

ASPECTS OF DEFENCE IN ROMAN EUROPE: AD 350-500  
HUGH WILLIAM ELTON, THE QUEEN'S COLLEGE, OXFORD  
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This thesis has three parts which can be briefly described as the nature of the threat, the instrument of response and the method of response.

Before discussing the military system of the Roman empire, it is necessary to examine its enemies, to see how and why they fought. The first part of the thesis looks at the limitations of the evidence concerning barbarians. It then discusses the social and economic basis of barbarian life, showing their potential for war and the type of threat presented to the Roman empire. The next section deals with the types of conflict between Rome and the barbarians and the reasons for it. There then follows a detailed discussion of barbarian armies and their equipment, strategy and tactics when fighting the Romans.

The second section discusses the Roman army. Initially, the organisation of the army is examined, then its troop types and their equipment. This is done with regard to both land and naval forces. Then the sources of soldiers and the problem of barbarization are discussed in some depth. Lastly, the types of fixed defences are briefly examined.

Having examined the instrument of response, the third section discusses how it was used. It starts by examining the conditions affecting decision-making at this period, then discusses foreign policy, i.e. whether to use force or alternative methods, with regard to both barbarians and internal enemies. Strategy, i.e. the type of operation employed to defeat the enemy, is then discussed with regard to defence against barbarians, attack against barbarians and against internal enemies. The following part, on operations, discusses how the army performed in the field and analyses tactics for fighting field battles, naval battles and sieges.

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## CONTENTS

List of Abbreviations . . . . .	3
List of Illustrations . . . . .	6
Preface . . . . .	8
Introduction . . . . .	12
Part I: The Barbarians . . . . .	14
Economy and Society . . . . .	15
Motivation for War . . . . .	65
Equipment and Military Practices . . . . .	83
Part II: The Roman Army . . . . .	133
Organisation, Arms and Equipment . . . . .	134
Recruiting and Barbarization . . . . .	175
Fortifications . . . . .	216
Part III: Roman Military Practices . . . . .	243
Foreign Policy . . . . .	244
Strategy . . . . .	279
Operations and Battles . . . . .	330
Conclusion . . . . .	373
Notes on Sources . . . . .	377
Appendix: Other Ranks of the Roman Army . . . . .	382
Bibliography . . . . .	384

## ABBREVIATIONS

AM	Ammianus Marcellinus
Anon. <u>dRB</u>	Anonymous, <u>De Rebus Bellicis</u>
Anon. <u>PS</u>	Anonymous, <u>Peri Strategikes</u>
<u>Anon. Val.</u>	<u>Anonymus Valesianus</u>
<u>ASC</u>	<u>Anglo-Saxon Chronicle</u>
<u>C.Gall.452</u>	<u>Chronica Galliae ad 452</u>
<u>CJ</u>	<u>Codex Justinanus</u>
<u>CT</u>	<u>Codex Theodosianus</u>
Cass.	Cassiodorus
GT <u>HF</u>	Gregory of Tours, <u>Historia Francorum</u>
HA	Historia Augusta
Hyd.	Hydatius
Jul.	Julian
<u>LV</u>	<u>Laterculus Veronensis</u>
Lib.	Libanius
Marc. Com.	Marcellinus Comes
<u>ND</u>	<u>Notitia Dignitatum</u>
<u>NTh</u>	<u>Novellae Theodsianae</u>
<u>NSev</u>	<u>Novellae Severianae</u>
<u>NVal</u>	<u>Novellae Valentinianis</u>
Olymp.	Olympiodorus
<u>P.S.Sabae</u>	<u>Passio Sanctae Sabae</u>
<u>Pan.Lat.</u>	<u>Panegyrici Latini</u>
Philost.	Philostorgius
Prosp.	Prosper Tiro

RPF            Renatus Profuturus Frigeridus  
SA            Sidonius Apollinaris  
Symm.        Symmachus  
Theoph. AM   Theophanes, Chronographia, Anno Mundi  
Veg.         Vegetius  
Zos.         Zosimus

- GAUL Fifth-Century Gaul: A Crisis of Identity ? ed. H.W. Elton and J.F. Drinkwater, (forthcoming)
- Grosse Grosse, R., Römische Militärgeschichte (Berlin, 1920)
- Hoffmann Hoffmann, D., Das spätrömische Bewegungsheer und die Notitia Dignitatum (Düsseldorf, 1967)
- I, II Prosopography of the Later Roman Empire, vols. I and II, eds. A.H.M. Jones, J.R. Martindale and J. Morris and J.R. Martindale, (Cambridge, 1970 and 1980)
- Johnson Johnson, S., Late Roman Fortifications (London, 1983)
- Lander Lander, J., Roman Stone Fortifications from the First century AD to the Fourth, BAR S206 (Oxford, 1984)
- LRE Jones, A.H.M., Later Roman Empire (Oxford, 1964)
- RGA<sup>2</sup> Reallexikon der Germanische Altertumskunde<sup>2</sup>

all other abbreviation as L'Année Philologique

## ILLUSTRATIONS

### Figures

Figure 1 Overlapping artefact distributions . . . . .	p17
Figure 2 West German tribes . . . . .	p25
Figure 3 East German tribes . . . . .	p31
Figure 4 Dendritic Central Place System . . . . .	p46
Figure 5 Hunnic Kingship and Genealogy in the Early-Fifth Century .	p47
Figure 6 Frankish and Saxon Attacks on the Roman Empire: AD 354-378	p69
Figure 7 Alamannic Attacks: AD 354-378 . . . . .	p71
Figure 8 The Rhine Frontier: AD 354-378 . . . . .	p71
Figure 9 Distribution of Angons, Saxes, Franciscas . . . . .	p96
Figure 10 Barbarians as Percentage of Known Army Officers, by decade	p195
Figure 11 Roman Forts in Valeria . . . . .	p221
Figure 12 Roman Fort Design . . . . .	p230
Figure 13 Upgraded Fort . . . . .	p231
Figure 15 Information and Action . . . . .	p249
Figure 16 <u>Limitanei</u> Commands . . . . .	p284
Figure 17 Valens' Gothic Campaigns, AD 367-369 . . . . .	p316
Figure 18 Mursa Campaign, AD 351 . . . . .	p328
Figure 19 March order of Roman Army . . . . .	p344
Figure 20 Line of Battle . . . . .	p355
Figure 21 Line of Battle Variations . . . . .	p356
Figure 22 Strasbourg Deployment . . . . .	p360

Tables

Table I Foederati Regiments in the Roman Army . . . . . p139

Table II Geographical Origins of Field Army Troops . . . . . p183

Table III Tribal Origins of non-Roman Soldiers . . . . . p186

Table IV Roman Army Officers, AD 350-476 . . . . . p191

Table V Roman Army Officers, AD 350-476 (expanded) . . . . . p192

Table VI Offices and Known Holders . . . . . p194

Table VII Other Ranks, Field Army, AD 350-500 . . . . . p197

Table VIII Origins of Field Army Other Ranks, AD 350-500 . . . . . p197

Table IX Officers and Other Ranks, AD 350-476 . . . . . p198

Table X Auxilia Palatina Soldiers and Officers . . . . . p198

Table XI Scholares . . . . . p199

## PREFACE

This thesis discusses aspects of military practice in Roman Europe, AD 350-500. The geographical area covers relations with all 'Germanic' barbarians as well as those from the steppes or in Britain. The chronological period starts with the Roman empire as the dominant power in Europe and ends with it dominant only in the Balkans.

Although the late Roman and early medieval periods have seen much attention in recent years, the field of military history has been somewhat neglected. Though detailed discussions of many aspects of the late Roman army are available, there is still no comprehensive modern account of the Roman army of the fourth and fifth centuries AD. This thesis is not intended to be such an account, but instead attempts to provide the background that will allow such a work to be written in the future. As such, it does not attempt to be exhaustive, but tries to provide some coverage of most relevant aspects of the subject. The result is a type of 'handbook' describing the 'normalities' of warfare in the late Empire. More could be said about almost any issue covered, but more work on one subject would inevitably mean less on something else. The frequent cross-references between sections show the extent to which the areas considered are linked, and illustrate the problems involved if only certain aspects of military practice were considered. As it is, the whole is larger than the sum of its parts.

The approach I have taken may appear <sup>u</sup>nsual and I will attempt to explain it here. It is certainly not what I thought I would be doing when I started work four years ago and is almost certainly not the way I would

approach the subject now. No attempt has been made to provide a narrative. Having tried to write one, I feel it would add little to what is done here. In any case, I am not as interested in how particular operations were dealt with as the principles and strategies used in different types of operations. With such broad aims, it seemed necessary to cover large geographical and chronological areas in order both to gain enough evidence and to understand the 'big picture'.

'How effective was the late Roman army?' is the underlying question running through the thesis, though not determining its shape. Such a question is complex and very difficult to answer for any army, even in periods where more information is available. For the late Roman army it is almost impossible. However, unless some judgement has been made on the effectiveness of the army, it is difficult to write anything meaningful about fifth-century politics and the fall of the western Roman empire. This thesis is an attempt to provide at least part of the answer to the question of the army's efficiency.

It does not, however, provide a complete answer. What has not been done? As already stated, given the range of topics covered here, the depth of coverage is obviously less than desirable in some places. Many topics, e.g. Roman foreign policy, barbarian military equipment and Roman fortifications, deserve considerable attention (and have been the subject of doctoral theses in themselves). I have done little more than skim the surface here and am well aware that more could (and perhaps should) have been written. It is hoped that the general nature of the arguments advanced here should not be affected by such shortcomings. Furthermore, it is

difficult to see which sections of the thesis could be removed to provide further room for discussion of other aspects.

The thesis does not deal with Roman operations within Africa (as opposed to operations launched from Europe) or east of the Bosphorus. This choice was made because the types of enemy faced by the Romans in these areas and their objectives were both very different from the European barbarians. Though this limits, somewhat, coverage of the Roman army itself, the inclusion of these areas would necessitate too much diversification.

Since the main concern of the thesis is the Roman Empire in Europe, the coverage of barbarian kingdoms of the late-fifth century is somewhat uneven. More, for example, could be said about the army of the Ostrogothic kingdom in Italy, but this would require extensive discussion of the sixth century and move too far from the Roman army.

Throughout the four years I have been working on this thesis I have received enormous assistance from many people. First and foremost are my two supervisors. John Matthews guided my initial steps into research and helped reform my prose style, though he is not responsible for its continued shortcomings. Roger Tomlin helped refine an unwieldy collection of material into something more tightly structured and has eliminated a number of careless errors. Fergus Millar has been a support and an inspiration, and I have received much encouragement from John Drinkwater. Several friends have read some of my material and provided many useful comments: Roger Batty, John Curran, Phil Freeman, Peter Heather, David Jennings and Simon Loseby. Phil deserves particular mention for his support, friendship and criticism. These friends, and many others, inside and outside Oxford and higher education, have provided assistance and

reassurance above and beyond the call of friendship. For endless chats,  
cups of coffee and pints of bitter I remain intensely grateful.

## INTRODUCTION

This thesis has three parts; the nature of the threat; the instrument of response; the method of response. These three parts are briefly summarised here.

Before discussing the military system of the Roman empire, it is necessary to examine its enemies, to see how and why they fought. The first part of the thesis looks at the limitations of the evidence concerning barbarians. It then discusses the social and economic basis of barbarian life, showing their potential for war and the type of threat presented to the Roman empire. This is expanded in the next section which deals with the types of conflict between Rome and the barbarians and the reasons for it. There then follows a detailed discussion of barbarian armies and their equipment, strategy and tactics when fighting the Romans.

The second part discusses the Roman army. Initially, the organisation of the army is examined, then its troop types and their equipment. This is done with regard to both land and naval forces. Then the sources of manpower and the problem of barbarization are discussed in some depth. Lastly, the types of fixed defences are briefly examined.

Having examined the instrument of response, the third part discusses how it was used. It starts by examining the conditions affecting decision-making at this period, then discusses foreign policy, i.e. whether to use force or alternative methods, with regard to both barbarians and internal enemies. Strategy, i.e. the type of operation employed to defeat the enemy, is then discussed, first with regard to defence against barbarians, then attack against barbarians, then against usurpers and rebels. The following part, on operations, discusses the implementation of the strategy, i.e. how

the army performed in the field and the last section discusses tactics for fighting field battles, naval battles and sieges.

The conclusion brings together points from all three sections to assess the effectiveness of the Late Roman army.

## PART I

### THE BARBARIANS

The first section of this thesis deals with the enemies of the Roman empire in Europe between 350-500. Firstly, it examines the evidence used, then discusses barbarian economies and society. After this barbarian motivations for waging war are analysed before a final chapter details the ways and means by which barbarians actually fought.

## ECONOMY AND SOCIETY

In the late-fourth century AD various barbarian tribes lived on the borders of the Roman empire in Europe. The orthodox view of these barbarians sees the small Germanic tribes combining into large confederations in the third century. Thus the Bructeri, Chatti, etc. were replaced by the Franks on the lower Rhine. These Franks were distinct socially and politically from the Saxons to the east and the Alamanni to the south. On account of their size, these confederations posed a greater danger than their predecessors to the Roman empire. Though the first wave of attacks in the third century was eventually defeated, continuing invasions in the fourth and fifth centuries inevitably overloaded the defences of the empire. This allowed barbarian tribes to move into the empire, a movement encouraged by pressure from the tribes further east, such as the Huns.<sup>1</sup>

The literary and archaeological evidence suggests that barbarian society was uniform and no significant differences in material or socio-political culture existed between the various groups living along the frontier. Although it cannot be proved that all groups were identical, it seems reasonable to follow Roman sources and treat all as 'barbarians', in general indistinguishable from one another, except by their membership of a political grouping. Throughout this thesis 'barbarian' is used to describe all non-Roman European enemies of the empire, including Huns and Alans.

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<sup>1</sup> e.g. Demougeot, E., La formation de l'Europe et les invasions barbares (Paris, 1979); for a good discussion of the historiography of the invasions, Goffart, W., Barbarians and Romans (Princeton, 1980), 3-35 and 'Rome, Constantinople and the Barbarians', AHR LXXXVI (1981), 275-306

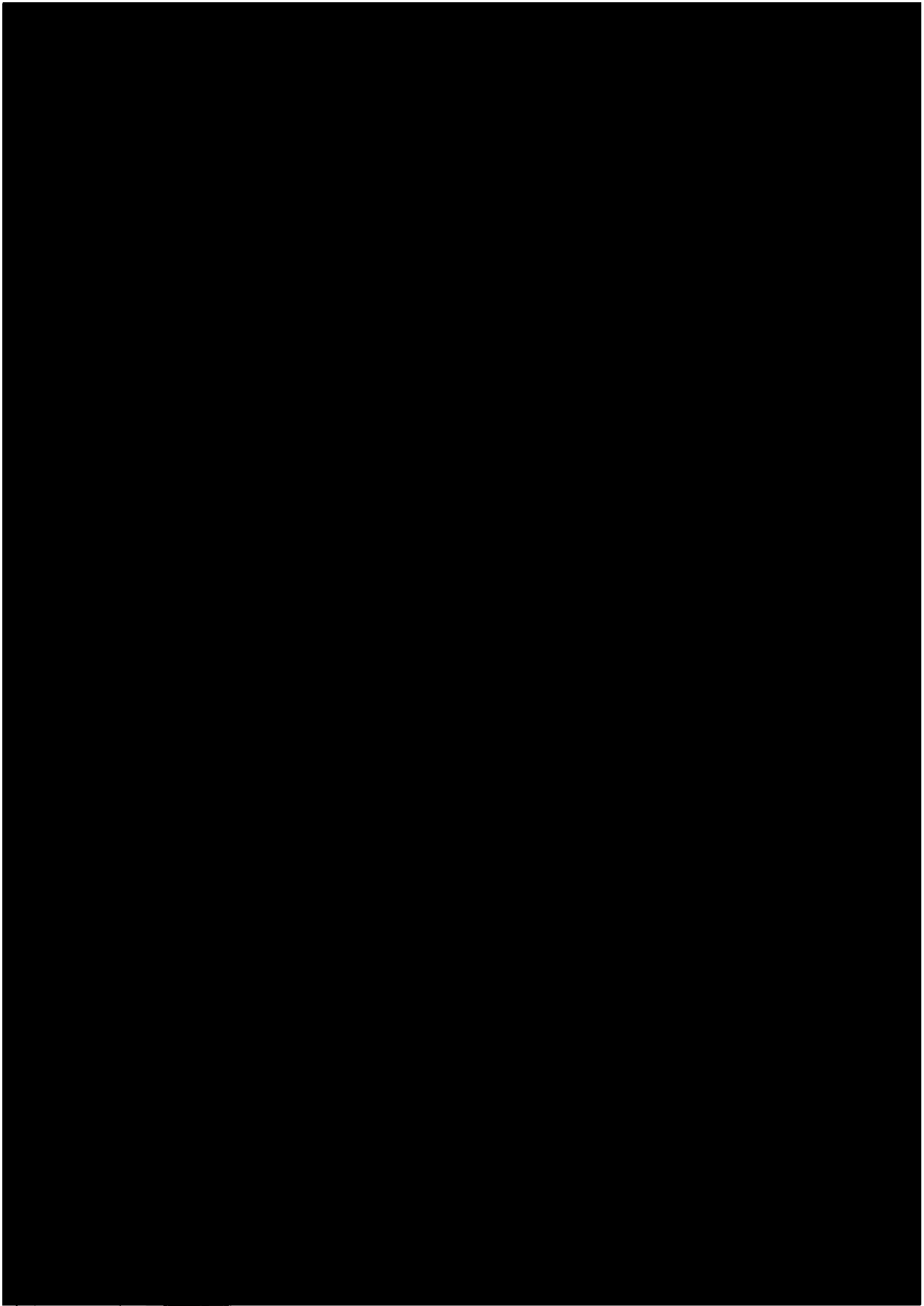
With this in mind, we can examine the archaeological and literary evidence. A cursory examination of the archaeological evidence suggests that there were no major differences in barbarian lifestyles along the frontier. The same types of artefact, pots, brooches, etc. are found everywhere, suggesting a common level of technology, with only local differences. Material is also found in similar quantities. No barbarians produced large quantities of glass or built whole villages of stone houses for example and groups lived in small villages, not large towns.

But archaeology cannot be used to distinguish between these groups. Although distributions differ for specific types of artefacts, these distributions overlap to such an extent that they cannot reflect political boundaries, although they may reflect regional customs (Figure 1).<sup>2</sup>

This is, of course, to simplify matters drastically. Not all barbarians were identical and, for example, barbarians from the lower Rhine and middle Danube (admittedly on the evidence of funeral deposits) seem to have worn their brooches differently. But these sorts of distributions do not suggest radically different societies, rather local variation. It seems likely that such features had no significance at any level other than of local fashion. A man or woman would not belong to a particular political group simply because they wore a particular type of brooch on the right or left shoulder. Such rare detailed instances illustrate the problems in describing barbarian society. The differences that did exist were very subtle and though they may have been apparent to contemporaries, they are lost to us. More worryingly, Romans seem to have been similar, at least in

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<sup>2</sup> artefact distribution is conveniently mapped in northwest Europe by Böhme, H., Germanische Grabfunde des 4 bis 5 Jahrhunderts zwischen unterer Elbe und Loire (Munich, 1974), e.g. Karte 15



**Figure 1: Overlapping artefact distributions, from Böhme**

archaeological terms, to barbarians (below p<sup>90</sup>).<sup>3</sup>

It is rare for political groupings to be directly related to cultural assemblages. Anthropological fieldwork in North America has recorded two Indian groups in the same region which are identical in terms of material culture (i.e. archaeologically), yet socially and linguistically distinct. Similar situations could easily have existed outside, or even within the Roman empire, and we would be unlikely to know about it unless we had a literary account. This is a problem which must be considered when working with archaeology, but the paucity of literary evidence means that archaeology is often the only source for socio-political differences. Despite the differences between these two Indian societies, they were still essentially similar and would probably appear identical to an untrained observer. It is assumed that this would also be the case in any similar situations among the barbarians on the Roman frontier.<sup>4</sup>

This situation is so common that it is now accepted by archaeologists without question that 'archaeological cultures clearly cannot be correlated in any mechanical fashion with societal groupings such as tribes, bands or nations'.<sup>5</sup>

Most literary accounts of barbarians present the same picture as the archaeology, i.e. of peoples with few differences. But this evidence cannot be immediately accepted at face value. Firstly, the difficulties faced by

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<sup>3</sup> archaeological differentiation, Böhme, H., Germanische Grabfunde des 4 bis 5 Jahrhunderts zwischen unterer Elbe und Loire (Munich, 1974), 158-165; cf Burns, T.S., A History of the Ostrogoths (Bloomington, 1984), 115-117; James, E., The Franks (Oxford, 1988), 46

<sup>4</sup> Hodder, I., 'Simple correlations between material culture and society: A review', The Spatial Organisation of Culture, ed. I. Hodder, (London, 1978), 3-24 at 15-16

<sup>5</sup> Trigger, B.G., Time and Traditions (Edinburgh, 1978), 116 and passim

many Romans in obtaining information must be taken into account. According to Cassius Dio in the second century

in Rome, for example, much is going on, and much in the subject territory, while, as regards our enemies, there something is happening all the time, in fact every day, and concerning all these things no one except the participants can easily have correct information, and most people do not even hear of them at all.<sup>6</sup>

These problems would have been faced by fourth- and fifth-century writers too, or at least by those who did any serious research. Most poets and orators, one suspects, would not devote much time to this, with the result that their accounts would reflect only information easily available (at court), not necessarily the truth.

Secondly, literary stereotypes are frequent in descriptions of barbarians, to the extent that some descriptions were repeated almost verbatim from earlier authors. The problems of stereotyping can be minimised in three ways. Firstly, the author concerned can be checked for internal consistency. Secondly, their account can be checked against archaeological evidence. If there is a strong divergence one should be at least wary of the literary material. Thirdly, an attempt can be made to find the source of the literary stereotype.

These points are particularly relevant to the Huns in the fifth century, usually seen as an exclusively horse-riding pastoral nomadic society (below p38). But firstly, their recorded actions are not consistent with this picture. Secondly, the archaeological evidence from the region of the Theiss, controlled by the Huns in the early-fifth century, shows no marked change from the fourth century in types of artefact. Thirdly, it is clear that the accounts of the Huns given by Jerome and Claudian are based on Ammianus Marcellinus' account. This suggests that Jerome and Claudian's

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<sup>6</sup> Dio LIII.19.5; cf Eunapius fr.50, 66.1-2

accounts cannot be used to confirm the details Ammianus provides of the Huns.

But not all literary accounts are stereotyped and some Romans recognised the differences between various groups. The sixth-century Strategikon of Mauricius divides the enemies of the empire into four major groups, the Persians, the Scythians, i.e. Avars, Turks and other 'Hunnic' types, the western barbarians (specifically Lombards, Suevi and other fair-haired races) and the Slavs and Antes from the lower Danube.<sup>7</sup>

Though stereotyping was frequent in descriptions of barbarians, it is hard not to accept the basic impression given by contemporaries. All the societies are described in the same way, as farmers or shepherds, living under kings, economically primitive, and having no roads, towns or literature. Given the range of possible descriptions, it is interesting that Roman writers never strayed outside these limited alternatives. In comparison, descriptions of the Arabs stress that they lived in tents, treated their women as communal, were shepherds not farmers, did not stay in one place but moved their settlements around, had chieftains etc. They are distinctly different in description from European barbarians. Roman descriptions of the Sassanid Persians and Moors are again quite different.<sup>8</sup>

This hypothesis that barbarian groups seemed similar to the Romans all along the frontier can also be tested by producing evidence which shows

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<sup>7</sup> Mauricius, Strat. XI.1-4; below p53

<sup>8</sup> stereotypes, Shaw, B.D., 'Eaters of Flesh, Drinkers of Milk' the Ancient Mediterranean ideology of the Pastoral Nomad', Ancient Society XIII/XIV (1982/1983), 5-31; descriptions of Arabs, AM XIV.4; Persians, AM XXIII.6.75-84; Mauricius, Strat. XI.1; Moors, Procopius, BV IV.vi.10-13

whether barbarians could easily be distinguished from each other. The problems in distinguishing these peoples are illustrated by a passage of Cassius Dio, describing a Roman treaty with the Quadi in the second century.

However, the right to attend markets was not granted to the Quadi, lest the Iazyges and Marcomanni, whom they had sworn not to receive, or to allow through their territory, should be mixed up with them and, passing themselves off as Quadi, might spy on the affairs of the Romans and buy supplies.<sup>9</sup>

From this it is clear that the Romans could not be sure of recognising neighbouring barbarians and distinguishing between them if they didn't declare themselves. Procopius in the sixth century recorded

there were many Gothic people (Ἔθνη) in earlier times, as there are now, and the greatest and most important of them all are the Goths, Vandals, Visigoths and Gepids...[3] all these, while they are distinguished from one another by their names, as has been said, do not differ in anything else at all. [4] They all have white bodies and yellow hair, are tall and pleasing to the eye, they use the same laws and practise a common religion. [5] For they are all of Arian belief and have one language, Gothic. And it seems to me that of old they all came from one people and later were distinguished by the names of those leading each tribe.<sup>10</sup>

This was the picture in his own day and suggests that there were few distinctions visible to most Romans between barbarian groups then and probably earlier. From this account one would expect the Romans to have difficulties in identifying peoples. It is likely that Procopius' assessment that the names of leaders determined groupings was a means often

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<sup>9</sup> Dio LXXII.11.3

<sup>10</sup> Gothic similarity, Procopius, BV III.ii.2-5; Alans described as Goths, Procopius, BV III.iii.1; other confusion, Priscus fr.22.3 [= Suda M.405] showing Attila angry at Roman paintings depicting barbarians giving tribute to the emperor, presumably because they looked like his own people

used by Romans to identify barbarians, i.e. they were assumed to be of the same tribe as their leader.<sup>11</sup>

It is accepted that the extensive argument from silence renders this approach methodologically weak. However, not only is there no evidence for great variation in way of life, artefacts etc. or for identification of political groups with cultural assemblages, there is no reason to expect any. This approach avoids unnecessary repetition in descriptions of various peoples. This is not to deny that variations existed between barbarian groups. They undoubtedly did, though they would not be detectable to the Romans. But these variations would rarely affect Roman military relations with the barbarians on anything other than a tactical level. To reiterate, the point is not whether there were differences between barbarian groups, but whether there were militarily significant differences.

In this thesis various facets of fourth- and fifth-century barbarian society and their relations with the Romans are compared with those of the Pathans on the north-west frontier of British India in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. In both societies scattered tribes, economically weak though rarely overpowered by superior opposing technology, were continuously in close contact, both hostile and friendly, with the border forces of a large empire. The similarities between the two frontiers are

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<sup>11</sup> cf early Anglo-Saxon groups named after a leader, Haestingas, Oiscingas, etc., Myres, J.N.L., The English Settlements (Oxford, 1986), 36-44; problems in attributing race, Reynolds, R.L. and Lopez, R.S., 'Odoacer: German or Hun?', AHR LII (1947), 36-53; MacBain, B., 'Odoacer the Hun?', Classical Philology LXXVIII (1983), 323-327

sufficient to shed some light on barbarian society and motivation of their relations with the Romans.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Dyson, S., 'The Role of Comparative Frontier Studies in understanding the Roman Frontier', Actes du IXe Congrès International D'études sur les frontières Romaines, ed. D.M. Pippidi (Bucharest, 1974), 277-283; Kirk, W., 'The Making and Impact of the British Imperial North-West Frontier in India', Invasion and Response, BAR 73, eds. B.C. Burnham and H.B. Johnson, (Oxford, 1979), 39-55

## BARBARIAN SOCIETY

Having considered these points, we can now attempt to reconstruct barbarian society. This reconstruction uses literary and archaeological evidence from different regions. It is not intended to give a full description of barbarian society, but to show how the structure of barbarian society influenced, if not determined, their military relations with the Roman empire. Factors which do not affect this significantly are therefore not discussed. Barbarian society is examined first in terms of their economy, then in increasing sizes of political units, villages, optimas-groups and pagi.<sup>13</sup>

### ECONOMY

Barbarian economies can be divided into two main groups, east and west, with the dividing line coming on the Danube bend around Budapest where the Great Hungarian plain began. Local variations would have always existed, but do not affect the overall picture presented here. The major groups of western barbarians were the Picts, Scotti, Franks, Saxons, Alamanni and Quadi.

