cindazunda* with the names of historical Matasuntha and her more famous mother *Amalasunta*, the youngest daughter of Theoderic the Great, the regent of the Ostrogoths from in the second quarter of the VIth century, whose assassination gave revengeful Justinian I arguments to invade Italy [14, 63].

There is a presumption or a general belief of general accountability of Old Germanic names, as “these compound words are translatable, intelligible, in other words their conjoint meaning depends upon the separate meanings of the words which unite to form them” [15, 86]

According to this presumption her name is regarded to be derived from Germanic

(Goths) “*ama-l / amals *swinþaz > amala-suintha*”, meaning “very active, strong work”. The prepositional element comes from the family name of her husband (this partially substantiates our reflections about names of females being subordinate to men’s names: she was married to a noble of the old Amal line. According to Gothic legend, the Amali were descended from an ancient hero whose deeds earned him the epithet of Amala or “mighty” (this root may be found outside Teutonic vocabulary, there is a cognate word in present day Ossetian: *amal-*).

We have no parallels for the first element in the name Cinda-zunda, but these post-positional elements *-zunda* and *-sunta* in these names can be compared.

Yet our skepticism about the authenticity of her names seems to have certain grounds, since this exponent may be a word-formational element of a masculine name as well.

There are at least three names in the list of Visigothic kings with the same or similar exponent: one with the prepositional *Suint-ila*, and in the names of *Rece-svinto* and *Chinda-suinto* in postposition.

Of special interest is the name *Chindasu-into*, because it testifies to the fact that there was another person with the identical name as the Suevian princess, and whose historical fate is also connected with this Iberian location. Shall this fact be treated as coincidence, but the degree of casual probability of such similarity is doubtful. Are the princess and the Gothic king namesakes? Or this sound complex was meaningful and in agreement with the above-mentioned Old Germanic tradition, these two names were coined by a similar derivative pattern with the same elements separately and independently for both of them.

In the preface note to his poem R.Southey states: “the history of the Wisi-Goths for some years before their overthrow is very imperfectly known, It is, however, apparent, that the enmity between the royal families of Chindasuintho and Wamba was one main

cause of the destruction of the kingdom” [16, 384.]

The king Chindasuintho is not a mere invention of R.Southey’s poetic talent in order to expand the history told “as briefly as possible”. Romantic poets were well-read in history and this is a reference to a real person.

Chindasuinth-Chindaswinth Chindaswind, Khindaswinth Chindasuinto Chindasvindo, Chintasvintus, Cindasvintus; spelled in Gothic as *Kinþaswinþs*; was Visigothic King of Hispania. He ruled for 13 long years from 642 until his death in 653, which constitutes quite a lasting period in those turbulent times, he is listed after Tulga and as a predecessor of Recesvinto.

King Chindasuintho is also discussed in the section on Visigoths in Spain in “An Universal History, from the Earliest Account of Time” [17, 421]

It is important to note, that there is final vowel in the variants: Chindasuinto Chindasvindo, probably, these forms were misleading for future generations and the name became gender neutral, or gender opposite. We can presume, that the name of the Suevian royalty may be the result of an overlap in the historical memory of two different names with the two centuries lap between the protagonists.

It is noteworthy in this context to discuss the name of another lady, who can also claim being depicted on the coat of arms. Her name has different spelling variants –*Isabel* in Aragonese, Portuguese and Spanish and *Elisabet* in Catalan, as this Hebrew name has differing variants in different languages. Correspondingly, she is known both as the Sainted Queen Isabel, and as Elizabeth of Aragon, or Elizabeth of Portugal.

The legend about the coat of arms of the city of Coimbra, which we considered, traces back these symbols to the first quarter of the Vth century. Consecutively, it ascribes the image of a lady in the centre to Cindazunda. It is doubtful that the image bears resemblance with the historical Suebi princess

or her attire. But probably this time, as well as with the name, she inadvertently claims somebody else's heritage.