### PICTS

The Picts lived in lowland Scotland north of Hadrian's Wall. This region was a large plateau over 200 m high which began sloping gently towards the sea approximately 15-25 km from the coast in most places. The

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<sup>13</sup> recent surveys, Thompson, E.A., The Early Germans (Oxford, 1965); Todd, M., The Barbarians (London, 1972) and The Northern Barbarians<sup>2</sup> (Oxford, 1987); Maenchen-Helfen, O., The World of the Huns (Berkeley, 1973); Wolfram, H., History of the Goths (London, 1988); see also entries in Reallexicon der Germanische Altertumskunde<sup>2</sup>, at present extending to *Email*

plateau is broken by a large number of streams and small rivers, mostly running along a southwest-northeast axis. This pattern continued as far north as the Forth-Clyde isthmus, beyond which the ground climbed more steeply. The border itself was marked by Hadrian's Wall. Most of the terrain was open moorland and

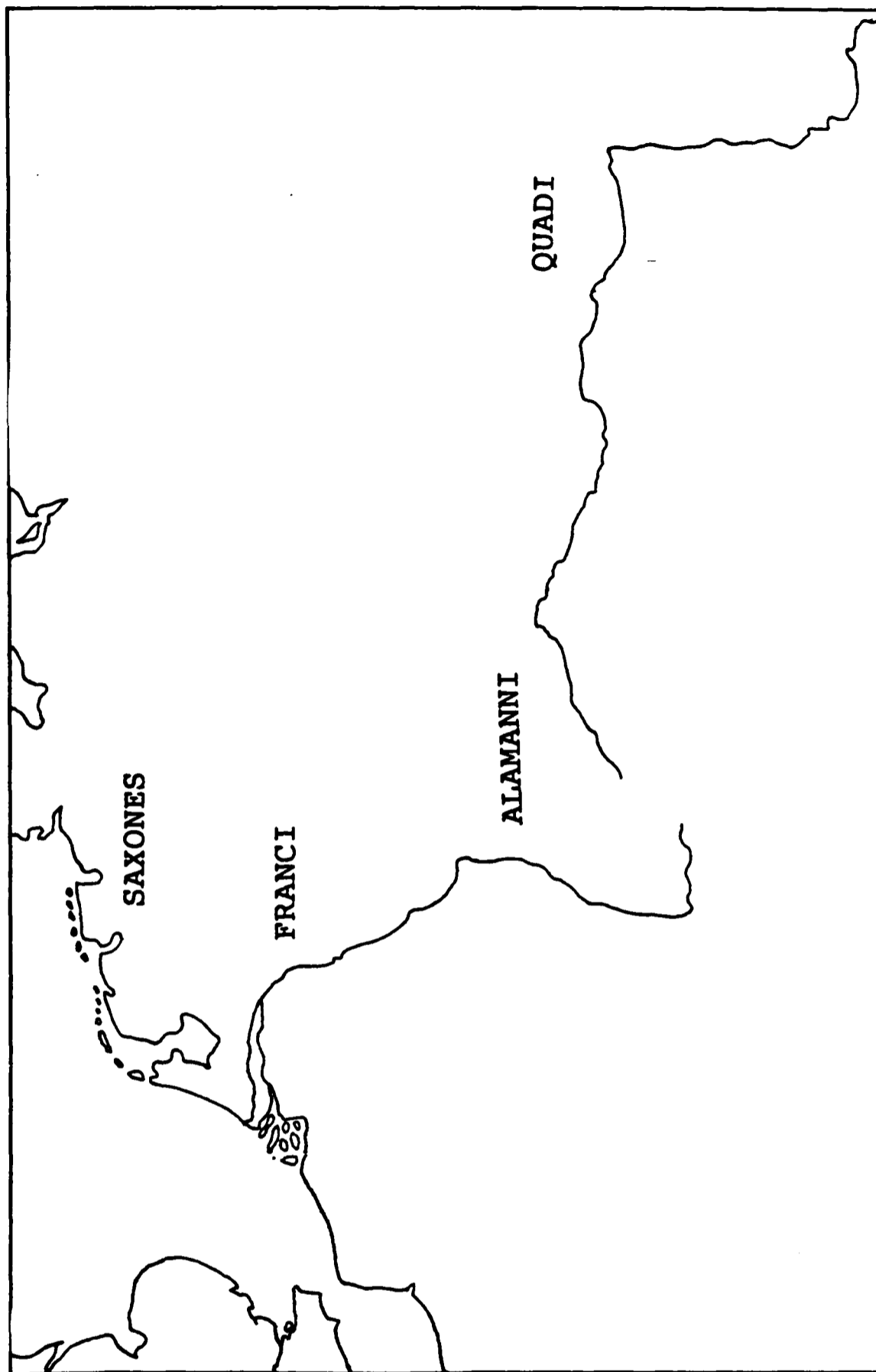


Figure 2: Western Barbarians, c.350

vegetation was sparse, though there were scattered areas of woodland.<sup>14</sup>

The Attacotti were also a threat to Britain, but their homeland is unknown, to the extent that it is only probable that they lived in

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<sup>14</sup> Picts, Alcock, L., Arthur's Britain (London, 1971), 270-277; Pictish Studies, BAR 125, eds. J.G.P. Friell and W.G. Watson, (Oxford, 1984); LV XIII.3-4; AM XX.1.1, XXVI.4.5, XXVII.8.5

Scotland. They may have been a subdivision of the Picts, but they are hardly known, being mentioned twice by Ammianus, once by Jerome and not at all by other writers. They also formed several auxilia palatina in the Roman army.<sup>15</sup>

#### SCOTS

The Scotti from Ireland are similarly obscure. We know very little about them beyond the fact that they had kings. Their territory does not need to be described, since the Romans did not carry out any military operations there. Several Irish kings in the late-fourth and early-fifth centuries were famed for raiding England (capturing St. Patrick) and even for settling in Wales.<sup>16</sup>

#### FRANKS

In the fourth century the Franks occupied territory bordering the Rhine from the North Sea coast to an area south of Cologne where they had a frontier with the Alamanni. The area as a whole was known as Francia. On occasion the area was referred to as Sygambria and Sygambri seems to have been used, poetically at least, as a synonym for Franks. The island of

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<sup>15</sup> Attacotti, AM XXVI.4.5, XXVII.8.5; Jerome, Adversus Iovinianum, II.7, [=PL XXIII.308-309], Ep. LXIX; Bartholomew, P., 'Fourth-Century Saxons', Britannia XV (1984), 169-185 at 173-177; units, ND Or. IX.29, Occ. V.197, 200; CIL III.9538?

<sup>16</sup> Scotti, Alcock, L., Arthur's Britain (London, 1971), 254-270; Bartholomew, P., 'Fourth-Century Saxons', Britannia XV (1984), 169-85; Thompson, E.A., Who was St. Patrick? (Woodbridge, 1985); LV XIII.2; AM XX.1.1, XXVI.4.5, XXVII.8.5; discussion of sources for Irish in England, Dumville, D., 'Sub-Roman Britain: History and Legend', History LXII (1977), 173-192

Batavia was also occupied by Franks, having been captured from the Romans in the early-fourth century. To the east of the Franks lived the Saxons.<sup>17</sup>

North of Cologne the Rhine valley runs through a large, low plain, which rolls gently towards the sea. Much of this area is wooded, though thinning out into heath and scrub as the coast is reached. Here there are large areas of marsh and these areas are often affected by floods. Opposite Cologne, and from there southwards, the terrain on both sides of the Rhine is hilly, about 200 m above sea level. The river valley itself is lower, *but between Cologne and Mainz it is very narrow, cutting through the* ~~but 3-4~~ the Eifel. Further from the Rhine, between the Main and Lippe rivers, the hills of the Bergisches Land, Westerwald and Taunus rise to 600 m in places, and were heavily wooded in antiquity. These characteristics are echoed on the Roman side by the high hills of the Eifel and Ardennes.<sup>18</sup>

#### SAXONS

To the east of Francia lay Saxonia, though the boundaries between the two are unknown and were probably not distinct. Saxons and Franks were often referred to in the same breath by Roman historians, perhaps because of uncertainty as to the origin of particular groups.<sup>19</sup>

The Saxons lived mostly on the coast. It is possible that some did not live too far from the Rhine since Magnentius hired Saxons for use against Constantius II, though this may be another example of the lack of difference between, and Roman inability to distinguish, Franks and Saxons.

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<sup>17</sup> James, E., The Franks (Oxford, 1988); Feffer, L.C. and Perin, P., Les Francs (Paris, 1987) summarize and refer to all earlier work; but see also the more traditional approaches of Beisel, F., Studien zu den fränkischen-römischen Beziehungen (Idstein, 1987) and Zilner, E., Geschichte der Franken (Munich, 1970); between Saxons and Alamanni, Jerome, V.Hilarionis 22

<sup>18</sup> character, Sulpicius fr.1,6; SA Ep. IV.1.4

<sup>19</sup> Bartholomew, P., 'Fourth-Century Saxons', Britannia XV (184), 169-185; Myres, J.N.L., The English Settlements (Oxford, 1986)

From Bede and other later sources, we can deduce that some Saxons lived between the Elbe and the Weser rivers in the seventh and eighth centuries and they may have lived there in the fourth and fifth centuries. To their north the Angles inhabited modern Angeln.

Between the Rhine and the Elbe the land is generally flat, less than 200 m above sea level, with coastal areas often being below sea level. It is cut by numerous water courses, and off the coast are numbers of small islands. The area is prone to flooding and contains numerous marshlands even now. During antiquity, the region was similar, though probably wetter, and the coastline was further inland than it is today. As in Francia, coastal habitation was probably concentrated in terpen.<sup>20</sup>

#### ALAMANNI

The Alamanni inhabited an area which can be divided into several regions. Their borders with the Romans ran along the river Rhine, from Mainz as far as Lake Constance, the river Iller and the Danube as far as Regensburg. North of the Main and the Taunus mountains lay the Franks, to the west of Alamannia the Quadi.<sup>21</sup>

Most of Alamannia is uplands, 200 m or more above sea level. The only region that is lower lying is the Rhine valley from Colmar as far north as Mainz, with short re-entrants off along the Main and Neckar rivers. The valley is open and well-watered, well-suited for agriculture though narrow, only 20 km wide on the Roman side, 10-15 km on the German. South of

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<sup>20</sup> Saxon geography, Todd, M., The Northern Barbarians<sup>2</sup> (Oxford, 1987), 82; marshes, Orosius VII.32.10; terpen, Elder Pliny, NH XVI.1.3

<sup>21</sup> third-century Alamanni, I have not seen Okamura, L., Alamannia Devicta (Michigan, 1984); fourth century, Tomlin, R.S.O., The Emperor Valentinian I, unpublished D.Phil, (Oxford, 1975); Zur Geschichte der Alamannen, ed. W. Mller, (Darmstadt, 1975); see also the useful series Quellen zur Geschichte der Alamannen, eds. C. Dirlmaier and G. Gottlieb (Heidelberg, 1976)

Karlsruhe the land climbs steeply on both banks, to the Vosges in the west, the Black Forest (Hercynian Woods) and Swabian Alps in the east. Steep and craggy, these are both heavily wooded, producing severe obstacles to movement not overcome even today when both areas now contain extensive national parks. Further north the ground is lower in height, but still wooded and difficult. Along the Danube, conditions are similar, until the Bohemian plateau begins to rise near Regensburg.<sup>22</sup>

Between the Alamanni and the Quadi the area of the Bohemian plateau is only sketchily known. The Marcomanni seem to have lived in this region, though they are rarely referred to. It is just possible that they were called Alamanni or Quadi by some writers during this period.<sup>23</sup>

#### QUADI

The Quadi lived across the Danube, bordering Pannonia I and the northern reaches of Valeria, from Vienna to Aquincum. Their western neighbours were the Alamanni, their eastern neighbours the Sarmatians.<sup>24</sup>

Most agriculture took place in the Danube valley, a flattish fertile area extending some 10 km north of the river at its narrowest, up to 60 km at wider points. As in Alamannia, settlement seems to have been concentrated in the river valley. Beyond this, the land climbed steeply and was cut by the rivers and wooded mountain ranges of the Slovakian mountains, containing upland meadows, villages and farmsteads. The eastern extent of Quadia was marked by the range of hills some 200+ m in height,

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<sup>22</sup> Alamannia, snow, AM XIV.10.6, XVII.1.10; forest, AM XV.4.3, XVII.1.8; Claudian, de Cons. Stil. I.228-231; Jul. fr.2; high ground, AM XVII.1.5, XXVII.10.9, XXXI.10.12-16; farmland, AM XVI.12.19, XVII.1.8

<sup>23</sup> Marcomanni, AM XXXI.4.2; Paulinus, V.Ambrosii 36; in Roman army, ND Occ. V.198, 199, VI.65, VII.38, XXXIV.24

<sup>24</sup> Dittrich, U.-B., Die Beziehungen Roms zu den Sarmaten und Quaden im vierten Jahrhundert n. Chr. (Bonn, 1984)

running from the upper Danube bend to the Slovakian mountains. Though the Quadi are well-known in the fourth century they disappear from record in the fifth.<sup>25</sup>

The Burgundians were enemies of Rome in the third century, but are hardly attested in the fourth before reappearing in the fifth. Earlier clashes occurred around the upper Rhine. In the fourth century they lived to the east of the Alamanni, but by the fifth century they were on the Rhine and had begun to cross the river.<sup>26</sup> The Vandals were similarly obscure in 350, living to the north of the Quadi and had little direct contact with Rome until the fifth century.<sup>27</sup>

Most, if not all, western barbarians were farmers. This was a subsistence economy and most people would have to spend almost all of their time producing food to live off. Because of this we should not expect the barbarians to have standing armies or to be available for long campaigns. Many barbarian military operations took place in winter, while summer raids tended to avoid harvest times (May-July for spring wheat, September-October for autumn crops) (below p110). The most common crop was cereals, pulses and vegetables. Meat was provided by cattle and pigs, both of which could be grazed in woodland, and sheep provided meat as well as wool.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Quadic territory, AM XVI.10.20; mountains, AM XXX.5.13

<sup>26</sup> Burgundians, RGAs<sup>2</sup>; Perrin, O., Les Burgondes (Neuchtel, 1968); fourth century, AM XXVIII.5.9-14; Jerome, Chron. sa 373; fifth century, Thompson, E.A., Romans and Barbarians (Madison, 1982), 32-37; a new book on the Burgundians would be useful

<sup>27</sup> Vandals, Schmidt, L., Geschichte der Wandalen<sup>2</sup> (Munich, 1942); Courtois, C., Les Vandales et l'Afrique (Paris, 1955)

<sup>28</sup> Todd, M., The Northern Barbarians<sup>2</sup> (Oxford, 1987), 100-114  
Scotti, sheep/cattle, Patrick, Conf. 16; pigs, Muirchu, V.Pat. 11; Patrick, Conf. 19  
Franks, farmers, AM XVII.9.2-3; Claudian, de Cons. Stil. I.222-227

## EASTERN BARBARIANS

T h e  
economy of  
the eastern  
barbarians  
differed  
significantly  
from that of  
western  
barbarians.  
The societies  
in the area  
from the  
Great  
Hungarian  
Plain as far  
east as  
Moldavia were  
semi-  
sedentary.  
Social units  
did not  
remain in one  
area

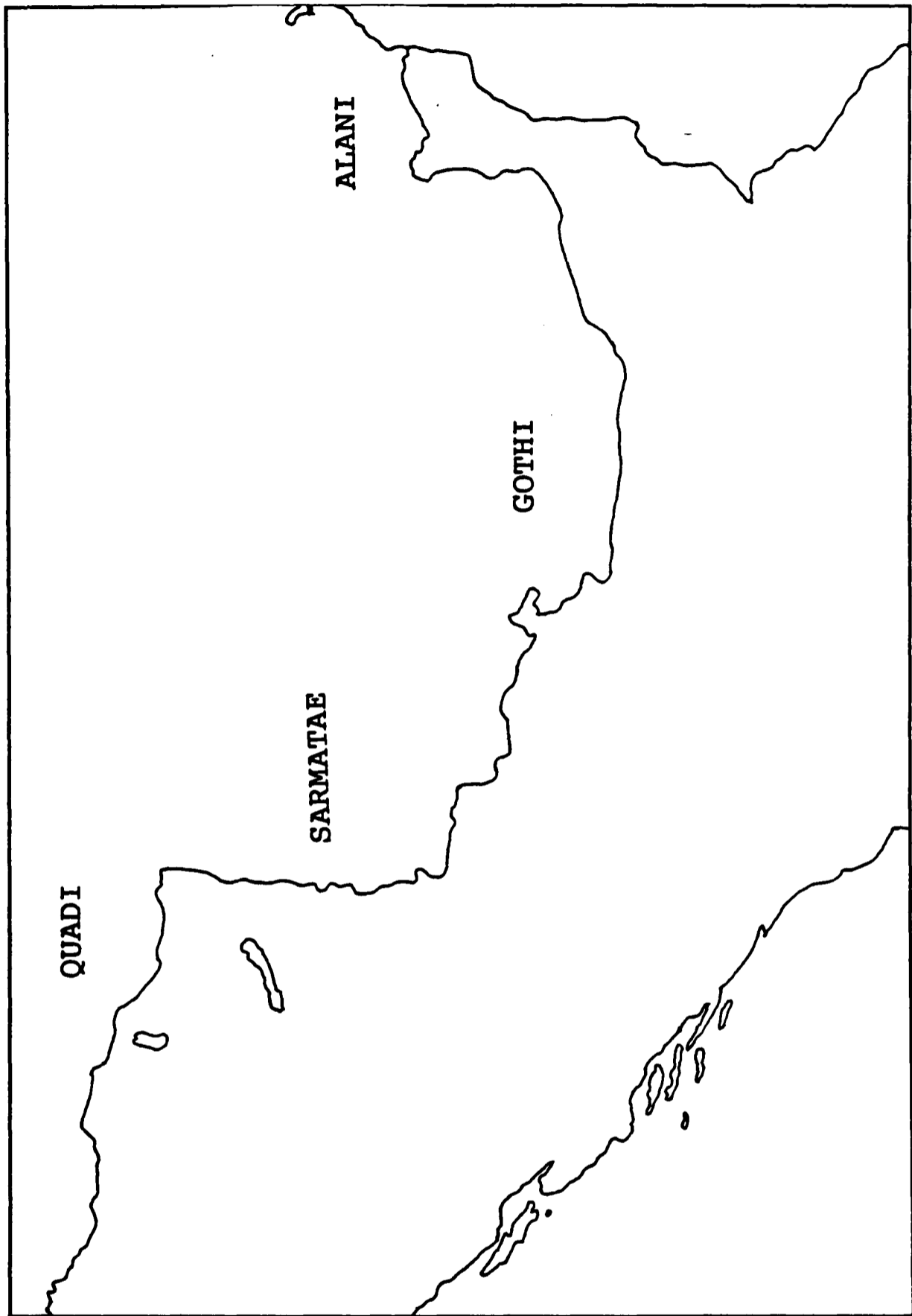


Figure 3: Eastern Barbarian Tribes, c.350

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Saxons, fishing, Elder Pliny, NH XVI.1.4; cattle, horses, Van Es, W.A., 'Wijster: A Native Village Beyond the Imperial Frontier', Palaeohistoria XI (1967), 574

Alamanni, farming, AM XVI.11.11, XVII.1.7, 10.6,9, XVIII.2.19, XXVII.10.7; Lib. Or. XII.44,48, XVIII.34,52; cattle, AM XVII.1.7, 10.6; Lib. Or. XVIII.45

permanently, but moved from area to area. Their growing methods meant that soil exhaustion would occur within a few years, forcing occasional relocation and ploughs able to use the soil effectively were not developed until the nineteenth century. These areas were thus not as effectively exploited as similar areas in the Roman empire, e.g. the Thracian plain. Sheep were much more important to these people than to western barbarians, and these, together with cattle, were herded in larger numbers. Transhumance activity took place, especially in the Carpathians. Large-scale herding meant that horses also played an important (though by no means dominant or necessary) role in the culture. Though it is an argument from silence, the few accounts of Roman expeditions against the Goths do not mention destruction of fields or houses, unlike attacks on western barbarians. The relocations of these groups did not take place on an annual or even a regular basis, but settlements would move to fresh areas every few years. This, in outline, is what is meant by a semi-sedentary society. But it conflicts with what is often written about Sarmatian and Gothic society, so needs closer examination.<sup>29</sup>

#### SARMATIANS

Sarmatia lay roughly opposite the Danube bend in the west and extended down the Danube as far as the Iron Gates. The western neighbours

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<sup>29</sup> nomads as farmers, Hole, F., 'Pastoral Nomadism in Western Iran', Explorations in Ethnoarchaeology, ed. R.A. Gould, (Albuquerque, 1978), 127-167 at 152-154; devastation of Gothia, AM XXVII.5.4,6; economy in mountains Jordanes, Getica 267,273; Batty, R., The Romans and the Danube, unpublished D.Phil, (forthcoming); Liebeschuetz, J.H.W.G., Barbarians and Bishops (Oxford, 1990), 83-85; for a different (and more traditional) view of Gothic society, Heather, P.J., The Goths and the Balkans, unpublished D.Phil. (Oxford, 1986), 64-76

and occasional allies of the Sarmatians were the Quadi, while the Goths lived on their eastern borders.<sup>30</sup>

The territory occupied by the Sarmatians can be divided into two areas, the plains of the Danube and the Theiss rivers, and the mountains to the east of the Theiss. Between the Theiss and the Danube a low plain rises out of the river valleys, about 20 km from the rivers themselves, and rising to 200 m. Elsewhere the plain is some 100 m high, though irregular. East of the Theiss, the plain, nowhere higher than 100 m, runs eastward for 100 km before slowly climbing into the Carpathians. Most of the lower-lying areas around the Theiss and Danube are swampy and the floodplain of the Danube extends up to 10 km from either bank. Swamps (or swamp forests) were also found along the tributaries of these rivers, especially the Maros. Further away from the rivers the plain was dotted with small woods.

The eastern region included the area known as Caucalanda, the western end of the Carpathian mountains, lying opposite the Roman city of Ratiaria. This area was heavily wooded, very different from the plains further west, and similar to, though rougher than, much of the territory inhabited by the Alamanni. These mountains rise to 2,500 m in some areas and effectively separate the Great Hungarian Plain from the Wallachian Plain, Moldavia and the Ukraine.<sup>31</sup>

During the second century and before, the Sarmatians had been pastoralists and a society of mounted warriors. But by the mid-fourth century (and probably before), they seem to have fought mostly on foot and

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<sup>30</sup> Dittrich, U.-B., Die Beziehungen Roms zu den Sarmaten und Quaden im Vierten Jahrhundert n. Chr. (Bonn, 1984)

<sup>31</sup> Sarmatia, extent, AM XVI.10.20, XVII.12.6, 13.20; mountains, AM XVII.12.5, 13.22, XXXI.4.13; plains, AM XVII.13.22; marshes, AM XVII.13.4,18,29; Priscus, fr.12.2.275-276; floods, AM XVII.12.4, 13.4

in many ways were similar to the barbarians to their west.<sup>32</sup> But some evidence suggests that the Sarmatians were still nomads in this period.

According to Ammianus Marcellinus, the Sarmatians

travel over very great distances chasing others or themselves turning their backs, being mounted on swift and obedient horses and leading one or sometimes two, so that changing may maintain the strength of their mounts and their vigour be renewed by alternate rests.<sup>33</sup>

Though a description of a raiding party, this is often taken as conclusive proof that all Sarmatians were nomads. But Ammianus also says that the Quadi (who no writer suggests are pastoralists) and Sarmatians had similar customs and equipment. Though he mentions that the Sarmatians owned horses and used them while raiding, he does not say that they were all mounted raiders. Nor is there any mention of horses in Ammianus' detailed descriptions of two sessions of negotiations with the Romans in 357 and 358. Horses (and wagons) feature in sixth-century accounts of Byzantine negotiations with the Turks to the east of the Caspian Sea. If the Sarmatians were nomads one would expect their horses to be a prominent feature of accounts.<sup>34</sup>

The Sarmatians also had a number of non-nomadic characteristics. They inhabited villages, were found in forests and mountains and, like the Franks and Alamanni, readily took refuge in marshes and mountains. They were also accustomed to using boats. None of these characteristics suit a nomad society. Lastly, Ammianus mentions the Huns and Alans as if nomads were new to Europe, describing their lifestyle in detail, which suggests

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<sup>32</sup> Dittrich, U.-B., Die Beziehungen Roms zu den Sarmaten und Quaden im Vierten Jahrhundert n. Chr. (Bonn, 1984), 19-25

<sup>33</sup> AM XVII.12.3; for Sarmatian cavalry and infantry, AM XVII.13.9

<sup>34</sup> Sarmatian negotiations, AM XVII.12-13, XIX.11; Turks, Menander fr.10.3

that on their arrival they were markedly different from the Sarmatians he had previously mentioned.<sup>35</sup>

Since there is a strong body of evidence that suggests that the Sarmatians were not a nomadic society, what is the evidence that has suggested they were? Four classical accounts, those of Tacitus, Pausanias, Cassius Dio and Ammianus Marcellinus, describe the Sarmatians. Dio deals with a single battle at length and mentions nothing about the Sarmatians except that they had their own boats and horses. Tacitus, Pausanias and Ammianus all focus on the armour of the Sarmatian cavalry, mentioning the scales made of chipped bone or horn, the same image that appears on Trajan's Column. This was obviously a characteristic of the Sarmatians in the first two centuries AD, and a stereotype on which Ammianus was drawing (below p?). But none of these writers state that the Sarmatians lived from herd animals, a characteristic necessary for (though not exclusive to) a nomadic society, nor do they state, or even imply, that all, or even most, were mounted warriors. If the Sarmatians had been nomads, it seems likely that they would have been described as the Huns were. Only a single passage from Ammianus suggests that some sections of their armies were for the most part cavalry. Other sources do mention horses frequently and they seem to have been a strong element in Sarmatian armies, but this is only to be expected in a people living, for the most part, on flat river plains.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> characteristics, AM XVII.12.1-3; Crump, G.A., Ammianus Marcellinus as a Military Historian, Historia Einzelschriften XVIII (Wiesbaden, 1975), 23-24; boats, AM XVII.13.17,27; refuge, AM XVII.13.18, XXXI.4.13; cf Dio LXXII.19.2; farming on Hungarian plain, cf Priscus fr.12.2.264-280; cavalry, AM XVII.13.9

<sup>36</sup> Tacitus, Histories I.79 mentioning 9,000 cavalry is often quoted, but see also III.5 where the Sarmatians 'offered to raise a mass levy as well as a force of cavalry, their one effective arm'; cf Pausanias I.21.8 saying that the Sarmatians are nomads and most of their territory is forests; Dio LXXII.7,16.2; AM XVII.12.2-3

## GOTHS

The Goths lived to the north of the Danube, controlling the area from the Iron Gates to Moldavia. To the west of the Goths lay the Sarmatians, to their east the Alans.<sup>37</sup>

This large area can be divided into two major zones, the plains and the Carpathian mountains. North of the Danube and east of the Iron Gates, the Baragyan steppe extended up to 100 km north from the Danube into the mountains. It was dry and generally unsuitable for farming though able to support herd animals. Marshy areas alongside the river bank were also a characteristic of the region, which had a wide flood plain prone to flooding in spring, freezing in winter. Such floods stopped Valens from campaigning against the Greuthungi in 368. But there were areas in the region suitable for farming. The Slavs who succeeded the Goths were described by the sixth-century Strategikon; 'they possess an abundance of all sorts of livestock and produce which they store in heaps, especially common millet and Italian millet.'<sup>38</sup>

Above the plains were the mountains, the south Carpathians (Montes Serrorum or Nivium), whose foothills start rising about 100 km north of the Danube. They reach a height of 2,500 metres and are heavily wooded, creating difficulties for movement.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Burns, T.S. A History of the Ostrogoths (Bloomington, 1984); Wolfram, H., History of the Goths<sup>2</sup> (London, 1988); Heather, P.J., The Goths and the Balkans, unpublished D.Phil., (Oxford, 1986) and with J.F. Matthews, Fourth-Century Visigothic Society (forthcoming)

<sup>38</sup> Danubian plain, Procopius, Buildings III.vii.13-15; Mauricius, Strat. XI.4.5

<sup>39</sup> Danube floods, AM XVII.13.4, XXVII.5.5; mountains, AM XXVII.5.3-4, XXXI.4.13; woods, P.S.Sabae IV.6; AM XXXI.4.13

The Goths are usually assumed, from the limited evidence, to have been sedentary farmers. It seems more likely that they were only semi-sedentary, a condition forced on them by local conditions. The difference between Gothic society as described here and orthodoxy is small, but it is important. The frequent movements of groups of people in the lower Danube region meant that any central authorities was less powerful than in the west, while local authority, i.e. optimates, were stronger and more independent. Individuals and groups drifted from leader to leader according to his success (below p45).<sup>40</sup>

#### ALANS

To the east of Gothia lay Moldavia, an area inhabited by the nomadic Alans. The area is a high plateau (over 100 m) which is flat and inhospitable, but cut by numerous watercourses, not only of the Prut or Dneister, but also of innumerable minor rivers. The soil was generally unsuitable for farming using contemporary techniques. It was the European end of the steppe corridor leading to the Don and the steppes of the Ukraine. It is thus no surprise to find that the Alans hardly practised agriculture.

Only a small part of these peoples live on the fruits of the earth; all the rest roam over deserted wastes, which never knew plough nor seeds... their dear ones, their dwellings and their poor belongings they pack upon wagons covered with the bark of trees.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> most recently, Liebeschuetz, J.H.W.G., Barbarians and Bishops (Oxford, 1990), 83-85; above p31

<sup>41</sup> AM XXII.8.42

The Alans rapidly lost their nomad characteristics once they left the steppes.<sup>42</sup>

## HUNS

It was in this area that the Huns first appeared. The Huns had migrated from east of the Black Sea and had entered western Europe in the early 370s, crossing the lower Don and Dneister and following the coast of the Black Sea into Moldavia and Wallachia. They drove out or incorporated many of the Alans.<sup>43</sup>

Ammianus Marcellinus describes Hun society at this date. They herded sheep for meat and wool, cattle for milk and meat. They were not tied to any particular area of land, but moved from pasture to pasture in wagons. Most Huns rode horses, easing the problems of controlling large herds over great distances. They spent so much time on their horses that their gait was often affected, like cowboys of the American west. Huns thus possessed considerable strategic and operational mobility and this was used to good effect in their early campaigns against the Goths. At this point they were similar to the Alans that they supplanted.<sup>44</sup>

The Huns are described in these terms for the late-fourth century, and it is generally accepted, following Thompson and Maenchen-Helfen, that the Huns remained as nomads throughout the fifth century and that their

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<sup>42</sup> Alans, Bachrach, B., History of the Alans (Minneapolis, 1973) is less useful than its title suggests; AM XXXI.2.17-24; recorded as Goths, Procopius, BV III.iii.1

<sup>43</sup> Maenchen-Helfen, O., The World of the Huns (Berkeley, 1973); Thompson, E.A., A History of Attila and the Huns (Oxford, 1948); Alheim, F., Geschichte der Hunnen (Berlin, 1959-1962); a new book on the Huns is badly needed, since Thompson and Alheim are badly dated and Maenchen-Helfen's work was never finished

<sup>44</sup> Huns, AM XXXI.2.1-11; Richter, W., 'Der Darstellung der Hunnen bei Ammianus Marcellinus (31.2.1-11)', Historia XXIII (1974), 343-377; gait, Zos. IV.20.4; AM XXXI.2.6; traditions, Procopius BV III.xviii.13-14

society did not change at all. The principle reason for this is the apparent unanimity of the sources. Almost all writers who describe the Huns write in terms similar to Ammianus and Eunapius. Jerome, Claudian and (via Claudian) Sidonius Apollinaris used Ammianus as a source for their descriptions of the Huns and Zosimus and Jerome used Eunapius as a source for their accounts. But once we get away from this group of late-fourth century inspired sources and once the Huns left Moldavia, the picture is somewhat different.<sup>45</sup>

In our other sources, e.g. Priscus in the fifth century, horses are mentioned in Hunnic contexts as often as they are in Frankish, Alamannic or Gothic contexts. Thus Attila received Maximinus' embassy in 449 in a building with chairs and couches, whereas in the sixth century, a Turkish leader received a Byzantine envoy in a tent on a wagon, though he later also received them in a building.<sup>46</sup>

If the Huns were a purely pastoral society, one would expect accounts of their actions, especially their military exploits, to be similar to those of the fourth-century Gothic wars and Mongol campaigns. Accounts of the Mongols stress their strategic and tactical mobility, mounted archers, horses etc., but those of the Huns in the fifth century do not. Furthermore, though many of the Mongol actions can or must be attributed to their horses, nothing that the Huns are recorded as doing after 376 is obviously the work of a mounted army, though their battles with the Goths

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<sup>45</sup> Ammianus as source for Claudian, Cameron, A., Claudian (Oxford, 1970), 333; Maenchen-Helfen, O., 'The Date of Ammianus Marcellinus' last books', AJP LXXVI (1955), 384-399; for Jerome, Maenchen-Helfen, ibid.; Cameron, A., review of Syme, Ammianus and the Historia Augusta, JRS LXI (1971), 255-267 at 259; Claudian as source for Sidonius, Carm. II.243-269, Loyen, A., Sidoine Apollinaire I (Paris, 1960) 173n38; Eunapius, as source for Zosimus IV.20.3-4, Paschoud, F., Zosime II<sup>2</sup> (Paris, 1979), 372n142; for Jerome, Banchich, T.M., 'Eunapius and Jerome', GRBS XXVII (1981), 319-324; Eunapius fr.41

<sup>46</sup> couches, Priscus fr.13.1.28-40; Turks, Menander fr.10.3

had involved such manoeuvres. The only occasion where they might have been involved in long-distance high-speed movement is in 388, during Theodosius' pursuit of Maximus. The logic of many historians is succinctly described by Lindner,

Huns were present, Theodosius seems to have brought cavalry along, the Hun auxiliaries must have been mounted (because they were Huns), so the Huns' horsemen won the battle.

This victory may have been the result of Hunnic cavalry, but the evidence does not prove this.<sup>47</sup>

Secondly, the archaeology of nomads differs little in type of artefact, though greatly in scale, from that of more settled peoples. Characteristics of nomad archaeology are herd animal remains and seasonal occupation of non-permanent dwellings (usually singly rather than multiply-roomed). Nomads did farm and use pottery, both on a small-scale, and neither of these find-types can be used to identify archaeological materials as 'non-nomadic'. The available archaeological evidence from the lower Danube region concentrates on villages and cemeteries and is similar in character during both the fourth and fifth centuries. In this context it is the evidence for the rank and file that is important. Finds of horses show little, as most are from aristocratic burials and most nobles had horses. The relevant material is to be found in settlement types and patterns, not in distributions of prestige items or cranial deformation.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> Gothic war, AM XXXI.3.6; fighting necessarily by mounted troops, AM XXXI.3.5-8; Lindner, R.P., 'Nomadism, Horses and Huns', Past and Present XCII (1981), 1-19 at 7; Mongol campaigns, e.g. Marco Polo's account; cf sixth-century raiding, Agathias, Hist. V.11-13, 19

<sup>48</sup> problems in identifying evidence, Hole, F., 'Pastoral Nomadism in Western Iran', Explorations in Ethnoarchaeology, ed. R.A. Gould, (Albuquerque, 1978), 127-167 is useful; Maenchen-Helfen, O., The World of the Huns (Berkeley, 1973), 169-171; Párducz, M., Die Ethnischen Probleme der Hunnenzeit in Ungarn (Budapest, 1963); fifth-century Moldavia, Teodor, G., The East Carpathian Area of Romania V-XI Centuries AD, BAR S81, (Oxford, 1980), 3-56

Thirdly, much of the area occupied by the Hun empire was best suited to agriculture and herding, as shown by the Sarmatian and Gothic way of life. If the Huns remained nomads they were presumably not making the most effective use of their environment, a hypothesis hard to sustain. Such economic sacrifice would be understandable if carried out for military purposes, i.e. to maintain an effective cavalry force, but there is no evidence for this being done on a large scale, if it occurred at all.<sup>49</sup>

It thus seems more likely that Hunnic society in the fifth century was much more sedentary than was argued by Thompson et al.. Hunnic villages were plentiful on the Hungarian plain and were well-supplied with millet, grain and barley. Even in Moldavia agriculture and fixed settlements had some role, though a minor one, to play.<sup>50</sup>

Although the Hunnic empire was not a pastoral nomad society in the fifth century, this is an economic judgement. It does not mean that horses did not play a major role in society and their skills on horseback seem to have been preserved. Many of them were excellent mounted warriors. Furthermore, Hun society was not identical in all areas and the Moldavian steppes continued to be inhabited by pastoralists throughout the fifth century.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> Huns not farming, Priscus fr.49; AM XXXI.2.10

<sup>50</sup> Hunnic villages and crops, Priscus fr.12.2.264-280; Moldavia, Teodor, G., The East Carpathian Area of Romania, V-XI Centuries A.D., BAR S81, (Oxford, 1980), 3-55

<sup>51</sup> nomads in Moldavia, Menander fr.2; sedentarization, Anderson, P., Passages from Antiquity to Feudalism (London, 1974), 217-218; Matthews, J.F., The Roman Empire of Ammianus (London, 1989), 355

## CONCLUSION

The basic conclusions drawn here, of sedentary western barbarians, semi-sedentary Goths and changes in Hun society, differ somewhat from orthodox opinions.

It should be remembered that economic characteristics were a product of the environment, not an inherent property of a people. Therefore, as peoples moved their economies would change. The Goths were only semi-sedentary while living in the Danube basin. Once they were settled in Aquitaine and Italy they became farmers, living in permanent settlements, like the western barbarians.

In all cases, these were subsistence communities. This to some extent determined military relations with the Romans. There was a large pool of manpower available for military purposes, but it could only be used at certain seasons without disrupting food production and threatening famine. Military operations initiated by barbarians would therefore be of short duration, probably measurable in months. The more mobile nature of eastern European groups meant that it was more difficult for the Romans to engage them at home or to destroy their livelihood.

Now that we have examined the economies of various barbarian groups we can look at the structure of their societies. Barbarian society was non-urban. Most settlements were villages and though there were some small hamlets or even isolated farms, especially in uplands and remote areas, there were no larger settlements.

Pictish settlements are hard to describe since only stone traces survive. Small villages seem to be most common, sometimes including sunken dwellings and in general seem little different from villages in western Europe.<sup>52</sup>

Ammianus' descriptions of the villages of the Quadi and Alamanni suggest clusters of wooden huts with thatched roofs which were easily burned and the same impression is given of Frankish villages by Sulpicius Alexander. This literary evidence is confirmed by archaeology, e.g. the well-documented villages of Feddersen Wierde, Wijster, Ezinge and, in Britain, West Stow. Sometimes one large house dominated the village site, suggesting one focus of authority in a small community. There were about fifty buildings at Feddersen Wierde, perhaps supporting a population of fewer than 500, though this cannot take into account dispersed settlement around the site. Individual houses were of 'longhouse' or Gr<sup>ü</sup>benhaus construction, sometimes sunk into the ground, with animals usually kept at one end of the building. A few stone constructions, similar to Roman villas are known in Alamannia and Quadia. Most villages appear not to have been fortified, but some hilltop sites with stone walls are known, e.g. Glauberg in Alamannia, which also had some stone buildings. Other villages could be

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<sup>52</sup> Picts, Alcock, L., Arthur's Britain (London, 1971), 272-275 and 'A Survey of Pictish Settlement Archaeology', Pictish Studies, BAR 125, eds. J.G.P. Friell and W.G. Watson (Oxford, 1984), 7-48; Watkins, T., 'Where were the Picts', Pictish Studies, BAR 125, eds. J.G.P. Friell and W.G. Watson (Oxford, 1984), 63-86

fenced or palisaded, Wijster for example. On the North Sea coast, villages were built on terpen, mounds increased, or created by, natural accumulations of dung and debris and deliberate accumulations of clay.<sup>53</sup>

The same style of building, i.e. wooden construction with thatched roofs, was used by eastern barbarians. It is described by Ammianus for the Sarmatians and by Priscus for the Huns. The types of buildings differed however, and instead of long houses, structures were smaller, often single-roomed and less permanent. They were rarely defended. No provision was made for keeping animals inside. Unfortunately the length of occupation of these temporary sites cannot be determined.<sup>54</sup>

Nomad habitations, for example in Moldavia, were less permanent and some groups lived in wagons in a peripatetic lifestyle. However, other groups lived in a semi-sedentary manner, constructing temporary villages.

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<sup>53</sup> villages, Todd, M., The Northern Barbarians<sup>2</sup> (Oxford, 1987), 77-100; Herodian VII.2.3-4; terpen, Pliny, NH XVI.1.3; Franks, Sulpicius fr.1; Saxons, Haarnagel, W., Die Grabungen Feddersen Wierde 2 (Wiesbaden, 1979); Van Es, W.A., 'Wijster: A Native Village Beyond the Imperial Frontier', Palaeohistoria XI (1967), 49-124; Alamanni, AM XVII.10.7, XVIII.2.15; farmsteads, RGA<sup>2</sup> vol. I, 149 d; in general, ibid., 156 c; AM XVII.1.7; 'Villas', AM XVII.1.7; Todd, M., The Northern Barbarians<sup>2</sup> (Oxford, 1987), 99; Quadi, AM XXX.5.14; 'villas', Pitts, L., 'Roman Style Buildings in Barbaricum (Moravia and SW Slovakia)', Oxford Journal of Archaeology VI (1987), 219-236

fortifications, Mildener, G., Germanische Burgen (Mnster, 1978); hilltop sites, see map, RGA<sup>2</sup> vol. I, 146; Todd, M., The Northern Barbarians<sup>2</sup> (Oxford, 1987), 98-9; Werner, J., 'Zu den alamannischen Burgen', Zur Geschichte der Alamannen, ed. J. Werner, (Darmstadt, 1975), 67-90; palisades, Van Es, W.A., 'Wijster: A Native Village Beyond the Imperial Frontier', Palaeohistoria XI (1967), 44-48

<sup>54</sup> Sarmatians, AM XVII.13.12-13; Danubian Goths, Teodor, G., The East Carpathian Area of Romania, BAR S81, (Oxford, 1980), 6-9, n.b. 7 with mention of seasonal dwellings; P.S. Sabae IV.5, V.3 (roof beam), though reflecting Roman views of a Gothic village, not a contemporary description of a Gothic village; Heather, P.J. and Matthews, J.F., Fourth-Century Visigothic Society (forthcoming); Hun villages, Priscus fr.11.2.264-280, 356-373, 551-556, 14.1.58-65; Jordanes, Getica 178-179

The precise type of settlement probably varied according to climate and the type of region currently inhabited.<sup>55</sup>

#### SOCIAL STRUCTURE

Most villages or groups of hamlets had a dominant noble family or families, described by the Romans as optimates, proceres, μεγιστάνες or λογαδές. The relationship of these families with the rest of the village is unclear, but their dominant position was probably the result of wealth and tradition, not of any formal position. The Gothic μεγιστάνες mentioned in the Passion of St. Saba were able to impose their will on Saba's village by force, but it is clear that not all aspects of village life were controlled from above, since the villagers were only prevented from concealing Saba's Christianity from the μεγιστάνες by Saba himself. Saba's village shows that the optimates (the term used throughout this thesis for barbarian nobility) were not resident in every village and suggests that some optimates had power over several settlements, but resided in one only. In times of war and when negotiating with the Romans optimates are usually found accompanying their king and independent action seems rare.<sup>56</sup>

A number of villages and their optimates formed a canton (pagus) under a royal family. Cantons were probably formed by distinct geographical areas, perhaps one valley per canton, but their composition may not have been fixed. The more successful a king was, the greater his sphere of influence and the more optimates would follow him. There is no evidence of

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<sup>55</sup> nomads, lack of villages, AM XXXI.2.4; wagons, AM XXII.8.42, XXXI.2.10,18

<sup>56</sup> Smith, C.A., 'Exchange systems and the spatial distribution of Elites', Regional Analysis 2, ed. C.A. Smith, (New York and London, 1976), 309-374 shows how much more we could know about social relations; Goths, P.S. Sabae III.1,4; in charge of several villages, Priscus fr.14.54-56; accompanying king, AM XVI.12.26, XVII.12.11, XXXI.5.7; independence, Hyd.92

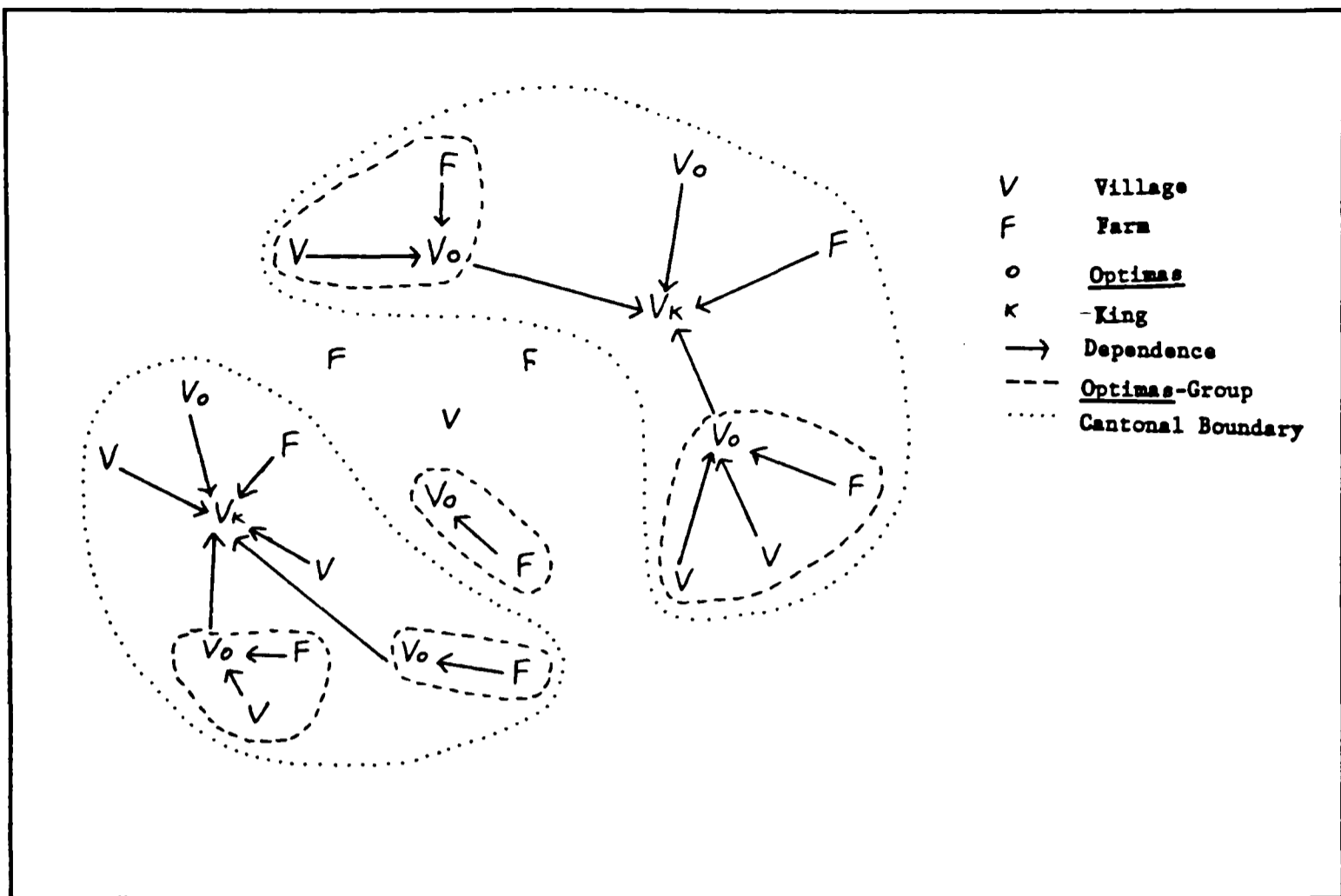


Figure 4 Cantonal Structure, after Smith, 1976, 318

anything binding one optimas to a particular canton, and it is probable that those on the fringes of royal authority might change allegiance from time to time, or even not belong to a canton (Figure 4).<sup>57</sup>

#### KINGSHIP

Each canton was ruled by a king (or kings) from an extended royal family. The kings were described by the Romans as reges, φυλαρχοι or βασιλεις. Within a family some members (perhaps subordinate branches or younger sons) had a lower status, only providing subkings (regulos or subregulos). Other members of the family had royal status (regales), a term which could also be used to refer to any or all of a royal family. These

<sup>57</sup> model after Smith, C.A., 'Exchange systems and the spatial distribution of Elites', Regional Analysis 2, ed. C.A. Smith, (New York and London, 1976), 309-374 at 318; individual kings gaining power, AM XXIX.4.2; Malchus fr.18.1, 2.55-59

distinctions are based on Roman historians (especially Ammianus) and probably conceal a more complicated situation.<sup>58</sup>

Most cantons had one king, but multiple kingship was not uncommon. In some cases all the heirs of the old king succeeded, regardless of number and it was the kingship, not the kingdom, that was divided. Thus in the 350s the brothers Vadamarius and Gundomadus both ruled the Alamannic canton of the Brisigavi. Succession could be more complicated, as shown by the brothers Attila and Bleda ruling the Huns in the 440s. Before this their father Mundiuc and his brother Oebersius were not kings, but two other brothers, Octar and Rua, were. After Octar's death, Rua remained as sole

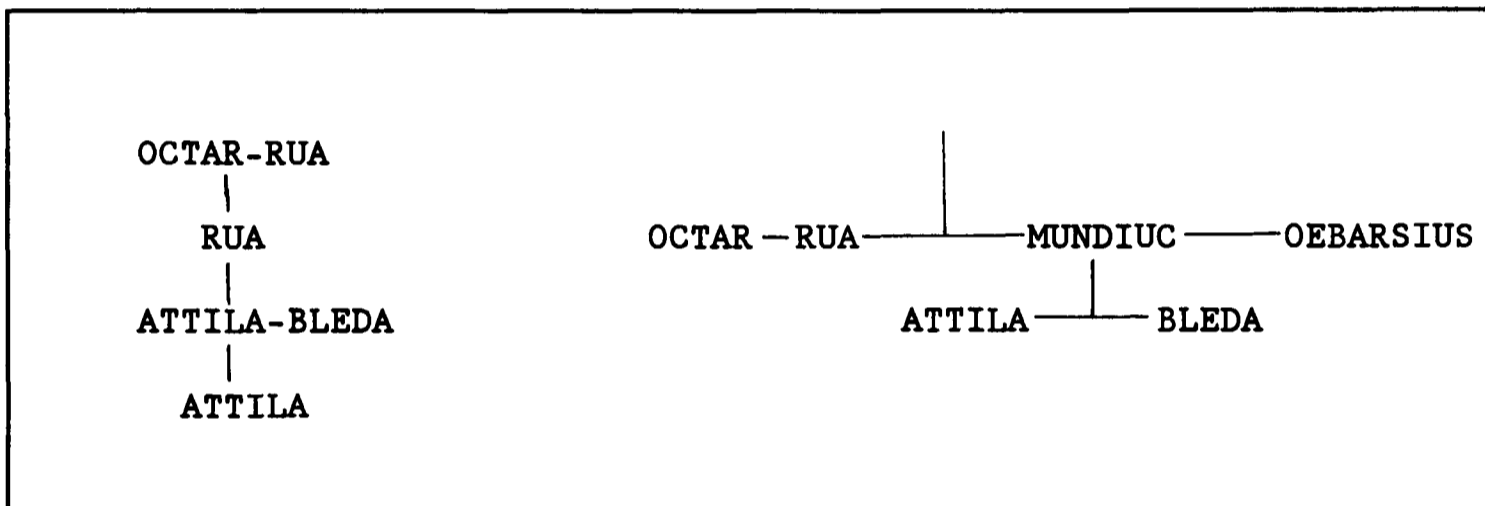


Figure 5: Hunnic Kingship and Genealogy, Early-Fifth Century

king, before being succeeded by Attila and Bleda (Figure 5). Such a confused situation is almost impossible to account for logically from the evidence we have. The only way the rules of primogeniture could be applied is if Mundiuc and Oebersius died before Octar and Rua and if Octar, Rua and Oebersius had no children. But we know that Oebersius was at Attila's court in 449, more than a decade after the deaths of Octar and Rua. It seems likely that personalities and supporters played as strong a role as

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<sup>58</sup> kingship, Chaney, W.A., The Cult of Kingship in Anglo-Saxon England (Manchester, 1970); Early Medieval Kingship, eds. P.H. Sawyer and I.N. Wood, (Leeds, 1977); Wallace-Hadrill, J.M., Early Germanic Kingship (Oxford, 1971)

tradition and custom in resolving successions. Even in the late-fifth century kingdoms within the Roman empire it was probably the kingship that was divided, not the kingdom. Thus Clovis took 'the kingdom and treasures' (regnum et thesauros) from the Frankish brothers, Ragnachar, Riccar and Rignomer when he killed them, though the brothers all had different capitals. The division of Clovis' kingdom between his sons in 511 appears to be an innovation.<sup>59</sup>

Although division of kingdoms between sons did occur it was not universal. In the 440s two sons of a Frankish king appealed to the Huns and the Romans, each hoping to become sole king. The Visigothic kingdom passed to the three sons of Theoderic I in turn after his death in 451, Thorismodus, Theoderic and Euric succeeding in order of age according to the conventions of primogeniture. However, the murder of Thorismodus by Theoderic and Euric and Theoderic's murder by Euric suggests some discontent with the situation. We simply do not know enough about the succession practices to generalise, but it seems likely that different groups had different practices.<sup>60</sup>

Minorities appear to have been rare events. The only known child king is Gothic Viderichus, who seems to have been dominated by his guardians Alatheus and Saphrax and quickly disappears from view. This is not surprising given the violence used by rivals when competing for kingship.<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> multiple kingship, Alamanni, AM XIV.10.1, XVI.12.17; Burgundians, GT HF II.32; Huns, Priscus fr.11.2.241-263; Franks, GT HF II.42; Ostrogoths, II: Theoderic 2 and children, Theoderic 5 and Anonymous 123; 511 division, Wood, I.N., 'Kings, Kingdoms and Consent', Early Medieval Kingship, eds. P.H. Sawyer and I.N. Wood, (Leeds, 1977), 6-29

<sup>60</sup> primogeniture, Priscus fr.20.3; Visigoths, Thompson, E.A., Romans and Barbarians (Madison, 1982), 54-56

<sup>61</sup> minors, I: Viderichus; cf Croke, B., 'Mundo the Gepid: from Freebooter to Roman general', Chiron XII (1982), 125-135

Occasionally, individual iudices are referred to who appear to be similar to kings. These appear among the Quadi and Goths in the fourth century, but are not heard of in the fifth. None of their actions appear different from those of kings.<sup>62</sup>

Our sources occasionally mention sacral kingship, for example among the Burgundians in the 370s, but this too would make little difference to the issues discussed here, assuming that this passage is original and is not derived from an unknown source.<sup>63</sup>

Any sacral traditions that did exist appear to have been weak and royal status seems to have been based as much on power as any tradition or hereditary nature. The best demonstration of this is the ability of optimates to become kings. Thus Singeric, brother of the exiled Gothic optimas or dux Sarus, became king of the Visigoths in 415. The uncertainties of succession are probably one reason why known royal dynasties are not linked to each other and it is not until the establishment of settled kingdoms in the west that we can reliably trace royal genealogies through more than two generations.<sup>64</sup>

The links between a people and their kings were often so weak that rulers from outside could be imposed on them, e.g. the Hun Ellac in the

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<sup>62</sup> iudices, Quadi, AM XVII.12.21; Goths, AM XXVII.5.6, XXXI.3.4; Wolfram, H., History of the Goths<sup>2</sup> (London, 1988), 94-96, 98; Heather, P.J., The Goths and the Balkans, unpublished D.Phil. (Oxford, 1986), 81, 84-86

<sup>63</sup> sacral kingship, AM XXVIII.5.14; sacral kingship has attracted excessive modern attention; Wallace-Hadrill, J.M., The Long-Haired Kings (London, 1962), 153-158 and Early Germanic Kingship (Oxford, 1971), 14-15

<sup>64</sup> optimates becoming kings, Singeric, Olymp. fr.26; in this context Jordanes' list of Gothic kings and Paul the Deacon's list of Lombard rulers are of little use, existing to legitimate a ruling family and derived, in Jordanes' case at least, almost entirely from material still available to us; Heather, P.J., 'Cassiodorus and the Rise of the Amals: Genealogy and the Goths under Hun Domination', JRS LXXIX (1989), 103-128

440s ruling the Akatiri or the Visigoth Aioulfus becoming king of the Suevi in Spain in the 450s.<sup>65</sup>

In such a situation, any royal blood was important. Royal relatives could be leaders of opposition and their frequent murder or exile may have been a king's way of dealing with threats to his power. Clovis certainly took great care to eradicate all the relations he could find.<sup>66</sup>

If kings are seen as primi inter pares rather than as absolute monarchs it helps explain the frequently troubled relations between kings of cantons and their optimates, occasionally exploited by the Romans (below p268). Factional strife perhaps led to the murder of Gundomadus in 354, killed by his brother, but probably with the support of (some of) the canton. Another case of factional strife is Fraomarius, ruler of the Alamannic canton of the Bucinobantes. He was given the kingship by Valentinian I after Macrianus, the previous king, had been expelled by the Romans. But after a few years Fraomarius was withdrawn by the Romans because the canton had been devastated by an unknown attacker. When we next hear of the Bucinobantes, they are again being ruled by Macrianus, and it is tempting to see him as the attacker who had reclaimed his kingdom after making Fraomarius' position untenable. A third case is that of Sarus, a powerful noble in the Gothic confederation led by Alaric. At some point before 405 he had left the Goths and worked for the Romans as a military officer, though still leading his own bodyguard. He had a blood feud of some sort with Ataulf, Alaric's brother-in-law, and for both of them this took precedence over the immediate political situation. Thus in 412

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<sup>65</sup> II: Aioulfus, Edeco, Ellac, Remismund

<sup>66</sup> Clovis' persecution, GT HF II.40-42; V.Remigii 15 for a surviving relative

Ataulf's negotiations with Jovinus, a Gallic usurper, were broken off because of the approach of Sarus to support Jovinus. The rivalry between the two was only halted by the death of Sarus, who died fighting Ataulf's entire army with only his bodyguard. But throughout these disagreements, Sarus' brother Singeric remained a powerful figure among Ataulf's Goths, even becoming king in 415.<sup>67</sup>

With violence being routinely used to settle political disputes, it is perhaps not surprising that kings and optimates had their own armed retinues. These were called comitatus by the Romans, though barbarians had their own terms, e.g. antrustiones among the Franks. These men were supported by their lord in return for loyalty and military service and were the closest most barbarian groups came to having any professional soldiers until the late-fifth century. In 357 Chonodomarius had two hundred retainers at a time when he was leading an alliance of Alamannic cantons. This suggests that larger numbers would not be found until kingdoms were established in the empire and more wealth was available. The comitatus of less successful kings were probably smaller.<sup>68</sup>

To support their comitatus and to reward their equals and followers (and appease dissidents?), kings and optimates were expected to give gifts.