There is another version of a later origin of the coat of arms, which accounts differently for the "lady" in the arms, stating, that she is the patron saint of Coimbra, the Sainted Queen Isabel, wife of King Dinis, also known as Elizabeth of Aragon and as Elizabeth of Portugal. There are serious arguments favoring this variant of the legend. The general trend to grant coats of arms could be more typical of the late Medieval times. Besides, the Queen has prominent virtues: in 1314 she founded a Monastery in Coimbra, after her husband's death in 1325, she retired to this very monastery in Coimbra. And although Denis' tomb was located in Odivelas, his wife was buried in the Convent of Santa Clara in Coimbra [18, 142–143].

This radically changes historical context and the symbolism of the heraldic emblems. Then the chalice must be reinterpreted as a symbol of Christianity, but not a symbol of the wedding feast of the Ataces and Cindazunda.



Pic. 3. The modern version of the coat of arms of the city of Coimbra

The twin shields on either side of Isabel in today's Arms (see Pic. 3.), are the ensigns of Afonso Henriques, Portugal's first monarch

(1109-1185), who made Coimbra his capital. But the king had died a century before Saint Isabel was born. Then, if the coat dates to the Vth century, these shields could be a later introduction to already existing emblem. Correspondingly, if the later version holds true, then the older symbols could be added to a newly-made coat of arms.

In our opinion, the dragon can be very important in identifying the age of this coat of arms. It could be a strong chronological marker of barbarous times. We would like to highlight here a possible inaccuracy in distributing the zoonymic symbols. It is believed that the lion is a symbol of Ataces and the dragon is a symbol of Hermenerico. In this regard it is important to remember about the importance of dragon images for Alanian and Sarmatian military cultures, as "the dragon standard was originally developed by the cavalry peoples of the Steppes (Sarmatians, Alans, Parthians and early Persians). Sarmatian cavalry were ...the dragon standards of the steppe peoples were in the forms of dragon heads mounted on poles, with a coloured cloth sleeve or streamers behind the poles such that the cloth sleeve or wind sock would turn in the wind to determine the wind direction for mounted archers [19].

Noteworthy is the opinion of the authors of the book on Arthurian circle connections with the Ossetian sagas about legendary Narts "From Scythia to Camelot", who believe that "the prominent role played by lizards (or dragons) in the symbolism associated with the Arthurian legends; however, may indicate that the Sarmatian tribe that eventually found its way to Britain did indeed venerate this creature" [20, 13]. Later the authors discuss the "prominence given to cups in the continental traditions surrounding the Holy grail, that indicates that the Alans, whose concern with cups survives in the Ossetic accounts" which can be also of interest in the present context in discussion symbolism of the chalice [20, 13].

Heraldic symbols of the Coimbran coat of arms must be investigated, which necessitates reading written sources in different languages and juxtaposing available data of different cultures. This could help to unveil interesting facts and trace unexpected connections about the past events immortalized by the ruins of Conimbrica, preserved in the coat of arms of Coimbra

Thus outside the circle of Portuguese- and Italian- speaking and -reading audience the name of the daughter of king of Sueves is practically unknown, as it is not found in early written records. But the residents of the town of Coimbra preserved the name Cindazunda or, if our speculations about the name hold some reason, at least memory of this princess, commemorated in Portuguese sources as enchantress of the king of Alans.

In the turbulence of The Great Migrations some ethnics and tribes were more turbulent than others. They formed unstable and short-lived confederations and kingdoms. In the situations of polyethnic and, consequently, polylinguistic commu-

nication many peoples shifted language code, losing their native tongues, thus becoming extinct.

Retrospecting history through proper names, different knots bound by history can be found, even if not untied, since this may highlight important points overlooked otherwise. As for the protagonists of this Coimbran legend there is a case of “split personality”, as Ataces is sometimes regarded as two different kings because of the dissimilarity of the graphic variants of his name. In terms of contrast, can be discussed the king of the Sueves Hermeric, whose name may twin him with the king of Visigoths, thus they merge into one historical identity.

And the most interesting is the perspective or rather disadvantage of being known under a false name or somebody's name, moreover, and even of the person of the opposite sex; the lot of many women in history: the sphere of anthroponyms is misogynistic. The traces of Alans and their contacts with different civilizations can be found in any places [21, 27], and each such trace deserves attention and scrutiny.

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