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<sup>67</sup> killed by royal relations, I: Gundomadus; II: Atakam, Bleda, Chilpericus II, Frederichus, Maman, Recitach, Thorismodus, Theoderic 6; other tribesmen, I: Viderichus?; II: Sarus; Claudian, de Cons. Stil. I.239-245; expelled, I: Athanaric, Fraomarius; II: Sarus; Claudian, de Cons. Stil. I.239-245

<sup>68</sup> comitatus, AM XVI.12.60, XVII.10.8, XXI.4.5, XXIX.4.5, XXXI.5.6; Malchus fr.18.3.41; Olymp. fr.6; P.S.Sabae IV.5; SA Ep. I.2.4, IV.20.1-2; GT HF II.42; Wallace-Hadrill, J.M., Early Germanic Kingship (Oxford, 1971), 11-15; Thompson, E.A., The Early Germans (Oxford, 1965), 51-60

These societies thus had a small, but constant, need for prestige items to distribute.

Though we understand the mechanics, it is difficult to demonstrate clearly the importance of gift exchange in fourth- and fifth-century barbarian society. Sixth-century evidence is more common. An Avar king claimed in negotiations that

I am ashamed and dishonoured before the tribes who follow me in alliance if I should withdraw from this place having achieved nothing at all and having brought myself no profit. In order that I shall not appear to have made the attack to no purpose and benefit send [me] some small gifts.

The custom is also shown by Hrothgar's speech to Beowulf.

So long as I shall rule the reaches of this kingdom  
we shall exchange wealth; a chief shall greet  
his fellow with gifts over the gannets' bath  
as the ship with curved prow crosses the seas  
with presents and pledges.<sup>69</sup>

The importance of the gifts in stabilising society adds significance to Roman gifts or payments to kings who had made treaties with them. Such payments allowed barbarian leaders to keep the peace without destabilising society in the canton, allowing the dominant Roman-supported faction to retain its position by providing gifts for distribution, without having to go to war to obtain them. If the Romans had exerted influence without payment, there would be a greater danger of an anti-establishment, and thus anti-Roman, faction arising, possibly causing more attacks on Roman territory (below p263).<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> gift-giving, Menander fr.12.5; Beowulf 1089-1103; AM XXVI.5.7; GT HF II.42; Menander fr.8; Priscus fr.11.2.203-206, 244-250, 40.1; cf Constantine Porphyrogenitus de Administrando Imperii I.1

<sup>70</sup> impact of Roman gifts, Braund, D., 'Ideology, Subsidies and Trade: The King on the Frontier Revisited', Barbarians and Roman in North West Europe, BAR S471, ed. J.C. Barrett et al. (Oxford, 1989), 14-26; Thompson, E.A., The Early Germans (Oxford, 1965), 88-108

Some cantons may have had some form of royal council since we often hear of kings discussing matters with their optimates. However, we do not know how formal this institution was, or whether kings chose to call a council or were forced to take into consideration the views of their regales and optimates. The latter seems more likely.<sup>71</sup>

#### TRIBES

Until barbarian groups entered the empire there existed no political groups larger than cantons. Tribal names such as Franks, Quadi etc. referred nothing more than the area a barbarian group came from and Franks only meant 'lower-Rhine Germans' and Quadi 'middle-Danubian barbarians'. As far as Roman writers were concerned, the important groupings were barbarians as a whole, then regions and little notice was taken of cantons. Roman triumphal titles were of the form 'Sarmaticus', 'Gothicus', 'Francicus', 'Alamannicus', or 'Germanicus'. No cantonal victory titles are recorded, from either the early or late empire. Only major groups are represented and there are no 'Saxonicus', 'Hunnicus' or 'Quadicus' titles, (though the absence of 'Hunnicus' may be connected with the fact that no emperor between Gratian and Justinian is recorded as having any victory titles).<sup>72</sup>

This does not mean that all Romans were unaware of the subdivisions. Ammianus certainly recognised the importance of cantons as political

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<sup>71</sup> councils, Malchus fr.18.2.55-59; Priscus fr.2?; Claudian, de Bello Gothico 479-482; SA Carm. VII.452-454, Ep. IV.22.3; AM XVII.13.21, XXXI.6.4-5; Thompson, E.A., The Early Germans (Oxford, 1965), 29-31

<sup>72</sup> triumphal titles, Kneissl, P., Die Siegestitular der römischen Kaiser (Göttingen, 1969)

units.<sup>73</sup> The vagueness of many writers probably reflects their distance from the frontier and lack of relevant experience. Roman officers on the frontier would certainly be more knowledgeable if the parallel of the northwest frontier of British India is anything to go by. The simple 'Pathans' of contemporary newspapers were recognised by soldiers in the field as being composed of numbers of subgroups, Wazirs, Mahsuds, Zhob, Afridis, Orakzais, etc. Frontier officer knowledge had to be extensive.

Nor was it enough to know that...Gul Sher Khan was an Afridi; one had to know whether he was, for instance, a Malik Din Khel from the fiercely independent Tirah where no Faranghi had set foot since 1897, or an Adam Khel from Kohat pass - Tribal territory to be sure, but so accessible to troops and police that he could almost be regarded as a Cis-frontier man. One had to know whether an Orakzai was Sunni or Shiah. It was sympathetic of [Frontier] Scouts' attitudes that a Pathan was seldom mentioned in reports or orders without his tribe, and often his section being mentioned.<sup>74</sup>

There is nothing to suggest that any of the cantons in a region had any constituted authority over the others. When leadership over more than one canton is found, it is the product of force, not of a position. Among the Sarmatians in the 350s, the regalis Zizais was escorted by subreguli and is described as potior, 'more powerful'. In the only mention of the leadership of the combined Alamanni at Strasbourg in 357, the kings Serapio and Chonodomarius are described as 'greater than the other kings through power (potestate)'. Though this could also be interpreted as 'through authority', this would make the Alamanni unique among fourth- or fifth-

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<sup>73</sup> the names of many Roman regiments in the Notitia are based on cantonal (as well as tribal) titles, Visi, Or.V.61, Tervingi, Or.VI.61, Salii, Or.V.51, Occ.V.177,210, Bucinobantes, Or.VI.17, Sugambri, Or.XXXI.66, Iuthungi, Or.XXVIII.43, XXXIII.31, Chamavi, Or.XXX.61, Gaetuli, Or.XXXV.32, Frisii, Occ.XL.36, Brisigavi, Occ.V.201,202; Bructeri, Occ.V.187

<sup>74</sup> Trench, C.C., The Frontier Scouts (London, 1985), 59; see also the useful table in Operations in Waziristan 1919-1920<sup>2</sup> (Delhi, 1923), 193-194

century barbarian tribes in having some form of constituted higher authority. In the early-fifth century, the Alans in Spain were described as being 'more powerful' than the neighbouring Vandals.<sup>75</sup>

Furthermore, the Romans never negotiated treaties with any 'high king' or with groups of cantons, only with the kings of individual cantons. This was the case even after defeating a group of cooperating cantons. Thus after Strasbourg Julian insisted on personal attendance at negotiations by the kings of all defeated cantons. If they were not present they might not consider themselves bound by the treaty. This can be compared with British practice on the Northwest frontier of India. A Pathan malik was trying to avoid meeting the British. It was reported that

"One of the [Pathan] leaders, however, has written to say that he cannot come as his house has been bombed"... if he was not present at negotiations he would not regard himself as being bound by the resulting agreement.<sup>76</sup>

Although cooperation between cantons was rare, it did occur. Alamannic cooperation in 352 was the result of the ambition of king Chonodomarius taking advantage of Roman weakness and encouraging the Alamanni to settle in Gaul. At Strasbourg in 357 Alamannic cooperation was again organized by Chonodomarius, this time to recover territory lost by Alamannic cantons on the left bank of the Rhine because of Roman action. This alliance was probably a continuation of earlier cooperation against Magnentius and reflected losses suffered by several cantons. Alamannic cantons also allied in 359 when the Roman army under Julian threatened to cross the Rhine into the territory of Suomarius, an Alamannic king who had

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<sup>75</sup> Sarmatians, AM XVII.12.9-11,14; Alamanni, AM XVI.12.23; Alans, Hyd.68

<sup>76</sup> treaties with individual kings, AM XVII.12.12, XVIII.2.18-19; Eunapius fr.18.6; Pathans, Lydall, E., Enough of Action (London, 1949), 164

allied with the Romans in 357. Other Alamannic cantons wished to stop the Romans crossing the Rhine into Suomarius' territory, an event which would be unopposed by him if they did not intervene. According to Ammianus they warned Suomarius not to allow the Romans to cross the Rhine. Compelled to accede to their demands, he let the other Alamanni into his territory to resist the Romans. Had it not been for the intervention of the other kings, Suomarius would have allowed the Romans to enter his territory and use it as a base for offensive operations against other cantons. Like the cooperation at Strasbourg, this seems to be for the general benefit of the Alamanni since it was known that Julian was planning to attack several cantons.

A similar alliance occurred in the 390s when the kings of two Frankish cantons, Marcomere and Sunno, seem to have established some form of hegemony over a number of cantons, at least the Ampsivarii and Chatti, and possibly the Bructeri and Chamavi. They raided Gaul in 388 and continued to cause trouble on the lower Rhine until dealt with by Stilicho in 396. And in north Gaul in the late-fifth century the Frankish king Clovis was able to secure the assistance of the canton of Sigibert in different campaigns against the Visigoths and the Alamanni.<sup>77</sup>

Cooperation was not limited to cantons from the same region or 'tribe'. For example, in 357 Araharius led Quadi and Sarmatians against the Romans and Huns and Goths fought together on a number of occasions.<sup>78</sup> Even when cooperation occurred it could be fragile. In 466/467 a Roman army trapped a mixed raiding force of Goths and Huns in Thrace and blockaded

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<sup>77</sup> cooperation, Strasbourg, AM XVI.12.1,9,23-6; Suomarius, AM XVII.10 (357), XVIII.2 (359); Franks, Sulpicius fr.1,4,6; Claudian, de Cons. Stil. I.239-245; Sigibert, GT HF II.37; Sarmatians, AM XVII.12.11-12

<sup>78</sup> Quadi and Sarmatians, AM XVII.12.11-12; Goths and Huns, AM XXXI.8.4; Priscus fr.49; Franks and Saxons, AM XXVIII.8.5; Sarmatians and Suevi, Jordanes, Getica 277

them. The Romans were able to turn the Goths on the Huns by some astute diplomacy. There was no love lost between allied barbarian groups and the Romans not only knew this, but could exploit it (below p267).<sup>79</sup>

Although cantons from the same region could cooperate against the Romans, they could also fight each other, an example being the 357 attack on the Salii by another Frankish canton, the Chamavi. On a larger scale were the wars on the lower Danube, first to create the Hun empire, then following the death of Attila when numbers of barbarian groups struggled for dominance. There was no such thing as barbarian nationalism and barbarians would fight alongside Romans against their own enemies. Thus in 358 the Liberi Sarmatae were allied with the Romans against the Limigantes. In this operation the Romans also persuaded another barbarian group, the Taifali, to fight against the Limigantes. Such hostility was not unique as the affair of Suomarius (above p55) shows.<sup>80</sup>

Hostilities also occurred between barbarians from different regions, e.g. the wars between the Ostrogoths and the Sciri in the late-fifth century.<sup>81</sup>

Cooperation between cantons, though often founded on mutual self-interest, was dependent on capable individuals (below p72). Without them, cooperation seems unlikely to have occurred. Thus Araharius was responsible for the cooperation between some Quadi and Sarmatians in 357, Marcomere and

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<sup>79</sup> fragility, Priscus fr.49; RPF fr.2; Soz.IX.5.1-5; Paulinus of Pella, Eucharisticus 372-375

<sup>80</sup> intra-regional hostility, Franks, Zos. III.6.2; Huns, AM XXXI.3.3; Jordanes, Getica 259-263; Sarmatians, AM XVII.12.18-19, 13.19

<sup>81</sup> Franks-Alamanni, AM XXX.3.7; Goths-Sciri, Jordanes, Getica 129-130, 276; Priscus fr.45

Sunno for the late-fourth century Frankish cooperation, and the alliance of various Frankish cantons in the fifth century was the result of Clovis' ambition and leadership.

When we know of cooperation we often know the names of the leaders involved. Where we do not know the names of the leaders, we should be wary about attributing cooperation. The 'barbarian conspiracy' of 367 and the Vandal-Suevic crossing of the Rhine are both occasions where cooperation is not proven, and indeed seems unlikely to have taken place. The Vandals and Suevi attacked at the same time, but over such a wide area (most of the Rhine) that cooperation is an unlikely possibility. Barbarians did not need to co-operate to take advantage of Roman weakness and no one has suggested that the Goths and the Burgundians were allied in 436 when they both took advantage of Roman involvement with bandits in Armorica - they were merely seizing the initiative independently (below p72). Likewise, the Huns invaded the eastern empire in 442 when the main eastern field army under Aspar was in Sicily. The importance of strong leadership in such alliances is shown by events following the death of Attila (above p59, below p59). The Hun empire did not dissolve, it exploded.

The importance of barbarian leaders is also demonstrated by Roman action against leaders (below p267). To some degree this could be counterproductive, in that Roman pressure created leaders or reinforced the authority of existing kings. The potential strength of a combined tribe forced the Romans to divide and rule, dealing with the barbarians by canton. The massive operation planned by Valentinian for 370 suggests that he saw the Alamanni as a single threat, distinct from the Franks, that could be dealt with in one operation, though each canton was attacked separately. This conception seems unlikely to have been based on any

differences between the Franks and the Alamanni, but on the geography of the region, north and south of the Main river.<sup>82</sup>

Longer-lasting than these groupings of fourth-century Alamanni or Franks was the fifth-century empire of the Huns. The area north of the lower Danube seems to have come under Hunnic control in the fifth century, under the leadership of various Hunnic kings, Rua, Octar, Bleda and Attila, all of the same family. This growth in power was gradual and still taking place at the beginning of Attila's reign. We hear of Hunnic kings (βασιλῆσκοι σκυθοί) taking refuge in Roman territory from Attila and of negotiations by the Romans with the Akatziri, a Hunnic people later conquered by Attila, who placed his son Ellac over them as king. As well as Hunnic groups, the empire incorporated a number of Gothic groups, including the Greuthungi and the Gepids. The forced nature of the empire is shown by events on Attila's death. A number of groups rejected Hun leadership and defeated Attila's sons at the battle of the Nedao in 454. Immediately Hun dominance of the middle and lower Danube was lost and there was a reversion to the situation of the early-fifth century with numerous independent groups. It is only after Nedao that we hear of most of the Hunnic cantons and they previously seem to have been under direct control of Attila's family with little independence and thus little presence in the historical record.<sup>83</sup>

Lack of a tribal structure is also shown by the ability of groups to move from tribe to tribe. Thus Alans and Visigoths are found in the Vandal kingdom in Africa and the Ostrogoths who invaded Italy included Rugi and

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<sup>82</sup> division, AM XXVIII.5.8-10,15

<sup>83</sup> creation of the Hun empire, Priscus fr.2, 9.3, 11.2.241-263; Marc. Com. sa 445; refugees, Priscus fr.1; disintegration, Jordanes, Getica 259-267; Priscus fr.40.1-2, 45, 46, 48.1, 49

Heruli in their number. The ease of assimilation suggests few differences between groups and an informal political structure.<sup>84</sup>

It was not just barbarians who could change political affiliation. Romans could also join barbarian groups. Thus in Italy in the 400s, Alaric was joined by Roman deserters and runaway slaves. We also know of other Romans joining dissident groups, both inside and outside the empire. The anonymous Greek merchant living among the Huns is well known, but he was only the tip of an iceberg of expatriate living, also illustrated by Eudoxius, a doctor who was involved with the Bacaudae and fled to the Huns (below p112). The apparent ease of incorporating Romans into barbarian groups suggests that barbarians would be absorbed more easily.<sup>85</sup>

#### CONCLUSION

The view of barbarian society outside the Roman empire presented here is much more culturally homogeneous and politically diverse than the picture often drawn by modern historians, but is drawn from the same evidence. Its similarity in political terms to barbarian society in the first and second centuries is interesting and suggests that some judgments concerning the third century such as the development of large tribal confederations did not occur in the same way as is often thought.

This discussion has concentrated on barbarian society outside the Roman empire in the fourth century. However, society did not remain static

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<sup>84</sup> Alans, Victor Vitensis II.39; Hyd.68; Visigoths, Possidius, V.Aug. 28.4; late Goths, Jordanes, Getica 283-284; Ostrogoths 489, Cass. Variae I.42-44; cf Agathias, Hist. I.6.3-4; Liebeschuetz, J.H.W.G., Barbarians and Bishops (Oxford, 1990), 39-40; Ostrogoths to Visigoths, II: Beremud, Vidimir

<sup>85</sup> Roman deserters, de Ste. Croix, G.E.M., The Class Struggle in the Ancient Greek World (London, 1981), 474-488; Alaric, deserters, Philost. XII.3; Zos. V.35.6; slaves, V.42.3; Liebeschuetz, J.H.W., 'Alaric's Goths: Army or People?', GAUL; Greek, Priscus fr.11.2.407-435; Eudoxius, C.Gall.452.133; AM XXXI.6.5-7

and there were two important developments during the fifth century. One was the appearance of wandering groups within the empire, the other was the creation of barbarian kingdoms on former imperial territory. But in many areas, especially where the frontier did not move, barbarian society remained similar to the fourth century.

## BARBARIAN GROUPS WITHIN THE EMPIRE

In the fifth century several groups of barbarians found themselves inside the Roman empire, but without any formal recognition of their presence and no fixed home. These groups had a peripatetic existence until they were able to make an agreement with the empire or gain permanent control over an area. Thus a Gothic group under first Alaric, then Ataulf and lastly Wallia wandered through the empire between 395 and 418 with only occasional agreements with the imperial government. The Vandal and Suevic invaders of 406 until their settlement in 411. The Goths under Theoderic the Amal and Theoderic Triarius in the 470s were in a similar condition and Radagaisus and his followers may also come into this category.

Without land to farm, these groups were in a parlous economic condition. They had to forage continuously for survival (below p115) or else live off supplies negotiated from empire (below p26). Herd animals became particularly important in these circumstances. Lack of a homeland, i.e. a secure rear area, also meant that these groups were always accompanied by women, children, the aged, infirm and all the tribes' possessions. These were transported by a train of wagons, a characteristic of the Gothic peregrinations. One Roman strike against some Balkan Goths in 479 captured 2,000 wagons.<sup>86</sup>

Apart from this major change such groups differed little from groups beyond the borders of the empire. Optimates were still found in these groups and though their power was still probably based on wealth and armed

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<sup>86</sup> dependents, Malchus fr.18.2; Zos. IV.25.3, 39.4; herds, Malchus fr.18.2.29-30; wagons, Zos. IV.25.3; Malchus fr.20.113-115, 228-231, 244-248; Claudian, in Rufinum II.129, de IV Cons. Hon. 466, de Cons. Stil. I.94-95; de Bello Gothico 83, 604; AM XXXI.8.1

followers. The small geographical area covered by these groups meant that most members would be immediately affected by most royal decisions, perhaps leading to the establishment of a form of court. This could strengthen kingship since relations with the Romans tended to be channelled through a single leader.

### BARBARIAN KINGDOMS

During the fifth century barbarian kingdoms began to emerge within the former boundaries of the empire. This could happen quickly, for example after Theoderic's conquest of Italy in 493, or slowly, and Frankish infiltration into north Gaul did not produce anything resembling a kingdom until near the end of Clovis' reign.<sup>87</sup>

In most cases barbarians settled on the land to farm themselves and/or to exploit the existing agricultural population. Suggestions that nomad groups continued to practice a nomadic economy once settled in Spain or Gaul seem unlikely and we should expect to see no more than transhumance within the empire.<sup>88</sup>

The small numbers of barbarians in these settlements, at least compared to regional populations, and their privileged status in most areas meant that they superimposed themselves on the existing urban and rural habitations. Barbarians seem to have had no particular antipathy for urban life, but no need for it unless they were using Roman administrative institutions. Where they did employ these institutions, they adapted urban life immediately, probably being supported by revenues from their

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<sup>87</sup> for the purposes of this thesis, Odovacer's Italy is considered a Roman state, not a barbarian kingdom

<sup>88</sup> continuance of nomadism implied by Thompson, E.A., Romans and Barbarians (Madison, 1982), 27, 156, 159

controlled estates. Otherwise they lived in rural villas like the Roman aristocracy.<sup>89</sup>

Barbarian use of urban centres and Roman structures gradually led to centralisation of authority in one capital, Toulouse for the Visigoths, Ravenna for the Ostrogoths, Paris for Clovis' Franks, Geneva for the Burgundians, Braga for the Suevi. The creation of a court increased royal power as the king was the means by which Romans and barbarians interacted in political affairs, similar in effect to royal leadership of peripatetic barbarian groups.

Stronger kingship also meant more control over military affairs. Warfare now became more firmly subordinated to political purposes and raiding became less common as a spontaneous event, though it still had a place within a campaign. It still occurred however, and Anaolsus' raid on Arles in 430 was probably not 'approved' by Theoderic I.<sup>90</sup>

#### CONCLUSION

This brief description of barbarian society gives a guide to what should be expected in their relations with the Romans. It was extremely fragmented and only posed any danger to the survival of the Roman empire when several groups united. Actions by single cantons were a nuisance, but in themselves unlikely to affect the long-term integrity of the empire. These groups were divided internally and their leaders seem to have owed their positions more to ability and wealth than to tradition and respect for their office.

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<sup>89</sup> details of settlements are discussed in Goffart, W., Barbarians and Romans (Princeton, 1980); Barnish, S.J., 'Taxation, Land and Barbarian Settlement in the Western Empire', PBSR LIV (1986), 170-195; Sivan, H., 'On Foederati, Hospitalitas and the Settlement of the Goths in AD 418', AJP CVIII (1987), 759-772

<sup>90</sup> Anaolsus, Hyd.92

## BARBARIAN MOTIVATION FOR WAR

Conflict between Romans and barbarians was common, but the form it took and the reasons for fighting are complicated and not clearly understood. This attempt to distinguish between motives for different groups shows that this conflict will not fit easily into convenient categories. First, however, it is necessary to examine two features of barbarian society, their perceptions of the empire and their martial nature, which lay behind much of this conflict.

Many barbarians saw the Roman empire as a land of opportunity and were impressed by the ease of life in the empire, the constant supply of luxuries and the high standard of living. In Justinian's reign, one Hunnic king complained that refugees from his rule in the empire

will have the power to traffic in grain, and to get drunk in their wine stores, and to live on the fat of the land. Yes, and they will be able to go into the baths, and to wear gold ornaments, the villains, and will not go short of fine embroidered clothes.

Though a sixth-century report, this seems to be representative of views held by barbarians earlier. Urban life particularly impressed barbarians.

As some Goths advanced on Constantinople in 378,

their courage was further broken when they beheld the oblong circuit of the walls, the blocks of houses covering a vast space, the beauties of the city beyond their reach, [and] the vast population inhabiting it.<sup>91</sup>

But barbarians had another impression of the empire, that of an armed camp, full of soldiers whom the Romans continually paraded before them.

Thus in 392

Eugenius led a military expedition as far as the frontier marked by the Rhine. He renewed the old traditional treaties

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<sup>91</sup> luxuries, Thompson, E.A., Romans and Barbarians (Madison, 1982), 3-15; Hun, Procopius, BG VIII.xix.16-17; Constantinople, AM XXXI.16.7; cf Priscus fr.11.1.22-29; Jordanes, Getica 143

with the kings of the Franks and the Alamanni, and he paraded his army, which was immense for that time, before their savage warriors.

These impressions of strength and efficiency could be reinforced by those barbarians who served in the Roman army and kept in contact with their people, such as the anonymous Alamannic scutarius who returned home 'on business' in 378.<sup>92</sup>

These points of view were not held by all barbarians. Those who lived on the frontiers were less easily impressed than those from the interior.

And indeed, Macrianus, having been admitted with his brother among the eagles and standards, was amazed at the magnificent appearance of the equipment and the men, which he first saw then... But Vadamarius, familiar with us because he lived by the frontier, admired the splendid field equipment, but remembered that he had often seen such things since his youth.<sup>93</sup>

Once barbarians were settled within the empire, familiarity with things Roman would diminish the wonder even more than contact along the frontier. Thus Ataulf in the early-fifth century wished to destroy the name of 'Romania' and replace it with 'Gothia', but realising the impossibility of persuading Goths to obey the laws, decided to use Gothic arms to support Rome instead. His comments on 'Romania' and 'Gothia' show a desire to exploit the empire, even if he had originally thought of destroying it. His ambitions do not appear characteristic of barbarian actions, but it is the only opinion we have recorded.<sup>94</sup>

The martial nature of their society meant that barbarians were accustomed to military activity. It offered warriors a chance to display

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<sup>92</sup> Eugenius, Sulpicius fr.7; other examples, below p255; scutarius, AM XXXI.10.3

<sup>93</sup> Macrianus and Vadamarius, AM XVIII.2.17

<sup>94</sup> Ataulf, Orosius VII.43.4-6; Wallace-Hadrill, J.M., The Long-Haired Kings (London, 1962), 25-48

their prowess and engage in fighting. According to Ammianus, 'among the Alani a man is judged happy who has sacrificed his life in battle'. The prestige resulting from raids could produce a 'knock-on' effect, creating further raids. Social rivals in the same or another canton would be forced to compete and the easiest way to do this would be to launch a raid of their own into the empire. Even if a raid were a military failure, the fighting could produce some prestige for its leader and those taking part.<sup>95</sup>

Like many martial societies, it had an unwritten military code. This could lead to acts of incredible bravery. The death of Sarus in 413, fighting Ataulf's entire army with only eighteen or twenty men, was the death of a German hero and would not have been out of place in heroic poetry. The Pathans on the northwest frontier of British India had a similar martial code. This code, known as 'puktunwali', had three elements, asylum, hospitality, and most importantly, vengeance.

Disputes over women, gold and land - zan, zar, zamin - lay at the bottom of most blood-feuds... The Pathan may wait years for his chance, but take it he must, sooner or later, or be utterly shamed.<sup>96</sup>

The influence of things military meant that violence was a political tool and was mastered by those who were successful. According to J.M. Wallace-Hadrill, 'opportunism, short-sighted and ruthless, was characteristic of every barbarian who made his way in the Roman world'.<sup>97</sup>

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<sup>95</sup> prowess-based society, Cunliffe, B., Greeks, Romans and Barbarians (London, 1988), 89-92; Alans, AM XXXI.2.22-23; cf AM XVII.12.21: Mauricius, Strat. XI.3.4; SA Carm. V.249-254

<sup>96</sup> Sarus' death, Olymp. fr.18; cf Agathias, Hist. I.15; Cass. Variae I.24,38 for Ostrogothic Italy; Pathans, Trench, C.C., The Frontier Scouts (Oxford, 1985), 3

<sup>97</sup> Wallace-Hadrill, J.M., The Long-Haired Kings (London, 1962), 166

This warlike spirit meant that most barbarians did not hate the empire, but merely attacked it because it was there. If the empire left a city ungarrisoned, it was considered reasonable to attack it. In return, it was accepted that the Romans had the right to cross the frontier and administer some rough treatment occasionally. The result was a parasitic relationship, though not a dependency, by barbarians on the Roman empire.

In Afghanistan the situation appears similar

there were certain features common to all frontier campaigns. The first was that in the end the Sarkar [British Empire] was bound to win; it was unthinkable that it should fail to defeat a few thousand tribesmen and compel them to pay for their misdeeds... both sides knew this perfectly well.

and

there was little ill-feeling between the two sides. The tribesmen knew that, if they fought well they would not be shamed even though they were sure to be defeated. Soldiers were quite pleased if the enemy put on a good show. The enemy in no way threatened the British rule of India.<sup>98</sup>

Romans and barbarians probably saw the situation in the same light. Barbarians probably never thought in terms of overthrowing the empire, except perhaps in the west in the late-fifth century. It was too big and their resources were too small, as Ataulf seems to have realised. Even the strongest barbarian alliance, Attila's confederation of Danubians, was only able to challenge the empire as a regional power, not to threaten its existence.<sup>99</sup>

A martial society, envious of the wealth of the empire, was likely to come into frequent military conflict with the empire. We do not know how

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<sup>98</sup> Trench, C.C., The Frontier Scouts (London, 1985), 144-145, 147

<sup>99</sup> Orosius VII.43.4-6; cf Thompson, E.A., Romans and Barbarians (Madison, 1982), 6-7

frequent attacks were and are unable to present a 'feel' for frontier life. However, Ammianus Marcellinus' history can be used to estimate frequencies and sizes of attacks on the Rhine frontier for the period 354-378. See Figure 6-Figure 8.

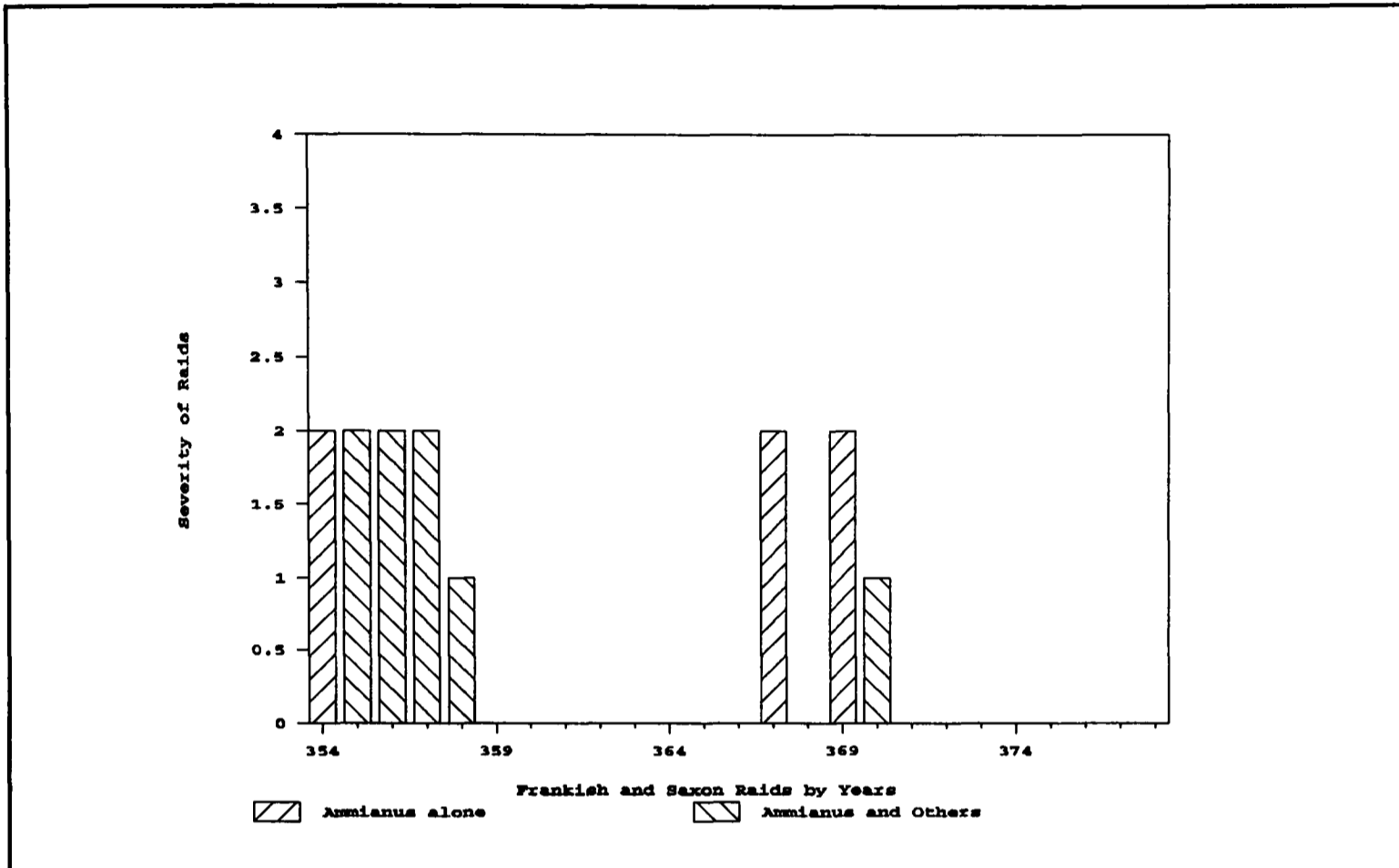


Figure 6: Frankish and Saxon Attacks on the Roman Empire: AD 354-378

In these figures attacks are divided into three sizes, attacks conducted only by one canton (arbitrarily given a value of 1 on the vertical scale), those possibly by more than one canton (valued at 2) and those definitely by more than one (valued at 4). Figure 6 and Figure 7 show attacks on the North and South Rhine separately, and separate attacks solely recorded by Ammianus Marcellinus and those also recorded by Ammianus and other sources. The detailed nature of Ammianus' account suggests that he recorded all major attacks, a hypothesis supported by these graphs. Figure 8 shows the whole Rhine frontier. These graphs show that recorded barbarian activity was not an annual activity, but one that occurred in bursts. The bad times were balanced by long periods of peace, probably punctuated by minor (and thus unrecorded) incidents.

This presentation of information gives the impression that frontier life was dangerous and that trouble could always occur, but also suggests periods of peace.

### Raids

Barbarian attacks on the empire can be divided into three types, raids, conquests and defensive wars. Raids intended to gain plunder were the most common type. Constantius II described the problem in a speech to his army in 357.

Our enemies in their madness were overrunning all Illyricum...and in successive raids were laying waste our furthest borders... they did not trust to engagements nor to arms and strength, but as is their custom, in lurking brigandage.<sup>100</sup>

Most raids were small affairs, carried out by a single canton with several hundred men (below p108). Small-scale military activity was common and at one point Ammianus recorded

Besides these [actions], many other battles less worthy of mention were fought, throughout various reaches of Gaul, which it would be superfluous to describe, both because their results led to nothing worthwhile and because it is not fitting to spin out a history with insignificant details.

This can be compared with a seventh-century Anglo-Saxon law of King Ine, 'we call up to seven men 'thieves', from seven to thirty five a 'band', above that it is an army'. Marine raids were probably the same size as land raids and Hydatius records a raid by the Heruli on the coast of Spain in 455 involving 400 men from seven ships.<sup>101</sup>

However, other raids were carried out by groups of cantons. Alamannic cantons combined against the empire in 352/353, 357 and 378 and a dangerous Frankish confederation appeared in the late 380s and 390s.

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<sup>100</sup> AM XVII.13.27

<sup>101</sup> small raids, AM XXII.7.7, XXVII.2.11; Ine 13.1; Hyd.171

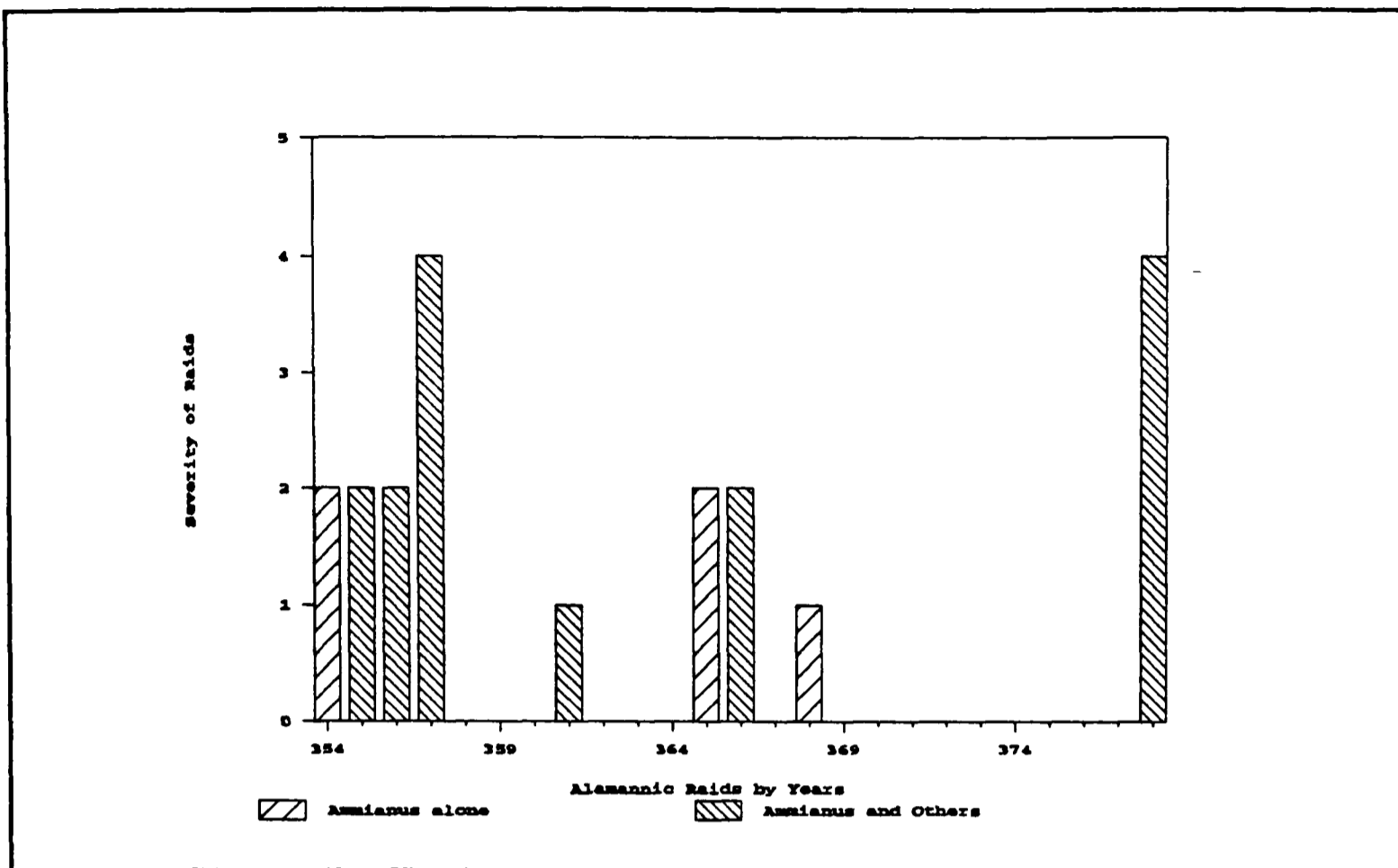


Figure 7: Alamannic Attacks: AD 354-378

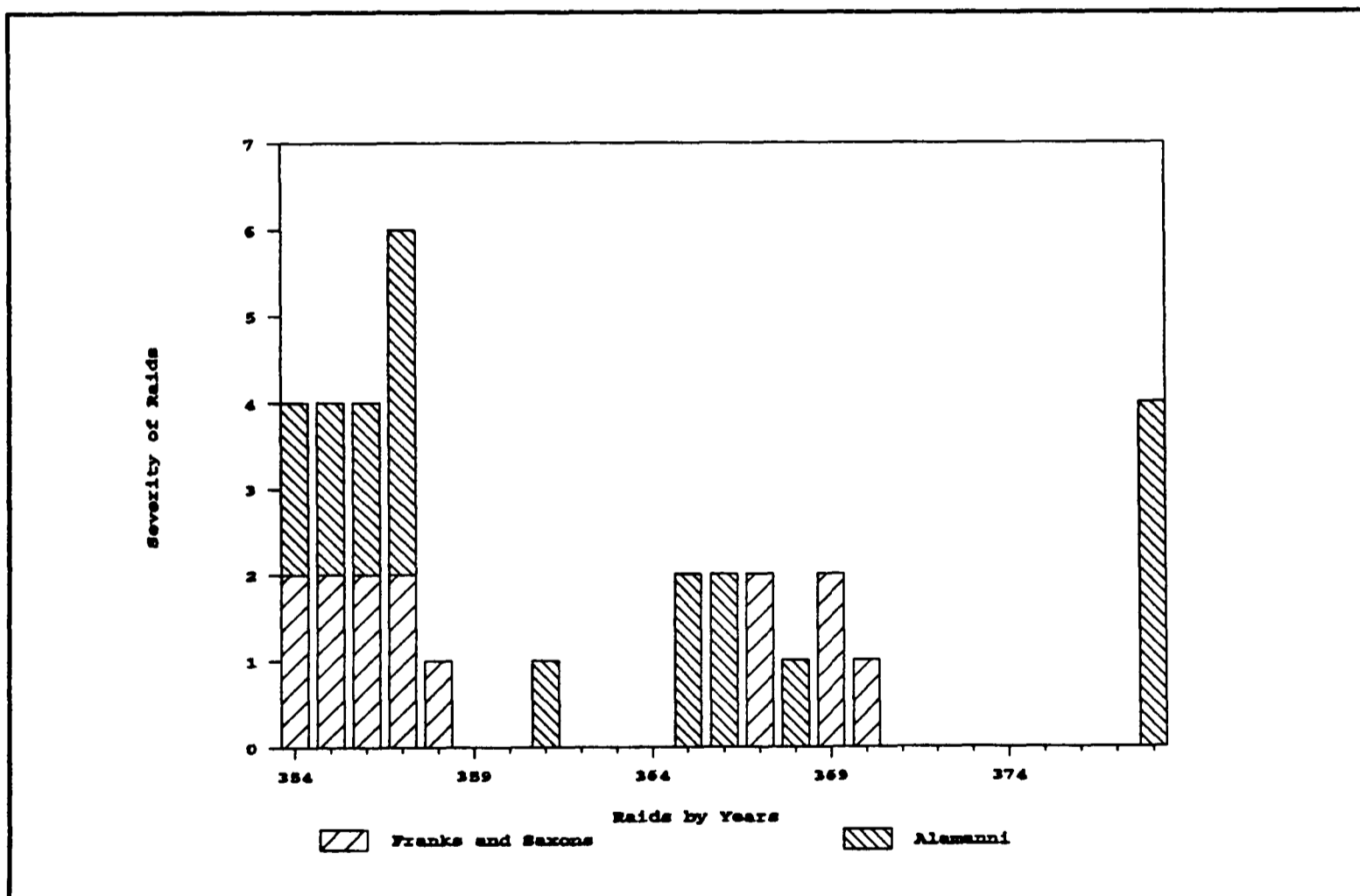


Figure 8: The Rhine Frontier: AD 354-378

These large raids became more common during the fifth century,

examples being the invasion of Radagaisus in 405, the Vandals and Suevi in 406 and the Huns in 422, 442, 447, 451 and 452.

Large raids and confederations depended on effective barbarian leadership (above p57). The Huns made major attacks against the eastern empire in 442 and 447, and in 451 and 452 they attacked the western empire. However, these were only major attacks because of the unification of the Danubian barbarians under a single leader. Before Attila, the Huns were not strong enough seriously to threaten the empire and after his death the Balkan provinces did not suffer from a major attack (as opposed to raiding) until the Bulgar attacks of the 490s.

Although there were more larger raids in the fifth century, small raids also continued. Raetia and Noricum seem never to have been disturbed in the same way as Gaul during the fifth century, though they suffered occasionally from the Alamanni across the Danube.

There were several reasons for the occurrence of individual raids. The most common was taking advantage of Roman weakness. The timing of barbarian attacks on the empire coincided too often with moments of imperial weakness for it to be fortuitous. These attacks were more likely to occur, to be successful, and thus attract the attention of contemporaries at times of Roman weakness.

This weakness was usually the result of movements of troops from one frontier to a crisis elsewhere. Thus the Hunnic attack of 442 was occasioned by the absence of the eastern field army in Sicily, fighting the Vandals. This weakness did not need to be actual, only perceived. The 378 attack by some Alamanni was a response to the news that Gratian was

marching east, not to his departure. Romans were accordingly worried about the consequences of moving troops from one area to another.<sup>102</sup>

The opportunities caused by Roman action elsewhere brought increasing barbarian attempts to realize these opportunities and in turn created more crises. Thus Stilicho's measures to contain Alaric in Italy in the early-fifth century involved weakening the defences of Gaul and Raetia, bringing about the attacks of Radagaisus in 405, then the Vandals and Suevi in 406. Similarly, the disruption caused in Gaul by the Vandal and Suevic attacks and the usurpation of Constantine III allowed the Visigoths (by then in Gaul) to take advantage of the disruption there and set up a kingdom in Septimania while the Burgundians crossed the Rhine. And though the usurpers were defeated and the Visigoths finally settled (under Roman control) in Aquitaine, the diversion of Roman attention from the Rhine frontier to central Gaul had allowed the Franks to make their way into the empire in northeast Gaul. For the next twenty years Rome's military efforts were concentrated on defending what she controlled in Gaul, not on recovering what had been lost.

Such a series of multiple crises was less common in the fourth century, though it almost occurred during the usurpations of Magnentius and Silvanus. If an unsubdued barbarian group had been present in the Balkans at the same time, the results would probably have been similar to fifth-century events. And from the 380s, failure to expel, destroy or disperse the Goths in the Balkans meant that serious internal troubles were always a possibility, increasing the severity of other crises.

A second reason for raids was Roman action. When the Romans murdered the Quadic king Gabinus in 374, his canton (and others) responded by

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<sup>102</sup> timing, 442, Theoph. AM 5942; Marc. Com. sa 441; Theoderet, HE V.37.5; 378, AM XXXI.10.3-5; others, 352/353, Zos. III.1.1; 357, AM XVII.2.1; 360/361, AM XXI.3.1; 374, AM XXIX.6.1; 401, Claudian, de Bello Gothico 278-280; 422, Theoph. AM 5943; Marc. Com. sa 422; 439, Prosp. 1339; fear of consequences, Lib. Or. XVIII.95; AM XXI.4.6, XXXI.7.4

attacking the empire. Similar in effect were Roman attempts to infringe barbarian territorial rights, for example by trying to build a fort on their territory. Attacks might also be caused by terminating or reducing subsidies (below p263). It was the reduction of subsidies in 365 that led to the Alamannic attack, though clumsy handling by the magister officiorum exacerbated the problem.<sup>103</sup>

Thirdly, raids could be brought about by problems in a canton, for example a shortage of food or clothing. These resulted in Gothic attacks on Balkan provinces in the 470s.<sup>104</sup>

Raiders hoped to gain as much plunder as possible and then retire. This plundering meant that barbarians were often described as latrones.<sup>105</sup>

Most raids did not penetrate very deep into the empire, which meant that the frontier bore the brunt of attacks. Many of the battles fought against the Alamanni in the fourth century took place in the Rhine valley, e.g. at Brumath, Strasbourg and Argentaria. But on occasion raids struck deeper, for example the Alamannic attack on Lyons in 357. Larger raids, with less immediate fear of counterattack, might strike more deeply. Thus the Alamanni in 366 seem to have headed directly west from the Rhine, with fighting being recorded at Scarponne (on the Moselle between Metz and Nancy) and Chalons-sur-Marne, the latter more than 300 km from the Rhine. The Hunnic attacks on Thermopylae and the Chersonese in 447 also resulted

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<sup>103</sup> murder, AM XXIX.6.5-6; infringing rights, AM XXVIII.2.1-9, XXIX.6.1-16; cf Trench, C.C., The Frontier Scouts (London, 1985), 165; reducing subsidies, AM XXVI.5.7; Priscus fr.24.2

<sup>104</sup> food, Priscus fr.37; Jordanes, Getica 283; Procopius, BV III.iii.1; clothing, Jordanes, Getica 283

<sup>105</sup> e.g. NVal IX (440); AM XVI.10.20, XVII.13.27, XXVIII.5.7; Eugippius, V.Sev. IV.1; ILS 8913

from deep penetrations. But even these large raids usually confined their activities to frontier areas. Frankish attacks seem to have concentrated on Trier, said to have been sacked four times in the first half of the fifth century. Other Frankish raids are known against Cologne and Toxandria, but until the late-fifth century the Somme seems to have been the western limit of Frankish activity in Gaul. Though the raids may not have penetrated deeply, raiding groups tended to split up and cover a wide area, albeit in small numbers (below p114).<sup>106</sup>

Marine raids could strike more deeply. The Heruli who attacked Spain in 455 must have sailed from as far east as the Rhine and were probably the Heruli who are mentioned by Procopius as living in Denmark. Saxons from east of the Rhine threatened the Loire valley and the Visigothic kingdom in Aquitaine. The long distance between marine raiders' place of origin and the areas they attacked suggests that knowledge of a short-term Roman weakness or direct Roman provocation were not likely to be motives and that raiders simply set out to plunder. Other naval raids were shorter in range, e.g. those of the Franks and Saxons against north Gaul and Britain.<sup>107</sup>

The plunder taken by the raiders tended to be confined to easily movable items. Gold, silver and jewellery were probably preferred, though they would rarely be available in large amounts unless towns were sacked.<sup>108</sup>

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<sup>106</sup> depth, Lyons, AM XVI.11.4; Trier, Salvian, dGD VI.39; Anton, H.H., 'Trier im Übergang von der Römische zur frankischen Herrschaft', Francia X (1982), 1-52

<sup>107</sup> Heruli, Hyd. 171; Saxons, GT HF II.18-19; SA Ep. VIII.6; AM XXVII.8.5, XXVIII.5.1

<sup>108</sup> luxuries, Maximus of Turin, Sermo 18.3; Hyd.114; AM XXVII.10.2?; Zos. V.5.6

plunder (unspecified): AM XVII.2.1, XIX.11.4, XX.1.1, XXI.3.1, XXVI.5.9, XXXI.5.8; Zos. IV.33.2, 48.1-2, VI.3.1; Sulpicius fr.1; Eunapius

Cattle and sheep would be useful plunder in the short term, providing food for raiders and essential supplies for groups wandering within the empire. But the capture of herd beasts would have a dramatic reduction in the mobility of the raiders, since cows and sheep cannot move more than 30 kpd, with no more than 15 kpd being recommended. Oxen have a maximum speed of 25 kpd. This slowing of movement sometimes contributed to raiders being caught while loaded with booty. Thus Frankish raiders retreating in 388 were caught in the Silvae Carbonariae because of their slow movement (below p117).<sup>109</sup>

A third type of plunder was prisoners (who could be ransomed later, but were usually kept as slaves). When negotiating peace treaties, the Romans generally demanded the release of prisoners, most of whom had presumably been captured in raids (below p258). Prisoners would also slow the movement of raids and increase the logistical burden by needing to be fed.<sup>110</sup>

Food or drink was also plundered, and often consumed on the spot. This occasionally lead to unfortunate consequences as the sated barbarians were caught by surprise, as happened to Franks in 356, Alamanni in 366 and Goths in 377.<sup>111</sup>

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fr.42.55-78; Jordanes, Getica 155, 271

<sup>109</sup> livestock, Claudian, in Eutropium I.247-248; AM XVI.5.17, XXVII.8.7, XXIX.6.6,8; Eugippius, V.Sev. IV.1, XXX.4; Malchus fr.18.2.29-30, 18.4; Jordanes, Getica 273; slowed by booty, Priscus fr.9.3.46-55; Sulpicius fr.1; Zos. IV.23.4; cf Mauricius, Strat. X.2.2; sheep, goats, etc., Dahl, G. and Hjort, A., Having Herds (Stockholm, 1976), 240; Manual of Horsemanship HMSO, (London, 1937), 254

<sup>110</sup> prisoners, AM XXVII.8.7, 10.2, XXIX.6.6,8, XXXI.6.7-8; Lib. Or. XVIII.34; Maximus of Turin, Sermo 18.3; Eugippius, V.Sev. IV.1, VIII.12; Claudian, in Eutropium I.245-246; Zos. V.5.6; CT V.6.2 (409), 7.1 (366), 2 (408); Jordanes, Getica 274; Hyd.131

<sup>111</sup> food and drink, AM XXVII.2.2; Zos. III.7.4, IV.23.4; Malchus fr.20.35-42

Some destruction might take place in plundered areas and statements about burning, especially in poetry, suggest this was common. Thus Orientius characterised the invasion of Gaul in 406 by the line 'all Gaul smoked as a funeral pyre'. Since many structures, especially in the countryside, would be of wooden construction with thatched roofs, accidental burning was probably common.<sup>112</sup>

Much of this plundering would go unrecorded in the archaeological record and consequently we are dependent on literary accounts for this sort of activity. It has been argued that the archaeological record in Britain reflects the destruction of the 367 raids, though closer examination of the quoted record suggests natural collapse or burning of different periods. According to Evans, 'evidence of destruction deposits...has yet to be demonstrated in the case of the 'Barbarian Conspiracy' in northern England'. The plundering described here usually resulted from raiding, but similar actions could occur during wars.<sup>113</sup>

### Conquest

The second type of attack was an attempt to settle within the empire, by conquest if necessary. These attacks occurred in the fourth century, but became more common in the fifth. If there was an opportunity to settle in the empire, barbarians would usually seize it. One example was the invasion of the Alamanni in 352-3, taking advantage of the near total collapse of

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<sup>112</sup> destruction, Orientius, Comonitorium II.184; AM XXIX.6.8, XXXI.5.8; Malchus fr.2.18-19, 20.2-5,99-100; GT HF II.6

<sup>113</sup> lack of archaeological impact, Whitehouse, D., 'Raiders and Invaders, the Roman Campania in the first Millennium AD', Papers in Italian Archaeology IV, part iv, BAR S246, eds. C. Malone and S. Stoddart, (Oxford, 1983), 207-213; Britain, Salway, P., Roman Britain (Oxford, 1981), 374-384; Evans, J., 'Settlement and Society in North-East England in the Fourth Century', Settlement and Society in the Roman North, ed. P.R. Wilson et al., (Bradford, 1984), 43-48 at 44-45

the Rhine frontier defences. This invasion probably started as a number of raids, but rapidly developed into settlement when it became apparent that there was no effective opposition. If land could be seized without fighting this would be done, for example by infiltrating Franks in north Gaul in the early-fifth century. As soon as barbarians settled on any territory they began farming on it.<sup>114</sup>

These movements into Roman territory were not always voluntary. The Frankish Salii who settled in Toxandria in 358 were driven into the empire by an attack of the Chamavian Franks and had to make the best of the situation. This was similar to the Gothic crossing of the Danube in 376. The Goths entered the empire as refugees from the Huns, not as invaders. Some were accepted by the Romans, others forced their way across the Danube. An attack of the Greuthungi in 386 is more difficult to evaluate. Women and children were apparently present at this attempt to cross the Danube and it seems that this was also an attempt to enter the empire by a whole people. Their motivation was probably similar to that which impelled them to try to enter the empire in 376, i.e. to escape from the Huns.<sup>115</sup>

For the settlements resulting from these movements to have any long-term security they needed to be recognised by the Romans and have provision for long-term security. Almost all the agreements which we know of between barbarians and Romans involved either supply of grain or land for farming.

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<sup>114</sup> Franks, AM XVII.8.3; farming, Lib. Or. XII.44,48, XVIII.43; Malchus fr.20.54-56

<sup>115</sup> Salii, AM XVII.8.3; Zos. III.6.2-3; Goths, Eunapius fr.42; Zos. IV.20.5; Greuthungi, Zos. IV.38-39

Other terms included cash payments and Roman offices for barbarian leaders.<sup>116</sup>

Some kingdoms or settlements were created without imperial sanction, as by the Salii Franci in 358, other Franks around 428, the Suevi, Alans and Vandals in 411 and Theoderic's Ostrogoths in Italy in 493. Such settlements would create tension with the indigenous population, many of whom would have to be dispossessed to provide land for the new arrivals. The Romans counterattacked or forced the settlers to move on as soon as they could. In the cases mentioned above, the Romans counterattacked almost immediately in 358 and 428 and over a number of years against the 411 settlers.<sup>117</sup>

Other settlements were the result of negotiations between barbarians and Romans on something approaching equal terms. These settlements were those of the Visigoths in Aquitaine in 418, Alans in Gaul in 440-442 and Burgundians in Gaul in 443 and 456. They are to be distinguished from those imposed by the Romans on barbarians, as settlers or POWs, without their own leaders (below p177).<sup>118</sup>

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<sup>116</sup> Goffart, W., Barbarians and Romans (Princeton, 1980) discusses legal basis of settlements and previous literature, but see also Barnish, S.J., 'Taxation, Land and Barbarian Settlement in the Western Empire', PBSR LIV (1986), 170-195; grain, Zos. V.48.3, 50.3; Olymp. fr.22.2, 30; Malchus fr.18.3.5-7; Philost. XII.4; land, Priscus fr.48.1, 49; Malchus fr.2.5-7, 18.3.5-7, 20.48-49; Zos. V.48.3, 50.3; no grain or land, Zos. V.36.1, 42.1; payment, Priscus fr.48.1; Zos. V.48.3; Malchus fr.18.3.13-14, 25-26; offices, Zos. V.48.3; Malchus fr.2.5-7, 22-28, 18.4.12-17; Claudian, de Bello Gothico 535-536, in Eutropium II.320-322

<sup>117</sup> illegal settlements, Salii, AM XVIII.8.3; Franks, Prosp. 1298; Suevi, Vandals and Alans, Thompson, E.A., Romans and Barbarians (Madison, 1982), 152-160; Hyd.49; Orosius VII.40.10; Visigoths, 413?, C.Gall.452 73; Burgundians, 413, Prosp. 1250; Ostrogoths, Ennodius, V.Epiphanii 132-134

<sup>118</sup> legal settlements, Thompson, E.A., Romans and Barbarians (Madison, 1982), 23-37, 50-57, 251-255; now also Burns, T.S., 'The Settlement of 418 and the Failure of the Policies of Theodosius the Great', GAUL; Nixon, C.E.V., 'Relations between Visigothic and Roman Gaul', GAUL

These settlements were more secure than those made without imperial sanction. Problems with local landlords could be ironed out quickly by the imperial administration, reducing the effect of disruption. The government-administered settlements of the Goths in Aquitaine and the Burgundians in Savoy seem to have caused less trouble than the autonomous settlement of the Suevi in Galicia. However, no writer in Gaul provided an account as detailed as that of Hydatius in Spain.<sup>119</sup>

When negotiating these settlements, barbarian groups could carry out their relations with the Romans (and each other) by ambassadors. This seems to be a change in practice since the fourth century when the Romans tended to deal with barbarian kings directly. Some barbarian kingdoms developed diplomatic specialists. Thus in Ostrogothic Italy, Senarius represented Theoderic the Great on twenty-five embassies, visiting Gaul, Spain, Africa and Constantinople. Such diplomacy could also be carried out by letter.<sup>120</sup>

As well as seizing opportunities, attacks could be made in an attempt to force a negotiated settlement on the Romans. If the barbarians could establish a dominant military or political position then they could force guarantees from the Romans. Thus Alaric's attacks on Rome and Ravenna in 409-410 were an attempt to compel Honorius to grant his demands. Gothic attempts to move into Africa to cut off corn supplies to Italy had the same objectives. Without a dominant position, Alaric was unable to compel Honorius to do anything and without success was himself liable to lose

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<sup>119</sup> trouble in Galicia, Hyd.91, 96, 119, 123, 137, 140, 142, 168, 179?, 196, 202, 229, 233, 241; Armorica, Constantius, V.Germani 28

<sup>120</sup> ambassadors, Ostrogoths, II: Faustus 9, Festus 5, Senarius; Visigoths, II: Leo 5; Hyd. 97, 170, 172, 192, 197, 205, 219, 233, 237; Jordanes, Getica 231; Huns, Jordanes, Getica 185-186, 225; Priscus fr.2, 11.1; Vandals, Priscus fr.36.1,2; Hyd.192, Malchus fr.17; Suevi, Hyd.226, 230, 245, 251; letters, Cass. Variae III.1-4; personal meetings, GT HF II.35

support through desertion. The conflict between Zeno and the Theoderics in the Balkans in the 470s and 480s was also of this type.<sup>121</sup>

### Self-Defence

The third reason for barbarian conflict with the Romans was self-defence. The Romans often tried to destroy or coerce barbarian groups. Such action could be direct, by military force, or indirect, blockading the barbarians in an attempt to starve them into submission. Roman strategy was the same whether attacking settled kingdoms or migratory groups. To avoid defeat and possible annihilation barbarians would be forced to attack the Romans, sometimes in disadvantageous conditions.

The types of conflict changed somewhat with the establishment of barbarian kingdoms and their recognition by the Romans. Campaigns now tended to revolve around the capture of a town, (the base from which authority could be exerted on a region) and raiding seems to have become less common. The 436-439 war between the Romans and the Visigoths, like the clashes between 395 and 415, was won by the Romans. But unlike earlier defeats the Romans did not force the Goths to leave Aquitaine and resume wandering. Instead, the Goths made a treaty with the Romans and their kingdom continued to exist.

However, where the resources were available and there was sufficient will, the Romans might try to destroy barbarian kingdoms. Justinian's wars against the Vandals and Ostrogoths suggest that reconquest of lost areas was possible in military terms, and worth attempting politically. Likewise, the expeditions launched against the Vandals during the fifth century

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<sup>121</sup> bringing to terms, Zos. V.37-VI.12; Malchus, fr.20; Heather, P.J., 'The Emergence of the Visigothic Kingdom', GAUL

almost certainly had reconquest rather than negotiation as their aim (below p252).

#### CONCLUSION

Reasons for hostilities between barbarians and Romans are simple to deduce, though it is not always possible to determine the precise reasons for the starting of any particular conflict. Hostilities seem to have become more common in the fifth century, though this was a barbarian response to Roman weakness, not a change of any sort in barbarian society or objectives.

## BARBARIAN TROOP TYPES AND EQUIPMENT

Warfare was a prominent feature in barbarian society and is also the element best recorded in their relations with the Romans. By the mid-fourth century there had been intermittent fighting along the Rhine and Danube for over three centuries without any major developments in barbarian technology or Roman military capability. Nor did any significant developments in barbarian warfare occur in the fourth and fifth centuries. Here, the types of troops fielded by barbarian armies are discussed, then their offensive and defensive equipment.<sup>122</sup>

### TROOP TYPES

Barbarian armies were composed of two troop types, infantry and cavalry.

The majority of barbarian soldiers were infantry, equipped only with a spear and shield. Richer men, such as optimates, might add a sword. Throwing weapons such as axes and javelins were common, long-distance weapons such as bows less so. Armour and helmets were rare at all levels.

This simple panoply was necessary for a number of reasons. One was a lack of skilled craftsmen and resources. Barbarian society may appear to have had a lot of metalwork, but in comparison to the Roman empire it had very little and most of this was confined to social elites. Armour and weapons were expensive and even after the Roman period the costs of equipping an infantryman with equipment beyond a shield and spear were high. There seems to be no reason why the same restrictions should not have

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<sup>122</sup> discussions of barbarian warfare, Thompson, E.A., The Early Germans (Oxford, 1965), 109-149; Todd, M., The Barbarians (London, 1972), 96-122 and The Northern Barbarians<sup>2</sup> (Oxford, 1987), 140-162; lack of development, ibid. 161-162, but also 191-192

applied in the fourth and fifth centuries. This problem was intensified by Roman prohibition of arms exports to barbarians. Although the effectiveness of such a prohibition is uncertain, making arms sales illegal would have increased prices and decreased availability.<sup>123</sup>

Barbarian infantry usually fought in a dense mass, but could send out parties of skirmishers armed with distance weapons before the main bodies clashed in battle (below p122). These skirmishers seem not to have been organised into different bodies and their equipment probably differed little from that of the men left in the main body.

In addition to their infantry, most barbarian cantons fielded some cavalry, their numbers varying from canton to canton. Cantons living in heavily wooded regions would obviously have fewer cavalry than those from the plains. Eastern barbarians (Goths, Sarmatians, Alans and Huns), living along the Theiss and the lower Danube seem to have had more cavalry available and armies from barbarians on the steppes (particularly the Huns and Alans), could consist entirely of cavalry. Otherwise, except in small mounted raiding parties, no more than a third, and more probably no more than a fifth, of any force would be cavalry. The only figures we have in this period for the proportions of cavalry are for the Ostrogoth Pitzias' expedition against Sabinianus in 505, when he led 2,000 foot and 500 horse.

The numbers of cavalrymen available could change over time. Thus the Visigoths probably possessed fewer cavalry in the period 380-418 than before their crossing of the Danube, a result of the hardship of their wanderings through Europe. Similarly, the Huns living around the Theiss in

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<sup>123</sup> prohibition of arms export, Digest XXXIX.4.11, XLVIII.4.1-4; CJ IV.41.1-2 (455/457), 63.2 (374?), XII.44 (420); CT VII.16.3 (420); shortage of weapons, Menander fr.5.4; Kunow, J., 'Bemerkungen zum Export römischer Waffen in das Barbaricum', LIMES, Studien zu den Militärgrenzen Roms III (Stuttgart, 1986), 740-746

the fifth century probably had fewer cavalry than the Moldavian Huns of the same period.<sup>124</sup>

Because of the expense of owning and feeding a horse, cavalry tended to be an elite and was generally drawn from the richer echelons of society, the optimates and regales. This was especially true in the west, though less so in the east, particularly on the steppes. Good cavalry horses (14+h.) were expensive and probably a mark of status. The late-sixth century Frankish Lex Ribuarie valued a stallion at seven solidi, a mare at three for wergild purposes. By comparison, cows were valued at one solidus and a helmet at six. Some steppe nomads may have had more than one horse.<sup>125</sup>

Once barbarians had settled within the empire increased landholding may have given some the resources to raise more cavalry, but a revolution in the proportions of cavalry in barbarian armies seems unlikely. Wolfram's statement that

the evidence for the far-reaching transformation of the [Visi-]Gothic army is clear cut: from this time [c.400] the cavalry set the tone and made up a larger and larger portion of the actual fighting force

has no basis in the evidence.<sup>126</sup> In Africa the Vandal army is reported to have mostly fought on horseback, but this seems to be an exaggeration. However, the immense wealth of the region allowed numerous cavalry to be

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<sup>124</sup> numbers, Dexippus fr 6.1ff says 40,000 of 120,000 Alamanni were cavalry, though numbers and proportions doubtful, Thompson, E.A., The Early Germans (Oxford, 1965), 116n2; Pitzias, Jordanes, Getica 300

<sup>125</sup> values, Lex Ribuarie XL.11; multiple horses, AM XVII.12.3, (though probably not relevant to the Sarmatians (above p33)); Mauricius, Strat. XI.2.9-14; regales, AM XVI.12.34-35; Olymp. fr.26.1; optimates, AM XXXI.5.7

<sup>126</sup> Wolfram, H., History of the Goths<sup>2</sup> (London, 1988), 167-168 at 168; cf Liebeschuetz, J.H.W.G., 'Generals, Federates and Buccelarii in Roman Armies around AD 400', The Defence of the Roman and Byzantine East, BAR S297 eds. P.W. Freeman and D.L. Kennedy, (Oxford, 1986), 463-474 at 464

fielded, though this was not a process that could be repeated elsewhere. In the sixth century, Merovingian and Ostrogothic armies continued to be composed of infantry for the most part.<sup>127</sup>

But though small in numbers, barbarian cavalry could be high in quality. Vegetius remarked that Roman cavalry had benefited from studying Goth, Hun and Alan cavalry. Even the Alamanni, whose home territory does not appear at first sight conducive to horsemanship, were described by Aurelius Victor as 'a people who fight wonderfully on horseback' and at Strasbourg they pushed back the right flank Roman cavalry. Marine raiders such as the Saxons are not known to have taken horses on raids, though they might, as the Vikings later did, commandeer horses after landing. But even these people would have some cavalry available if attacked at home.<sup>128</sup>

Most barbarian cavalry were shock troops, fighting in close formation with the primary function of defeating the enemy in melee. But some, especially those from the east where cavalry were more numerous and often bow armed, would act as light cavalry, with functions of skirmishing and harassing the enemy. Both types were probably used for scouting.

A last troop type, probably never used, was chariots. They apparently existed in Ireland at this date, but it is unlikely that they were ever transported to the mainland of Britain on raids. They were probably not used for military purposes.<sup>129</sup>

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<sup>127</sup> numbers, Visigoths, Merobaudes, Pan. I, fr IIB, 19-21; Vandals, Procopius, BV III.viii.27, though III.xix.15 and xxiii.7 suggest otherwise; Merovingians, below p88; Procopius, BG VI.xxv.2-3; Ostrogoths, Jordanes, Getica 300

<sup>128</sup> quality, Veg. I.20; Orosius VII.34.5; Alamanni, Aurelius Victor Caes. 21.2; Strasbourg, AM XVI.12.21-22; Visigoths, Merobaudes, Pan. I, fr IIB, 19-21; Vikings, ASC E 994

<sup>129</sup> Muirchu, V.Pat. 16



## EQUIPMENT

The evidence for barbarian equipment falls into two categories, literary and archaeological. Literary evidence gives only a general, though consistent, impression which has to be supplemented by archaeological evidence. There was little difference between the Romans and barbarians in the quality of available equipment and captured enemy equipment was used, on occasion, by barbarians.<sup>130</sup>

It is possible that literary evidence may be affected by stereotyping, with authors writing in the classicizing tradition portraying barbarians as howling half-naked savages (above p19). However, the consistency of the literary picture, especially when compared with material written in a less classical tradition from the sixth-century, suggests general accuracy, as does the positive correlation with archaeological evidence. A third-century historian stated that

the [Roman] archers found the Germans' bare heads and large bodies an easy long-distance target for their arrows. But if the [the barbarians] charged into close combat, they were stubborn fighters and often the equals of the Romans.

In 539, Procopius described the Franks as they invaded Italy.

They had a small body of cavalry around their leader, and these were the only ones armed with spears, while all the rest were infantry with neither bows nor spears, but each one had a sword and shield and axe.

The descriptions of barbarians in the sixth-century Strategikon of Maurice are similar. Western barbarians, Franks, Lombards, etc.,

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<sup>130</sup> survey, RGA<sup>2</sup>: Bewaffnung; Raddatz, K., 'Die Bewaffnung der Germanen vom letzten Jahrhundert vor Chr. Geb. bis zur Völkerwanderungszeit', ANRW II.12.3 (Berlin, 1985), 281-361; use of captured weaponry, Claudian, de Bello Gothico 535-539; AM XXXI.5.9, 6.3, 15.11; Zos. III.18.6

are armed with shields, spears and short swords slung from their shoulders. They prefer fighting on foot and rapid charges.

And the Slavs

are armed with short javelins, two to each man. Some also have nice-looking but unwieldy shields. In addition, they use wooden bows with short arrows smeared with a poisonous drug.

These accounts are similar and do not suggest great variety in barbarians equipment.<sup>131</sup>

Archaeological evidence for equipment usually comes from graves or ritual deposits. These finds give an idea of the equipment available and its geographical distribution. The best way to assess barbarian equipment archaeologically is to examine a number of cemeteries from different regions. This geographical variation should enable the hypothesis that 'all barbarians were the same' to be tested.

This examination is necessarily sketchy and is based to a great extent on secondary literature. Problems are created by the bias of work (especially published work) towards western Europe, and by an eastern European tendency to associate modern political groups and ancient material cultures.

There are several important points to note about cemeteries. First is the small number of burials with weapons, which indicates that weapon burial was not practised by every family on the same site, even assuming that weapon holding was universal. The second point is that we do not know what determined the presence or omission of weapons and armour in graves. Deposition was affected by ritual, social and economic considerations, which makes reconstruction of typical barbarian military equipment from

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<sup>131</sup> Herodian VI.7.8 (natural reading of context, though there are textual problems); Franks, Procopius, BG VI.xxv.2-3; cf Agathias, Hist. II.5.3-4; western barbarians, Mauricius, Strat. XI.3.2; Slavs, Mauricius, Strat. XI.4.11

graves an impossible practice. For example, graves have been found which contain a single francisca [Hemmingen, #16, 40; Gassen<sup>ö</sup>cker #17], a weapon which would have been of little use on its own in a battle. Regional variations also occur in the type of burial and the grave goods deposited. The motivation for burying weapons in Francia probably differed from that in Gothia, but we have no idea as to why and little about how. What we do know is that weapon burial was more common in Francia than in Gothia. Thirdly, there is an almost total lack of body armour in graves and helmets are rare. Lastly, the similarity of the equipment and weaponry to that of Roman soldiers is marked and on the basis of military equipment alone, no political distinction could be made.<sup>132</sup>

The evidence from cemeteries can thus be used to show what material was available (and probably used) in a particular area. However, absence of material in graves cannot be used as an argument for the lack of a particular type of equipment or its absence from a particular area. Nor can the cemeteries be used to show weapon combinations or proportions of one weapon to another or variations in these from one area to another.<sup>133</sup>

The first cemetery to be examined is Per<sup>ö</sup>chl, near Wittenburg, in Mecklenburg, deep within the barbaricum. This was a cremation cemetery of the late-third to fifth centuries. Of 429 adult cremations only ten

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<sup>132</sup> grave evidence, Halsall, G., 'The Origins of the Reihengraber: Forty Years On', GAUL; James, E., 'Cemeteries and the problem of Frankish Settlement in Gaul', Names, Words, and Graves, ed. P.H. Sawyer, (Leeds, 1979), 55-89 discuss some of the problems in using this material; bog deposits, Hines, J., 'The Military Context of the adventus saxonum: some continental evidence', Weapons and Warfare in Anglo-Saxon England, ed. S.C. Hawkes, (Oxford, 1989), 25-48

<sup>133</sup> for examples of the misuse possible, James, E., 'Cemeteries and the Problem of Frankish Settlement in Gaul', Names, Words, and Graves, ed. P.H. Sawyer, (Leeds, 1979), 55-89 at 78; Todd, M., The Northern Barbarians<sup>2</sup> (Oxford, 1987), 142

contained weapons, perhaps 5% of male graves. All of the weapons were spears and light javelins, in numbers varying from one to eight per grave. There were no swords, shield bosses etc., though their survival may have been affected by cremation. There were no bows, armour or helmets surviving. This site in the barbaricum, approximately 320 km from the Rhine, differs little from other contemporary cemeteries in the same area and is mainly distinguished from earlier cemeteries by the presence of weaponry.<sup>134</sup>

The second example is a late-fifth to early-sixth century inhumation cemetery at Hemmingen, 15 km northwest of Stuttgart and approximately 80 km east of the Rhine, lying in Alamannia. The cemetery was small, with only fifty-seven graves excavated. Of the adult burials, sixteen were of men, thirty-one of women and two of unknown sex. There were three male child burials, three female and two of unknown sex. Two of the three male child graves contained weapons as did eight of the sixteen male graves. Of the latter, four contained either a single francisca or javelin, one a single spatha, one a sax and javelin, one a spatha and javelin, and the richest grave (#2) a spatha, francisca and several javelins. Two of the graves with spathae (but not #2) also had shield bosses.

Hemmingen can be compared with another inhumation cemetery of the same date at Heidenheim-Grosskuchen, a village near Heidenheim in southern West Germany. Of the twenty fifth-century burials, five were male, thirteen female and two of unsexed children. Two graves of adult males contained

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<sup>134</sup> Perdhl, Schuldt, E., Perdhl (Berlin, 1976); cf Leube, A., 'Archologische Formengruppen im nördlichen Elb-Oder-Gebiet während des 1. bis 4. Jhrhrt', Prace Archeologiczne XXII (1976), 355-370

weapons, one a francisca (#17), the other a shield, spear and spatha (#21).<sup>135</sup>

Both these examples had a greater variety of equipment than the cemetery at Per<sup>o</sup>chl, possibly the result of easier access to Roman traders, though the fact that Per<sup>o</sup>chl was a cremation cemetery is important. It is also important that peoples based in north Germany tended not to bury weapons with their dead until the early-sixth century.

The third example is from the eastern fringes of the barbaricum at Let<sup>f</sup>ani in modern Rumania, about 30 km east of the Prut and c.200 km north of the Danube. It is a late-fourth century cemetery of the Sintana de Mures-Chernjakov culture, with forty-eight graves, both inhumed and cremated. Sixteen burials are cremations, thirty-two inhumations. Of the latter, seventeen were female, five male, three adult and unsexable and seven of children. It is characteristic of cemeteries east of the Danube bend in having few weapons buried in it. Only two of the burials contain any military equipment. One (#21) contained what might be a shield boss, another (#25) a spear head. No other burial contains any weaponry and even the knives so common in contemporary western cemeteries are almost totally absent.<sup>136</sup>

#### CONCLUSION

The evidence for barbarian equipment has to be used with care, but it is adequate to show what was available to barbarian warriors. However,

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<sup>135</sup> Hemmingen, Mller, H.F., Die alamannische Grberfeld von Hemmingen (Stuttgart, 1976); Heege, A., Grabfunde der Merowingerzeit aus Heidenheim-Grosskuchen (Stuttgart, 1987), 1-125 [=Gassen<sup>o</sup>cker]

<sup>136</sup> Bloşiu, C., 'Necropola dia secolul al IV-lea e.n. de la Let<sup>f</sup>ani (jud. Iaşi)', Arheologia Moldovei VIII (1975), 203-280, with French summary; details of other cemeteries in same region, Werner, J., 'Dančeny und Brangstaup', Bonner Jahrbucher CLXXXVIII (1988), 241-286

the distribution of equipment and weapon combinations cannot easily, if at all, be deduced from the archaeological record.

## OFFENSIVE WEAPONRY

Weaponry used can be divided into distance weapons, used before contact, and hand-to-hand weapons. Here infantry weapons are discussed first, then cavalry weapons.

### Missile Weapons

Missile weapons can be subdivided into two groups, long and short-range weapons. The only long-range weapon used by the barbarians was the bow. The most common type was the longbow, constructed from a single piece of wood. Complete examples from bog deposits at Thorsberg are 1.65 m and 1.51 m in length, and one from Nydam measures 1.9 m. But bows of composite wood and horn construction were also used, especially among those people with steppe antecedents, the Alans, Sarmatians and Huns. Archaeological evidence for bows is rare and they are not often found in graves. However, iron or bone arrowheads and horn stiffeners often survive if they were used (but being intrinsically undatable may not always be dated correctly). Ammianus says that the Huns used bone arrowheads, but none have survived that can be assigned to the Huns. However, of 125 arrowheads from Nydam 14 were of bone, so barbarians did use bone for this purpose.<sup>137</sup>

Such missile weapons seem not to have been widely used and were probably carried by only a few warriors, perhaps those in skirmishing roles. Though archers do occur in literary accounts, only the Huns had a reputation for numbers of bowmen. Some people even achieved the opposite

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<sup>137</sup> bows, Raddatz, K., Der Thorsberger Moorfund (Neumnster, 1987), 511, 512; Beckhoff, K., 'Die eigenzeitlichen Kriegsbogen von Nydam', Offa XX (1963), 39-48; Raddatz, K., 'Pfeilspitzen aus den Moorfund von Nydam', Offa XX (1963), 49-56; bone arrowheads, AM XXXI.2.9; problems in survival of archery equipment, Coulston, J.C., 'Roman Archery Equipment', The Production and Distribution of Roman Military Equipment, BAR S275, ed. M.C. Bishop, (Oxford, 1985), 220-366 at 222-224

reputation, Agathias stating that the Franks did not know how to use bows.<sup>138</sup>

Barbarians are not known to have used slings, though the cheapness and simplicity of this weapon makes it unlikely never to have been used.<sup>139</sup>

Short-range missile weapons were usually spears. Literary accounts stress the large number of spears thrown before contact, e.g. 'hurling weapons from all sides like hail'. Many graves contain more than one spear, some of which may have been used for throwing (as javelins) and others retained for hand-to-hand combat. Graves have been found with as many as eight of these weapons [Perdh<sup>ö</sup>l #382] which would suggest that some individuals had considerable missile power, though the number of men so armed is unknown. No differences exist which can be used to divide the finds into throwing and melee weapons. The same weapons, or at least their heads, were probably used for both purposes, though thrown weapons may have had shorter shafts. Such javelinheads are often described in archaeological reports as 'pfeilspitzen', although their shaft diameter, usually around 2 cm, makes most of them too large to be arrows, which usually have shafts of less than 1 cm in diameter.<sup>140</sup>

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<sup>138</sup> use, Alamanni, AM XXVII.1.3, XXXI.10.8; Eunapius fr.18.6; Franks, Sulpicius fr.1 (n.b. poison, cf SA Carm. V.400-402; Pactus Legis Salicae XVII.2; Mauricius, Strat. XI.4.11); Goths, AM XXXI.7.13-14; Orosius VII.33.14; Veg. I.20; Sarmatian bows, HA Triginti Tyranni X.12; Huns, SA Carm. II.266; Olymp. fr.19; AM XXXI.2.9; Jordanes, Getica 128, 255; Vandals, SA Carm. V.400-402; lack of use, Agathias, Hist. II.5.4

<sup>139</sup> lack of use, Agathias, Hist. II.5.4

<sup>140</sup> thrown weapons, AM XXVII.1.3-5; Lib. Or. LIX.131; Werner, J., 'Pfeilspitzen aus Silber und Bronz in germanischen Adelsgräbern der Kaiserzeit', Historisches Jahrbuch LXXIV (1955), 38-41; volume of fire, AM XIV.10.6, XVI.12.46, XXVII.1.3; multiples, Veg. I.20; Mauricius, Strat. XI.4.11; AM XIV.2.7; arrow shaft diameters, Hardy, R., Longbow (Cambridge, 1976), 200-201, 5/16" = 8 mm; also Coulston, J.C., 'Roman Archery

As well as these javelins, short-range missile power could be provided by angons [Hemmingen # 2 1], franciscas [Hemmingen #2] or saxes. Angons were spears with the initial length of the shaft protected by a metal sheath, 1.64 m long in an angon from Krefeld-Gellep

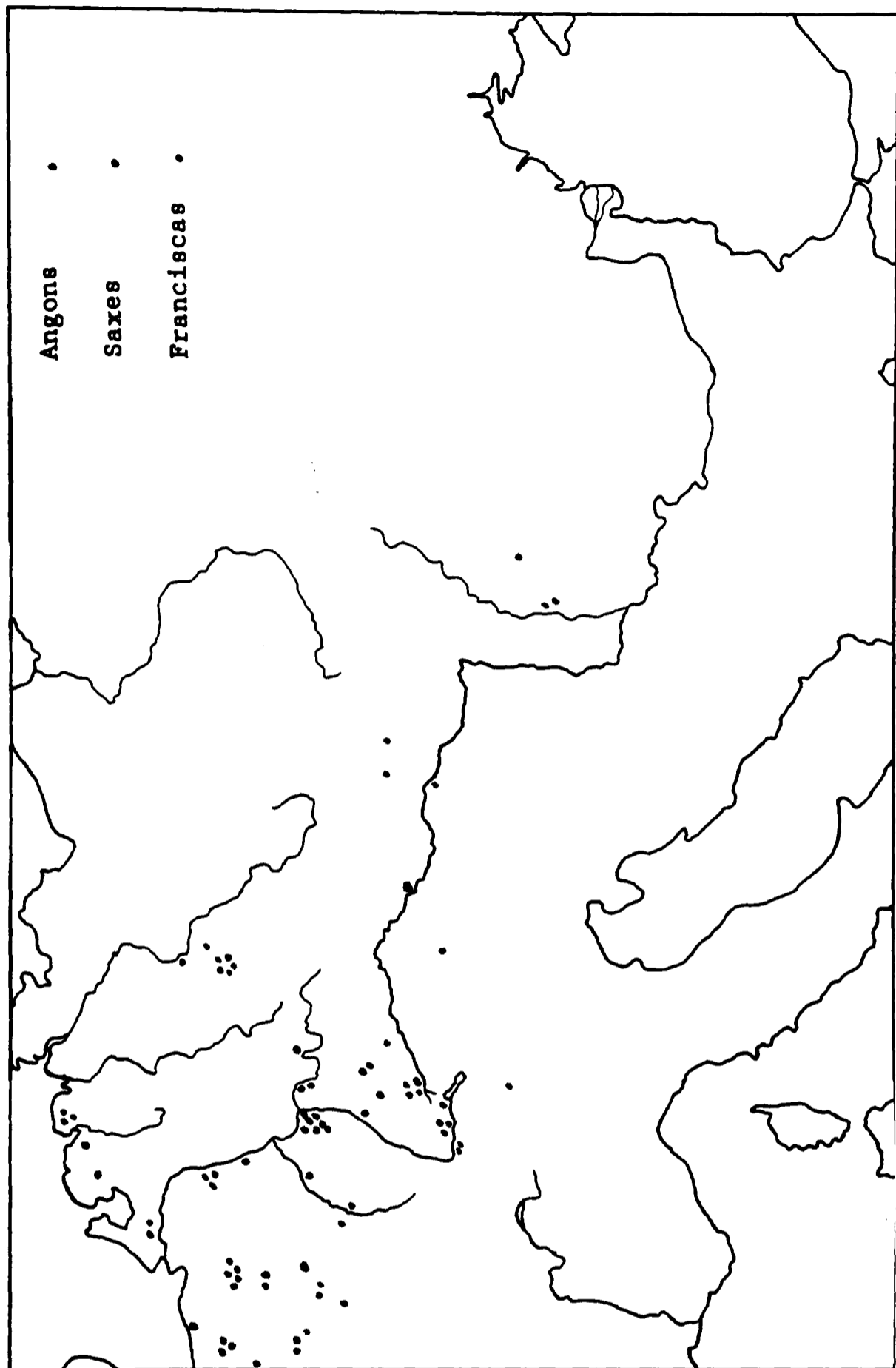


Figure 9: Angons, Franciscas and Saxes in Europe in the fourth and fifth centuries

Krefeld-Gellep

[#1782], but usually shorter. They may have been intended to stop the spearheads being cut from the shaft by edged weapons. These were usually

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Equipment', The production and Distribution of Roman Military Equipment, BAR S275, ed. M.C. Bishop, (Oxford, 1985), 220-366 at 264n, 266-267

carried in addition to other weapons. Angons were also widely distributed, being found in Alamannia, as well as deep in the barbaricum on the Elbe, in England and modern Czechoslovakia (Figure 9). Agathias said that the Franks had

axes with two edges and angones which they use for all purposes. The angones are spears, not very small, but not very big either, of a size both for throwing, if need be, and for meeting charges at close quarters.<sup>141</sup>

Franciscas were throwing axes. Although franciscas are traditionally supposed to have been a Frankish weapon, their find locations do not support this theory. They are found in large numbers in Francia and in Gaul, but are also to be found (in smaller numbers) in England, Alamannia [Hemmingen #2, 16, 29, 32] and further east (Figure 9).<sup>142</sup>

A third type was the sax, a single-edged knife. They had a point but only one cutting edge and were c.0.3-0.65 m in length. Although the Saxons were supposed to derive their name from the sax, these weapons were found throughout the barbaricum [Hemmingen #15](Figure 9).<sup>143</sup>

In all three cases, the distribution of these artefacts probably reflects the amount of fieldwork and publication carried out, as well as the spread of material. However, the distribution is certainly wider than would be expected if angons and franciscas were characteristic of the Franks, as was suggested by contemporary writers.<sup>144</sup>

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<sup>141</sup> angons, Schnurbein, S. von, 'Zum Ango', Festschrift für Joachim Werner zum 65 Geburtstag, eds. G. Kossack and G. Ulbert, (München, 1974), 411-433; Agathias, Hist. I.21.8, II.5-8; RGA<sup>2</sup>: Ango

<sup>142</sup> franciscas, Agathias, Hist. II.5.4; SA Carm. V.246-249, Ep. IV.20.3; Procopius, BG VI.xxv.2-4

<sup>143</sup> Gale, D.A., 'The Seax', Weapons and Warfare in Anglo-Saxon England, ed. S.C. Hawkes, (Oxford, 1989), 71-83

<sup>144</sup> distributions plotted from Böhme, H., Germanische Grabfunde des 4 bis 5 Jahrhunderts zwischen unterer Elbe und Loire (Munich, 1974), Menghin, W., Das Schwert im frühen Mittelalter (Stuttgart, 1983) and Germanen, Hunnen und Avarer (Nürnberg, 1987). The intention is to show that these

A last type of thrown weapon was the stone, a weapon of desperation at times, but also one that was cheap, readily available and effective against armoured troops, being capable of causing severe bruising.

### Melee Weapons

The basic melee weapon of barbarian infantry was the spear, by far the most common weapon found in graves. Spears were simple to produce and an effective weapon when used by close formation infantry. The functional nature of spears meant that there was little variety in the form of the spearhead. Their length appears to have been c.2.5-3.5 m. The angons used for throwing (above p96) could also be used in hand-to-hand combat when their metal shafts would be of some value.<sup>145</sup>

Swords were much less common weapons than spears. Their production was a skilled and expensive affair and swords were therefore rare beyond the Roman empire, though they seem to have been relatively common within it. Many barbarian graves found with swords also contain spears, which may suggest that it was a status symbol as well as a primary weapon. These swords were mostly long (c. 0.8-1.0 m), two-edged weapons with a point, able to be used for both thrusting and cutting. They differed little from the Roman spatha.

Swords may have become slightly more common during the fourth and fifth centuries, though this cannot be deduced from our evidence. Any increase in number was a gradual process, resulting from continued contact with the Romans and increasing wealth as a result of settlement in the

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weapons were used over a wide area and not to plot all known find spots; it also shows the lack of readily accessible syntheses of Eastern European archaeology and the rarity of weapon burials from this region

<sup>145</sup> spears, Swanton, J., The Spearheads of the Anglo-Saxon Settlements (London, 1983); length, AM XVII.12.2; Lib. Or. LIX.275

empire. A small increase in the use of swords would not make any significant difference to barbarian warfare. Although more swords would make individual barbarian warriors more effective against armoured troops, increasing the small number of men with swords would not allow the barbarians to do anything they could not already do. The spear remained the weapon of the majority throughout this period.<sup>146</sup>

Saxes were also common hand-to-hand weapons throughout the barbaricum. They were cheap to produce and were presumably used by less well-off barbarians or as secondary weapons.<sup>147</sup>

Axes, clubs and warhammers were used on occasion, but do not appear to have been common hand-to-hand weapons. No people achieved a reputation for their use similar to that gained by the Franks for thrown axes. Many of the axes and hammers found in graves may have been tools rather than weapons.<sup>148</sup>

Cavalry weapons were similar to infantry weapons, but the rarity of archaeological evidence for weaponry that definitely belonged to cavalry blurs distinctions between the two types. Therefore this section makes more use of literary evidence than the preceding. Even when spurs or harnesses are found in graves (rarely in the fourth and fifth centuries, though more common later), the equipment may have been intended for use dismounted.

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<sup>146</sup> swords, recently, Menghin, W., Das Schwert im frühen Mittelalter (Stuttgart, 1983), though unfortunately limited to 5th-7th centuries and some of western Europe; Lønstrup, J., 'Das zweischneidige Schwert aus der jüngeren römischen Kaiserzeit im freien Germanien und im römischen Imperium', LIMES Studien zu den Militärgrenzen Roms III (Stuttgart, 1986), 747-749; rarity, Beowulf 2047-2056; cost, (7 solidi), Lex Ribuariae XL.11

<sup>147</sup> saxes, above, p96

<sup>148</sup> clubs, AM XXXI.7.12; axes, AM XXXI.13.3; warhammers, Menghin, W., Das Schwert im frühen Mittelalter (Stuttgart, 1983), #39,44,45

Missile weapons used by mounted troops were bows and javelins. The bow seems only to have been used by individual cavalymen in the west, not by large numbers. This was probably an extension of the hunting use of the bow described by Sidonius Apollinaris for Theoderic II. Cavalry deriving from steppe peoples, the Huns and Alans (and perhaps the Sarmatians and Goths), probably made greater use of the bow, though there is unfortunately very little direct evidence. However, Hunnic foederati regiments in Roman service were probably equipped with bows, reflecting equipment with which they fought well. Short-range missiles were probably provided by javelins, though numbers of missiles carried is unknown.<sup>149</sup>

Melee weapons were the spear and sword. Cavalry spears seem (at least on the evidence of a seventh-century tombstone and late Alamannic graves) to have been the same length as infantry spears. Analogy with Roman practice and a seventh-century tombstone suggest they could be held underarm and used as a lance, though overarm thrusting probably continued. The use of swords was probably more widespread than among infantry, since those rich enough to afford horses could probably also afford swords.<sup>150</sup>

Lastly, a weapon occasionally used by cavalymen was the lasso, though its use appears to have been confined to those cavalry deriving from the Danube basin.<sup>151</sup>

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<sup>149</sup> bows (above p94), Theoderic, SA Ep. I.2.5; Huns, AM XXXI.2.9; Olymp. fr.19; Maenchen-Helfen, O., The World of the Huns (Berkeley, 1973), 221-232; Jordanes, Getica 128, 255; SA Carm. II.266; Hun foederati, Zos. V.45.6 and below p162; javelins, cf sixth-century nomads, Procopius, BG VI.i.8-10; Mauricius, Strat. XI.2.6

<sup>150</sup> spears, Mauricius, Strat. XI.2.6; AM XVI.12.24; tombstone in Halle Landesmuseum, Brown, P., The World of Late Antiquity (London, 1971) pl.80; swords, Mauricius, Strat. XI.2.6

<sup>151</sup> lassoes, Olymp. fr.18 (but see Blockley, Fragmentary Classicising Historians of the Later Roman Empire (Liverpool, 1983), vol II for text note); AM XXXI.2.9; Soz. VII.26.6; Malalas 364

## DEFENSIVE EQUIPMENT

Although the quality of barbarian military equipment was roughly equal to that of the Romans, the quantity certainly was not. Nowhere is this more apparent than in defensive equipment - shields, body armour and helmets. The Romans themselves remarked on this shortage, which is also very visible in the archaeological record.

Shields were the most common type of defensive equipment, complementing the spear and probably used by most warriors. There are fewer surviving examples than weapon graves or spears, though the majority of the (earlier) pictorial evidence shows barbarians with shields and no late antique author suggests that shields were lacking, though they do mention the lack of armour. Shields were probably not placed in graves in large quantities.

Preservation was also affected by their construction. Shields were made from wood or hide with a metal boss, though some first-century AD shields from bog deposits were constructed from wood alone. Some third-century shields had metal bindings around the rim and this may have been common, with a fifth-century example being known from Skedemosse in Denmark. Tacitus notes that shields were painted and it is probable that this was also the case in the fourth and fifth centuries, similar to the shield from the ninth-century Gokstad ship. Surviving shields were circular and a third-century example from Thorsberg was around 1.0 m in diameter, though oval shields similar to Roman examples were probably also common. One Hun is described as having a habit of leaning on his shield, suggesting

a height in excess of 1 m. Some spiked shieldbosses have been found suggesting a function as a secondary weapon.<sup>152</sup>

Though shields may have been plentiful, armour was not common in either the literary or archaeological evidence. Literary evidence suggests very little armour was available. In all Ammianus' descriptions of the Alamanni, only one man is mentioned who wore armour and a helmet, king Chonodomarius at the battle of Strasbourg. In the fifth century Sidonius Apollinaris' description of Sigismer, a Germanic prince, includes an extensive description of his and his bodyguards' arms, including shields, but no mention of their armour. Even though Sigismer was on his way to be married, one suspects that he would have worn armour if he had owned any.<sup>153</sup>

Archaeologically, an idea of the rarity of armour can be provided by Bhme's synthesis of Germanic graves of the fourth and fifth centuries between the Elbe and the Loire. In a list of over 100 weapon graves, none of these beyond the Rhine contain either a helmet or body armour. This point is reinforced by Menghin's study of early-medieval swords, which lists only two helmets and no body armour in a sample of 100 spathae finds, mostly from graves, of the fifth and early-sixth centuries. Owners of spathae would tend to be rich and most likely to own any defensive equipment available. Even the grave of Childeric I, the Frankish king buried at Tournai in 481 seems not to have contained any defensive armour, though it is one of the richest barbarian graves from the fifth century.

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<sup>152</sup> shields, bindings, Raddatz, K., Der Thorsberger Moorfund (Neumünster, 1987), #298-309, 311, 313, Taf. 29; SA Ep. IV.20.3(?); Hagberg, U.E., The Marsh of Skedemosse (Stockholm, 1967), #847, pl.19; painted, Tacitus, Germania VI.3; Hun, Soz. VII.26.6

<sup>153</sup> Chonodomarius, AM XVI.12.24; Lib. Or. XVIII.61; Sigismer, SA Ep. IV.20; cf Herodian VI.7.8

There is some archaeological evidence for mail shirts, but this is mostly confined to the Baltic coast, and as far as is known there are none attributed to the fourth and fifth centuries close to the empire. Even the rich bog deposits of the late-second and early-third century at Thorsberg contained only four small pieces of mail.<sup>154</sup>

Finds of armour and literary mentions are usually mail. The only other type mentioned is the scale armour of the Sarmatians. The manner of description in a clearly derivative passage suggests this is a topos, and similar armour is mentioned by Pausanias (above p35). However, some scale armour is known from eastern Europe at this period and though it was uncommon it was not totally unknown.<sup>155</sup>

Once barbarian groups had settled within the empire armour may have become more common, though its expense meant that it was still usually confined to the nobility. Among the Ostrogoths in the sixth century only their nobles had armour and Agathias could describe the Franks at the same time as totally lacking body armour. The late-sixth century Lex Ribuarie valued a mailshirt as twelve solidi and a helmet as six solidi for wergild purposes, when a cow was valued as one solidus.<sup>156</sup>

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<sup>154</sup> Böhme, H., Germanische Grabfunde des 4 bis 5 Jahrhunderts zwischen unterer Elbe und Loire (Munich, 1974); Menghin, W., Das Schwert im frühen Mittelalter (Stuttgart, 1983); Raddatz, K., Der Thorsberger Moorfund (Neumünster, 1987) #407.1, 408, 415, 416

<sup>155</sup> scale, AM XVII.12.2; Pausanias I.21.8; Maenchen-Helfen, O., The World of the Huns (Berkeley, 1973), 241-251

<sup>156</sup> value, Lex Ribuarie XL.11; armour, Mauricius, Strat. XI.2.6; GT HF V.48; Agathias, Hist. II.5.3; Paul the Deacon, Historia Langobardorum I.20; nobles only, Procopius, BG V.xxiii.9, VII.iv.21; cf MGH Legum Sectio II, Capitularia Regum Francorum I, 44.6 (805), 77.9 (801-813); lack of armour, Procopius, BP II.xxv.27, BG VII.xiv.26; Mauricius, Strat. XI.4.15-16

The rarity of armour can be shown by evidence from a slightly later period. The (originally) sixth-century poem Beowulf gives the impression, unique among literary sources, that armour was widespread. However, poetic heroes seem likely to have had the best equipment technologically available, so the poem probably does not reflect contemporary distribution of equipment, only technology. Indeed, its constant stress on the armour worn by protagonists suggests that armour was rare. Beowulf himself was equipped with a chain shirt, but his request to Hrothgar before fighting Grendel shows its value

But if the fight should take me, you would forward to Hygelac  
This best of battle-shirts, that my breast now wears,  
The queen of war-coats, it is the bequest of Hrethel  
And from the forge of Wayland.

This tradition of handing down armour may account for its rarity in graves.

Armour could also be burnt on the pyre of a dead hero.

The pyre was erected, the ruddy gold  
brought from the hoard, and the best warrior  
of Scylding race was ready for the burning  
displayed on his pyre, plain to see  
were the bloody mail-shirt, the boars on the helmet

The same poem describes the death of king Hygelac, 'the king's person passed into Frankish hands, together with his corselet'. Its loss was worth mentioning. These two mechanisms could account for the lack of armour in the archaeological record, but they would only have evolved if there had been a shortage of armour.<sup>157</sup>

Helmets were also rare, though they appear to have been more common than body armour. Some have been found in graves beyond the Rhine and Danube and a few examples have also been found in cemeteries within the

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<sup>157</sup> handed down armour, Beowulf 452-456, 2615-2624, 2809-2812; cf Maenchen-Helfen, O., The World of the Huns (Berkeley, 1973), 241; destruction on pyre, Beowulf 1107-1113, 3136-3139; Hygelac, Beowulf 1210-1211

empire. Nevertheless, they were probably owned mostly by the rich. Like swords and body armour, helmets probably became more common as barbarians settled in the empire. By the late-fifth century the Ostrogoths in Italy had taken over the Roman fabricae (below p152) there and were using them to produce some equipment. The helmets known to us are metal, but it is possible that some men wore leather helmets which would be unlikely to survive archaeologically.<sup>158</sup>

During the sixth century some rich individuals obtained almost complete sets of armour, but even as late as the ninth century full armour was worth remarking on as a description of Charlemagne shows.

Then came in sight that man of iron, Charlemagne, topped with his iron helm, his fists in iron gloves, his iron chest and Platonic shoulders clad in an iron cuirass.<sup>159</sup>

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<sup>158</sup> helmets, Werner, J., 'Zur Herkunft der frühmittelaltlichen Spangenhelm', Prähistorische Zeitschrift XXXIV-XXXV (1949-1950), 178-193; literary references are rare, AM XVI.12.24

<sup>159</sup> Charlemagne, De Carolo Magno.17, MGH Scriptores II (Berlin, 1829)

## BOATS

The boats used by barbarians living by the North Sea were probably similar to the clinker-built long boats of Scandinavia, e.g. the contemporary Nydam boat, as well as the similar, though later, Sutton Hoo (seventh century) and Gokstad (ninth century) ships.

These longboats were oar driven, having no keels and thus no place for a mast. Although Sidonius suggests that Saxon ships had sails, we do not know if he had ever seen a Saxon vessel. Such longboats had a shallow draught and could manoeuvre in shallow waters and up rivers, as well as being easy to beach. We do not know whether these boats could carry horses, though the sixth-century vessels recorded in Beowulf could, suggesting that small numbers might have been transported at this period. The boats used by the Scotti to raid Britain were probably similar.<sup>160</sup>

The Vandals in the Mediterranean used different types of boats. Though the evidence is limited, it seems probable that the Vandals used galleys for their expeditions. Several naval battles are recorded, showing their ability to fight at sea, something that would be unlikely if they were using transport vessels. Some ships may have been able to carry horses. They also used fireships. The fleet created by the Ostrogoths in Italy was probably similar and is recorded as having used galleys.<sup>161</sup>

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<sup>160</sup> boats, Hodges, R., Dark Age Economics (London, 1982), 94-97; Nydam boat, Shettig, H., 'Das Nydamschiff', Acta Arch. Copenhagen I (1930), 1-30; SA Ep. VIII.6.15; Procopius, BG VIII.xx.31; Scotti, Alcock, L., Arthur's Britain (London, 1971), 265-266; horses, Beowulf 1896-1898

<sup>161</sup> Vandal ships, Procopius, BV III.vi.21-23; Theoph. AM 5961; horses, SA Carm. V.398-3997; fireships, Procopius, BV III.vi.17-20; Ostrogoths, Auct. Haun. sa 493 (dromones)

## CONCLUSION

Although reference to earlier sources has generally been avoided, Tacitus' description of barbarian equipment in the first century is particularly illuminating.

Only a very few [barbarians] have swords or spears. The spears that they carry, *frameae* is the native word, have short and narrow heads, but are so sharp and easy to handle that the same weapon serves for fighting hand-to-hand or at a distance. The horseman demands no more than a shield and spear, but the infantry has also javelins for throwing, several to each man, and can hurl them to a great distance... few have breastplates [*loricae*], and only here or there a helmet of metal or hide... their strength lies in their infantry rather than cavalry.<sup>162</sup>

There was no significant change in barbarian equipment from Tacitus' time until the sixth century.

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<sup>162</sup> Tacitus, Germania VI.1-2

## BARBARIAN OPERATIONS

Operational aspects of barbarian armies have been greatly understudied and little work has been done on the subject since Gundel's dissertation of 1937.<sup>163</sup> Many general accounts have been coloured by the belief that most barbarian armies were mostly cavalry.<sup>164</sup>

## DEPLOYMENT AND MUSTERING

In the fourth century, the only bodies of standing troops among the barbarians were comitatus (above p51), so before fighting an army had to be mustered. Though small numbers of men could be brought together swiftly, assembling warriors from a number of cantons would take longer. However, the martial nature of society meant that most men would have weapons close to hand. Thus if the Romans could catch barbarians at home by surprise then they might be able to defeat them in detail.

Evidence for the size of attacks is extremely sketchy and there is not enough evidence from which to draw firm conclusions. Most raids seem to have been conducted by a single canton and appear not to have been much bigger than 2,000 men. Most were smaller than this. The size of these groups seems to have remained roughly constant over the fourth and fifth centuries. In the winter of 357, a group of Franks occupied a deserted fort on the river Meuse. This band was recorded by different sources as 600 and 1000 strong. A century later, Majorian defeated a band of 900 Alamanni who had crossed the Alps. In 378 raiders of the Lentienses, having broken through the border troops, were defeated by an auxilia palatina brigade,

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<sup>163</sup> Gundel, H.G., Untersuchungen zur Taktik und Strategie der Germanen nach den antiken Quellen (Marburg, 1937)

<sup>164</sup> Wolfram, H., History of the Goths<sup>2</sup> (London, 1988), 167-168; Liebeschuetz, J.H.W.G., Barbarians and Bishops (Oxford, 1990), 33-34

a force no more than 2,500 strong.<sup>165</sup> Estimating the size of larger attacks is impossible. Many figures given by our sources are unbelievable, i.e. armies over 100,000 men. But occasionally we hear of smaller totals which may be accurate. At the battle of Strasbourg in 357 the kings of four to six Alamannic cantons led 35,000 men, who included some mercenaries and some lent (by other kings?) as a favour. These groups seem not to have been organised in any formal manner and leadership was the duty of kings and optimates.<sup>166</sup>

Estimating tribal strength, i.e. the number of barbarians in a region, is obviously difficult, given the problems with estimating cantonal size and numbers of cantons. The best evidence for the size of tribes is provided by the Alamanni. The three largest Alamannic armies that we have evidence for in this period are recorded by Ammianus Marcellinus. Two were 35,000 in 357 and 40,000 strong in 378. A third was in three divisions in 366, of which one was over 10,000 strong.

Comparisons with earlier barbarian tribes such as the Helvetii and their allies in 58 BC would suggest that approximately 20-25% of the population were able to fight as warriors. This would give the Alamanni a minimum population base of around 150,000. This figure is roughly comparable with the strength of the Tervingi in 376 who are recorded by Eunapius as having a population of 200,000 when they crossed the Danube.<sup>167</sup>

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<sup>165</sup> sizes, Meuse, Lib. Or. XVIII.70; AM XVII.2.1; Majorian, SA Carm. V.373-380; Lentienses, AM XXXI.10.4; cf Eugippius, V.Sev. IV.2-4, XXVII.2-3

<sup>166</sup> Goffart, W., Barbarians and Romans (Princeton, 1980), 231-234; size, Strasbourg, AM XVI.12.4, 24-26; Cannabaudes, HA Aurelian XXII.2

<sup>167</sup> Alamanni, 357, AM XVI.12.26; 378, AM XXXI.10.5; 366, AM XXVII.2.4,7; population size, Caesar, de Bello Gallico I.29, 92,000 warriors from a population of 368,000, a suspiciously exact ratio of 1:3; Tervingi, Eunapius fr.42.4-5; cf Dexippus fr.6 mentioning 120,000 Iuthungi in the third century

In the late-fifth century some of the barbarian kingdoms began to create small standing forces, in addition to comitatus. Standing forces are known at the Visigothic court in the late-fifth century, in Ostrogothic Italy and perhaps in Vandal Africa. These were not standing armies like the Roman army, but garrisons placed at strategic points. The Ostrogoths placed some on the borders of their kingdom, others were concentrated in royal courts. These armies never became very large (for financial reasons) and for large campaigns armies would have to be levied from the population as a whole. Some formal units began to appear, or at least leaders such as χιλιαρχαι or millenarii, suggesting some organisation, though probably not a sophisticated one.<sup>168</sup>

#### PLANNING

The amount of planning involved in raids appears to have been minimal since they were simply intended to gain plunder (above p75). These raids could take place at any time of year. If there was no Roman opposition as, for example, when troops had been removed from Gaul in 351, then raids might take place at any time. If they were responding to a Roman weakness this inevitably determined their timing, though no seasons seem to have been avoided. Raids frequently occurred in winter, e.g. the attack by a group of Franks in 357 or the raid of Beorgor, defeated near Bergamo in early February 464.<sup>169</sup>

Once it had been decided to launch a raid, it was necessary to choose an area to attack and keep an eye out for the Roman army. Both choices

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<sup>168</sup> standing armies, Visigoths, SA Ep. I.2.10; Vandals, Malchus fr.17; Ostrogoths (training), Cass. Variae V.23, 26-27; Ennodius 263.83-86; Frankish muster parade (?), GT HF II.27; staff?, II: Phocas 2; organisation, Burns, T.S., The Ostrogoths (Bloomington, 1984), 176,197

<sup>169</sup> winter raids, AM XVI.4.1-4, XVII.2.1-4, XIX.11.4, XXVII.1.1; Marc. Com. sa 464; Hyd.140

depended on local intelligence, though it does not seem likely that raiders planned their attacks in great detail. One exception is the attack of Rando on Mainz in 368. This was launched when he knew the town was ungarrisoned, but he also attacked during a Christian festival. While in the field, raiders were self-sufficient, so supplies would not affect planning (below p114). Many raids may not have been planned or controlled by kings, but took place without their knowledge. Kings could at least claim this, even if it was not always true.<sup>170</sup>

Invasions were similarly badly planned. The frequent lack of a single leader made control and organisation more difficult and it was only with a capable leader that any centralised activity could take place. Alamannic operations in the late 350s under Chonodomarius' leadership contrast markedly with the confused Gothic actions of the 370s-380s. Supply considerations were rarely taken into account and hardship was frequent in these situation (below p115).<sup>171</sup>

The development of stronger kingship in the fifth century meant more planning took place before attacking the Romans. The clashes between the Hun empire and the Romans involved some planning, possible because of Attila's autocratic position. Thus in 451 Attila made a deliberate decision to attack the western rather than the eastern empire since 'it seemed best for him first to undertake the greater war and march against the west'. The objectives of the campaign are unclear to us.<sup>172</sup>

These large attacks could also take place in winter. Thus Alaric crossed the Julian Alps and threatened Milan in winter 401 while the

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<sup>170</sup> lack of control, AM XVI.12.17; Rando, AM XXVII.10.1-2; Hyd.192?

<sup>171</sup> invasions, RPF fr.2

<sup>172</sup> Attila, Priscus fr.20.1; Clover, F.M., 'Geiseric and Attila', Historia XXII (1973), 104-117 overestimates the planning carried out by Attila

Vandals, Alans and Suevi crossed the Rhine on the last day of 406. Similarly, the Vandal kings probably decided which kingdoms were to be attacked, though marine raids would probably not occur in winter.<sup>173</sup>

The kingdoms of the late-fifth century also benefitted from taking over Roman institutions and officials. Many ex-Roman subjects, some of whom were aristocrats, joined barbarian armies. Many of the aristocrats acted as commanders, participating in planning etc. Most of these are known from the Visigothic kingdom, for example Namatius who under Euric was appointed to defend the coast of Aquitaine against Saxon raiders or Vincentius who fought for Euric in Gaul and Italy.<sup>174</sup>

Similar use was made of skilled Romans among the Ostrogoths in Italy and in the sixth-century (and probably fifth-century) Frankish and Burgundian kingdoms.<sup>175</sup>

#### STRATEGIC INTELLIGENCE

The success or failure of attacks was often determined by the available intelligence. This intelligence could be extremely accurate. Thus Rando's attack on Mainz in 368 took advantage of the absence of its garrison, as well as attacking on a Christian feast day. Likewise good intelligence led to the attack on and siege of Julian at Sens in winter 355-356, when the Alamanni knew he had only a few troops with him. In 442 the Huns attacked Thrace knowing the Roman field army was absent in Sicily.

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<sup>173</sup> winter attacks, 401, Fast.Vind.Prior. sa 401; Claudian, de VI Cons. Hon. 442-444; 406, Prosp. 1230

<sup>174</sup> Visigoths, Apollinaris 3, Arborius 1, Calminius, SA Ep. V.12; Hispanus, Leo 5, Namatius 1, Nepotianus 2, Burgess, R., 'Gallia Romana to Gallia Gothica: the view from Spain', GAUL; Vincentius 3, Victorinus 4

<sup>175</sup> Ostrogoths, Aemilianus 5, Cyprianus 2, Liberius 3; Franks, Aredius, Aurelianus 7 ?; Burgundians, Aredius, Laconius; Vandals, Sebastianus 3

And in 459 the Vandals were sufficiently aware of Majorian's plans to take extensive countermeasures to defeat his attack, salting the wells in Mauritania and preparing a fleet for a pre-emptive strike.<sup>176</sup>

But where good intelligence was lacking, disasters could occur. The failure of the Greuthungi to discover Promotus' deception in 386 was catastrophic and during the 440s bad Frankish security led to a wedding party being attacked by the Romans at Vicus Helena.<sup>177</sup>

There were several ways in which the barbarians could obtain their intelligence. They used spies, though the professionalism of some of these men was minimal, if the behaviour of a Gothic spy in 391 is anything to go by. The emperor Theodosius 'was lying in a room of the lodgings when he saw a man who said nothing and looked as if he wished to escape notice'. Information was often received from Romans, usually civilian criminals or deserting soldiers, generally men facing punishment rather than hoping for a better life with the barbarians (below p60, p202). Information could also be transferred through events of every day life, since merchants crossed the frontier regularly and there would also be frequent contact in the major cities along the frontier. To be included in this category is the information gained by the Lentienses from the Alamannic soldier home on leave in 378, though it would seem unlikely that the Lentienses were not already aware of the troop withdrawals. Lastly, envoys to the Romans for whatever reasons could also collect information.<sup>178</sup>

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<sup>176</sup> Rando, AM XXVII.10.1-2; Sens, AM XVI.4; 442, Theoph. AM 5942; 459, Priscus fr.36.1

<sup>177</sup> intelligence failures, 386, Zos. IV.38-39; 440s, SA Carm. V.211-230; AM XVII.12.4

<sup>178</sup> spies, Zos. IV.31.3, 48.4-6; SA Ep. IV.xxii.3; deserters, AM XVI.4.1, 12.2, XXXI.7.7; Lee, A.D., Information, Frontiers and Barbarians, unpublished, (Cambridge, 1986); casual transfer, AM XXVII.5.2?, XXXI.10.3;

Overall, barbarian intelligence seems good. J.F. Matthews has suggested that 'there was little of importance that did not somehow come to their attention'. However, the interpretation of information received seems sometimes to have been at fault. There were no mechanisms for checking intelligence and in some cases barbarians acted on the first piece of information received. Thus the Frankish raiders encountered by Severus in 357 thought the Romans were still engaged with the Alamanni to their south and the Alamannic raiders of 378 also seem surprised to meet Roman resistance and presumably thought that most Roman troops in the area had marched east.<sup>179</sup>

#### SUPPLY

When barbarian raiders left their home territory, they ceased to be supplied with food from their homes and were dependent on what they carried with them initially and what they could find. Supply was rarely a problem for groups that kept moving and foraged in new areas, but a prolonged stay in the same area could lead to an eventual exhaustion of available forage. This in turn led to a reduction in the fighting ability of the barbarians because more time and manpower would be spent in foraging.<sup>180</sup> Barbarians often split up into numbers of smaller groups, covering a wider area and thus finding more food (and plunder). This dispersal would slow down their movement and would also make them vulnerable to defeat in detail, since barbarian command systems did not allow them to concentrate rapidly.

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Malchus fr.11; envoys suspected of spying, Lib. Or. XVIII.52-53

<sup>179</sup> Matthews, J.F., The Roman Empire of Ammianus (London, 1989), 317; hasty action, AM XVII.2.1, XXXI.10.3-6

<sup>180</sup> foraging, AM XVI.4, 5.17; Zos. III.7.4; above p76

However, this also made it difficult for the Romans to inflict a convincing defeat on barbarian groups.<sup>181</sup>

Barbarians seem not to have suffered especially from supply shortages in raids occurring in winter. In 356-7 Julian was besieged by some Alamanni at Sens for a month while he was wintering there. This shows a capability of supplying men in winter in the same place for a month, though the surrounding area is mentioned as afterwards being denuded of food. The Franks that Julian besieged on the Meuse in 358 held out for 54 days, suggesting that they had a large amount of food with them. It was only when raiders were prevented from foraging that they suffered from starvation, otherwise they seem to have been able to support themselves from the land even in winter. Starvation was usually the result of Roman action, not natural shortages (below p306,312).<sup>182</sup>

The supply requirements of peoples on the move were somewhat different. Any supply problems faced were greatly exacerbated as a result of the large numbers in these groups. Like raiders they were usually dependent on foraging, though this could be eked out by using their accompanying livestock as food supplies. Because of their consumption they found it more difficult than raiding parties to remain in the same place for a long time. Supply problems probably account for Radagaisus' division of his army into three parts in 406. On some occasions these peoples were able to supplement foraging by purchase from either local inhabitants or merchants, as the Visigoths did in 416, at least until Constantius

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<sup>181</sup> barbarians dispersed in region, AM XVI.2.2,7, 11.3, XVII.12.1, XIX.11.1, XXI.3.1, XXVII.1.1, 2.1-2, 8.7,9, XXXI.5.8, 10.21, 11.4-5; Zos. III.7.4; cf Menander fr.15.2

<sup>182</sup> winter supply, AM XVI.4, XVII.2; blockade, 416, Olymp. fr.29.1; Jordanes, Getica 281

blockaded them. Normally, livestock, forage and purchase were sufficient for supply, even in winter. Thus Alaric invaded Italy in winter 401 with no apparent supply problems. But if the Romans could impose a blockade on the barbarians then serious shortages could occur (below p<sup>306, 312</sup>).<sup>183</sup>

Large barbarian armies such as those of the Visigoths and Huns in the mid-fifth century or the Ostrogoths and Franks in the late-fifth century had similar problems to peoples on the move. Though their food requirements were probably less (because of the absence of women and children), their mobility was probably not greatly increased because of the existence of baggage trains. Armies tended not to disperse, perhaps because of the risk of meeting a Roman field army. These armies probably took some measures to gather supplies before campaigning though no evidence survives. However, the Strategikon assumes that some armies would have a baggage train and this was probably true before the sixth century.<sup>184</sup>

When barbarians took over functioning Roman administration, for example in Ostrogothic Italy, Roman organisation for supplying the army could continue. Thus horses were supplied from various areas as remounts and the Praetorian Prefect was still responsible for army supply in Ostrogothic Italy.<sup>185</sup>

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<sup>183</sup> merchants, Malchus fr.25; cf Maximus of Turin, Sermo 18.3; AM XXXI.4.11; Orosius VII.43.1; foraging, AM XXXI.6.5; Claudian, De VI Cons. Hon. 239-241; Malchus fr.18.4, 20.35-42

<sup>184</sup> baggage train, Mauricius, Strat. XI.2.13; Jordanes, Getica 210

<sup>185</sup> horses, Cass. Variae I.4.17; supply, Ennodius, Ep. IX.23; Cass. Variae II.15

## ON THE MARCH

Raiding parties were lightly loaded and fast moving. Some Goths and Alamanni are known to have carried tents, but overall loads were probably lighter than those of Roman troops (below p<sup>174</sup>). They usually remained dispersed, but often concentrated if a Roman army entered the area. As they acquired booty these groups would move more slowly, and were on occasion caught by the Romans because of their reduced speed (above p76).<sup>186</sup>

The main characteristics of migratory peoples were the large number of wagons carrying their possessions, children, seed corn etc, and the herds of sheep, cattle and other animals (above p62). During the 470s, the Ostrogothic wagon train in the Balkans contained 2,000 wagons. The number of wagons and their inherent low speed meant that these groups had little freedom of manoeuvre. Sometimes attempts were made to escape from this restriction, as in 479 when Theoderic the Amal detached the wagon train from his army in an attempt to capture Lychidnus and the neighbouring towns by surprise. If he was accompanied by a wagon train, news of his arrival would probably have preceded him.<sup>187</sup>

Barbarian armies had smaller baggage trains than migrating peoples and thus more freedom of manoeuvre. However, the presence of wagons and infantry would keep speeds of all but scouting and foraging groups to a minimum.

We know little of the march formations used in this period, though we hear of scouts and advance guards (sometimes of cavalry) and divisions

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<sup>186</sup> speed of movement, AM XVI.11.14; tents, AM XXVII.2.9, XXXI.15.15; slowed by booty, Zos. IV.23.4; AM XXVII.8.7, XXIX.6.12; Sulpicius fr.1; Priscus fr.9.3.39-53?; reconcentrating, AM XXXI.7.7; means unknown, smoke signals were used in other periods, e.g. by Magyars in 933, more suo igne fumoque ingenti agmina diffusa collegerunt, Widukind, Res Gestae Saxonicae 1.38, a reference I owe to Leyser, C., 'The Battle at the Lech, 955', History L (1965), 1-25 at 16

<sup>187</sup> detaching baggage, Malchus fr.20.113-116,226-232

into multiple bodies. Rearguards are almost unknown. Armies tended to remain concentrated as one body when in the vicinity of the enemy and we do not hear of barbarian forces splitting up for strategic purposes, though detachments might be thrown out for foraging or scouting purposes. They seem rarely to have imitated the Roman practice of building a camp at night, perhaps because of a lack of the required tools, though examples are known of barbarian fortified camps in 395, 451 and 491.<sup>188</sup>

#### RIVER CROSSING

Entering the Roman empire involved crossing the Rhine or the Danube in most cases, at least until settlements were made in the empire. Movement within the empire frequently necessitated river crossings too.

Frozen rivers posed little of a problem and the Danube and Rhine often froze. According to the Admiralty in 1945, 'it is rare for it [the Danube] to freeze twice in one winter, and in exceptionally mild winters it may not freeze at all.' The frozen Danube appears regularly in poetry and Maurice's Strategikon in the sixth century assumes that rivers in the region usually froze in winter. Freezing was most severe on the upper reaches of the Danube. The Rhine also froze occasionally, though not as far as is recorded, in 406 or at any other time in our period. Today, the upper Rhine freezes in winter, leading to lower water levels in the lower Rhine. It is now less prone to freezing as it is canalised and thus flows even faster than in antiquity.<sup>189</sup>

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<sup>188</sup> advance guard, AM XXXI.3.5; Malchus fr.20.102-104; three divisions, AM XVII.12.7; Malchus fr.20.110-113; rearguard, Malchus fr.20.230; camps, Claudian, in Rufinum II.127-129; Anon. Val. 54?; Jordanes, Getica 210

<sup>189</sup> prone to freeze, Herodian, VI.7.6-7; AM XVI.1.5, XXVII.6.12; Jordanes, Getica 280; Danube, Yugoslavia, Admiralty Naval Intelligence Division, (London, 1945), vol. III, 452-478; AM XVII.12.4, XIX.11.4; Rhine, AM XXXI.10.4 but text is lacunose; France, Admiralty Naval Intelligence

Fords could be used to cross rivers, especially when they were running low. Today the Danube runs low in summer above Belgrade, in autumn below it. The Rhine tends to be low in late summer and early autumn, a pattern followed by most smaller rivers. These problems were probably similar in antiquity.<sup>190</sup>

Other crossings were accomplished by boats, usually if the crossing forces lived in the area. Thus some Alamanni crossed the Rhine by boat after Strasbourg in 357.<sup>191</sup> Crossings could also be improvised. This might involve rafts and rough log-built boats, as in 386 when the Greuthungi attempted to cross the Danube. Rivers could also be swum, as during the rout after the battle of Strasbourg.<sup>192</sup>

#### TACTICAL INTELLIGENCE

The sophistication of barbarian tactical intelligence varied widely. Many barbarian groups were caught by surprise, which suggests that their scouts (if any) had not detected the Romans. Thus at Adrianople the Goths did not expect to engage the Romans and so their cavalry was absent foraging. Even when barbarians were being engaged by the Romans they were not always able to discover what the Romans were doing. Thus at Solicinium

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Division, (London, 1942), vol. IV, 404-408; there is no ancient evidence that I know of for the Rhine freezing in 406 and Gibbon says only 'most probably frozen'

<sup>190</sup> fords, AM XVI.11.9, XVII.13.27

<sup>191</sup> boats, AM XVI.11.9, 12.58, XVII.13.17, XXXI.4.5; Them. Or. X.137A

<sup>192</sup> rafts, AM XXXI.4.5; Zos. V.21.2-4; Priscus fr.11.2.275-276; log dugouts (μονοξύλοι, AM XVII.13.27, XXXI.4.5; Zos. IV.38.5-39.3; Priscus fr.11.2.71-76, 273-275; swimming, Zos. IV.39.3; AM XVI.12.55-57, XVII.13.15, XXXI.4.5

in 368 the Alamanni did not detect a Roman flanking march until it reached their rear areas.<sup>193</sup>

On the other hand, barbarians carried out a number of successful ambushes against Roman forces. Thus in 356 a marching column of Romans was ambushed at a crossroads by Alamannic raiders and in 409 6,000 Romans were defeated by Ataulf in Italy; as there were only one hundred survivors this was probably an ambush. This suggests there was some successful scouting and barbarian scouts are frequently attested. It is probable that the varying levels of effectiveness reflected the ability of the barbarian leaders.<sup>194</sup>

Barbarian groups seem rarely to have got lost or been trapped in (as opposed to being forced into) unfavourable terrain. This may have been partly the result of Roman guides, for example the gold miners who led some Goths in Thrace in 377.<sup>195</sup>

At its best, the ability of barbarians to know what was going on was impressive and forced the Romans to take special measures to surprise (below p<sup>351</sup>) or even engage barbarians. Roman expeditions were often forced to reach into the uplands since the barbarians could remove themselves, their families and possessions from the initial Roman area of operations. Barbarians could predict attacks and their objectives. They probably accepted this as part of the 'game'. By way of comparison, a Mahsud on the northwest frontier of British India remarked that

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<sup>193</sup> surprised barbarians, Zos. III.7.2, IV.23.4, 25.2; AM XVII.8.3, XXVII.2.1-3, XXXI.11.4; SA Carm. V.211-230

<sup>194</sup> barbarian ambushes, AM XXVIII.2.8; Zos. IV.31.3-4, V.45.1-2; Lib. Or. XVIII.45; Sulpicius fr.1,6; Mauricius, Strat. XI.4.9; scouts, Malchus fr.18.3.40; AM XVI.11.9, 12.19

<sup>195</sup> Roman guides, AM XXXI.6.5-7

the army will sit quietly within its wire and we can sell it eggs and chickens, and if they march out we will know exactly where they are going and how far they can go.

For barbarians it must often have been like this.<sup>196</sup>

## TACTICS

Barbarians preferred to avoid pitched battles against the Romans as much as possible. Their almost invariable defeat when engaged in open battle makes this understandable. Even before Adrianople there was a great reluctance to fight on the part of the Goths; they did not expect to win.

If a pitched battle had to be fought the barbarians tried to negate Roman superiority in open battle. One way of doing this was by fighting in difficult terrain such as mountains, forests and marshes. This would reduce the Roman advantages of planning and control and made the use of cavalry and missile weapons by the Romans difficult or even impossible, making the struggle more a series of hand-to-hand combats than anything else. The difficulties presented by the terrain were sometimes increased by deliberately blocking paths with fallen trees, a tactic not confined to battles in home territory. The advantages of fighting in difficult terrain can be seen by the frequent Roman refusal to fight in such conditions, and occasional defeats if they did so, for example the annihilation of a Roman force pursuing Franks into marshes in 388.<sup>197</sup>

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<sup>196</sup> Trench, C.C., The Frontier Scouts (London, 1985), 99

<sup>197</sup> fighting in difficult terrain, AM XVII.1.8, XXVII.10.9, XXXI.10.12-16; Sulpicius fr.1; Zos. III.6.3, IV.11.2, 45.3; Eunapius fr.55; cf Herodian VII.2.5-6; Theophylact, Hist. VI.8.10-11; Mauricius, Strat. XI.4.13; obstructing cavalry, cf Zos. V.15.5; Frontinus Stratagems II.iii.23; obstacles, AM XVI.11.8, 12.15, XVII.1.9, 10.6; Sulpicius fr.1; cf GT HF III.28; Roman refusal to engage, AM XVI.12.59, XVII.1.8; Anon. dRB XIX.2; Roman defeats, Sulpicius fr.1; cf Zos. I.23.2-3

When a battle was fought, most barbarians usually formed up in a line (by tribes, kinship and common interest (φυλαί, συγγενεία, προσταθεία)). Cavalry deployed on the flanks of the infantry. If there was a convenient hill the battle line would be drawn up on it. Missile troops could be deployed in front of the main line and some preliminary skirmishing usually took place before the main body of the enemy was engaged.<sup>198</sup> If deployed on a hill, barbarians would wait until the enemy came close before charging. Their attack usually took the form of a fierce charge, occasionally in wedge formation (cunei), accompanied by a loud war cry. Though crude, the charge's shock value could lead to victory. But if the charge failed, superior Roman training and protection tended to win the prolonged melee.<sup>199</sup>

Cavalry could be used offensively and they played this role at Adrianople. On other occasions, cavalry was used simply to protect the flanks of the infantry. Thus they appeared on the Alamannic left flank at Strasbourg and were given close support by light infantry. This practice could have been followed by other tribes. Cavalry might also dismount to fight, though they are not attested as doing this in our period. Steppe peoples preferred to fight in a looser formation, continually harassing their enemies with barrages of missiles and avoiding hand-to-hand combat.<sup>200</sup>

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<sup>198</sup> tactics, Gundel, H.G., Untersuchungen zur Taktik und Strategie der Germanen nach den antiken Quellen (Marburg, 1937), 1-60; deployment, Mauricius, Strat. XI.3.4; Anon. PS 34; cavalry on flanks, AM XVI.12, XXXI.12; defending hills, AM XVII.1.5, XXVII.10.9, XXXI.7.10; Sulpicius fr.6; skirmishers, AM XVI.12.36, XXVII.1.3, XXXI.7.12, 10.8

<sup>199</sup> speed of attack, AM XVI.12.36, XXVII.1.4, 10.13, XXIX.6.14, XXXI.2.8, 5.9; Lib. Or. LXIX.130; Urbicius, Epitedeuma 7; Mauricius, Strat. XI.3.3,6; wedges, AM XVI.12.20, XXXI.2.8; Agathias, Hist. II.8.8-9; Mauricius, Strat. XI.2.14; warcry, AM XVII.13.10, XIX.11.10, XXXI.7.11, 10.8, 12.11

<sup>200</sup> offensive cavalry, AM XXXI.12.17; defensive, AM XVI.12.21-22, 37-42;; light infantry, cf Caesar de Bello Gallico I.48; Veg. III.16; dismounting, cf AM XVI.12.34; Mauricius, Strat. XI.2.19; nomads, AM

A cutting edge to the army could be provided by grouping optimates and their comitatus together into a single unit. On account of their experience and concentration of better weaponry and armour they would give the Romans a much harder fight than the normal troops. Royal comitatus would have the same effect.<sup>201</sup>

Though the tactics used were simple there was no realistic alternative. Barbarian command systems were not sufficiently sophisticated to be able to control anything more than a single body of soldiers. The use of reserves, as opposed to a second line of troops, is unattested.<sup>202</sup>

When fighting occurred in difficult terrain the barbarians could use ambushes. The surprise effect of an ambush might shake the Romans and give the barbarians a greater chance of breaking them. Thus at Strasbourg in 357 part of the Alamannic right wing was anchored on a canal or drainage channel, where troops were in ambush in the reeds and in ditches dug specially.<sup>203</sup>

The extensive wagon trains of migratory people were used as bases for fighting and as refuges for women, children, livestock etc. Such wagon lagers were used at Ad Salices in 377 and Adrianople in 378. They were also

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XXXI.2.8-9; Mauricius, Strat. XI.2.15-31

<sup>201</sup> optimates, AM XVI.12.49

<sup>202</sup> second line, AM XVI.12.49

<sup>203</sup> battle ambushes, Zos. IV.22.2; AM XV.4.7-8, XVI.12.23,27, XVII.1.6,8, XXVIII.2.8, XXX.3.7; Sulpicius fr.1,6; Lib. Or. XVIII.56; Mauricius, Strat. XI.4.9; Gundel, H.G., 'Die Bedeutung des Geländes in der Kriegskunst der Germanen', Neue Jahrbucher für Antike und Deutsche Bildung III (1940), 188-196; cf Frontinus, Stratagemis I.3.10

used by the Goths to fortify their camp (along with a ditch and palisade) in Greece in 395 and by the Huns at Mauriacus in 451.<sup>204</sup>

Barbarians seem to have been reluctant to attack or march at night, probably a reflection on their poor command skills and lack of formal organisation. This is not to say that they never did, but that it was unusual if they did so.<sup>205</sup>

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<sup>204</sup> wagon laagers, AM XXXI.2.18, 7.5 (377), 12.11, 15.5 (378); Claudian, in Rufinum II.127-129; Theophylact, Hist. VII.2.4-9 (Slav); Jordanes, Getica 210; Veg. III.10; Urbicius, Epitideuma 14

<sup>205</sup> night operations, Marc. Com. sa 493 could be an exception, but we do not know who initiated the battle; AM XXXI.3.6 may not be reliable; Mauricius, Strat. XI.4.9

## NAVAL WARFARE

Barbarian naval activity can be divided into three types, raids, blockades and naval battles. Raids usually consisted of a few ships delivering a raiding party to Roman territory. Ships gave raiders greater mobility than on land, but the process of raiding was otherwise similar. This mobility allowed Saxons to raid as far as the French Atlantic coast, Heruls as far as Spain and Vandals from Africa to north Spain.<sup>206</sup>

On a few occasions barbarian naval forces were used in sieges, to assist attackers by depriving coastal towns of supplies from the sea. In 491-493 Theoderic's galleys were able to isolate Ravenna and deprive Odovacer's troops of supply from the Adriatic.<sup>207</sup>

Thirdly, in the Mediterranean the Vandals occasionally mustered fleets to fight naval battles. These fleets seem to have been summoned for defensive purposes when there was a threat of Roman intervention. Thus we hear of Vandal fleets in 456, 460, 468, though in 491 a fleet was used to recapture Italy. No other barbarian groups were able to acquire sizeable fleets in the fifth century and it seems likely that the Visigothic and Ostrogothic squadrons were confined to little more than patrolling against raiders at this period.<sup>208</sup>

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<sup>206</sup> naval raids, Saxons, GT HF II.18,19; SA Ep. VIII.6; Heruli, Hyd.171, 194; Vandals, Hyd.86, 120, 131; Priscus fr.39

<sup>207</sup> blockades, Auct. Haun. sa 493

<sup>208</sup> Vandal fleets, 456, Hyd.176; SA Carm. II.367; 460, C.Gall. 511.654; Marius Aventicensis sa 460; 468, Priscus fr.53.1; Procopius, BV III.vi.12; 491, II: Ansila 2; Visigoths, SA Ep. VIII.6; Ostrogoths, Auct. Haun. sa 493

## SIEGE ABILITY

Barbarian siege ability was limited, though their capabilities should not be ignored. If confronted with walls, barbarians would often sit around outside for a few days, then give up in disgust. At the siege of Sens,

at last on the thirtieth day the barbarians sadly departed, muttering that they were stupid and foolish to have contemplated the siege of a city.

This sort of inability led Fritigern, a Gothic leader, to remind his men that he was 'at peace with walls'. Even after their victory outside Adrianople in 378, the victorious Goths were unable to capture the city, despite several attempts, and after a few days moved elsewhere. When barbarians did undertake sieges, they were long. The Huns besieged Aquileia for three months in 452 and Theoderic spent three years besieging Ravenna from 490.<sup>209</sup>

This inability to capture walled sites, whether military forts or defended urban centres, was common to all barbarians. There were two main reasons for their lack of success, lack of technical expertise and logistical inadequacy.

As a rule, barbarians did not know how to build or use sophisticated machinery such as siege towers or catapults. The limit of their achievement was scaling ladders and battering rams, crude devices, though occasionally effective. These could be quickly improvised from trees, and in the third century we hear of the walls of Trapezus being scaled by improvised ladders made from trees. Countermeasures to these weapons, in the form of large

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<sup>209</sup> siege inability, Thompson, E.A., The Early Germans (Oxford, 1965), 131-140 and Romans and Barbarians (Madison, 1982), 6-10; AM XVI.4.1-2, 11.4, XVII.6.1, XXIX.6.12, XXX.3.3, XXXI.6.4, 15.15; GT HF II.7; Eugippius, V.Sev. XXX.3; Priscus fr.39.21-24; outside Europe, AM XIV.2.13, XXVIII.6.15

ditches or moats and recessed, angled or enfiladed gateways were simple and were present on most Roman fortified sites (below p<sup>23</sup>).<sup>210</sup>

However, on a very few occasions barbarians involved in sieges did have more sophisticated equipment such as siege towers. In the third century the Goths used siege equipment in the sieges of Thessalonica, Philippopolis and Side, but in both the fourth and fifth centuries such use was extremely rare. In the mid-sixth century, at the siege of Rome, Goths again used siege towers. Trans-Rhenane barbarians in the third century are supposed to have used siege towers as well, but are not recorded as having such devices in the fourth or fifth centuries. In all these cases the barbarian siege equipment was ineptly used.<sup>211</sup>

The only occasion in the fourth and fifth centuries where barbarians seem to have acquired significant siege technology was during Attila's domination of the Huns. The Huns used siege equipment in the siege of Naissus in 442, including shields to protect archers and battering rams. This equipment was not of great sophistication and it would only slightly increase the ability of barbarians to attack towns. However, it did allow Naissus to be stormed. Similar siege equipment was used at the siege of Aquileia in 452. This ability seems to have been lost after Attila's death and it is not until the time of the Avar Chagan Baian that Danubian barbarians again demonstrated a strong capability in siege warfare.<sup>212</sup>

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<sup>210</sup> scaling ladders, Lib. Or. XVIII.43; AM XXXI.15.13; Priscus fr.6.2; improvised, Zos. I.33.2; battering rams, GT HF II.7; Priscus fr.6.2

<sup>211</sup> siege capability, third century, Eusebius, fr.2.2,5; Dexippus, fr.27,29; sixth century, Theophylact, Hist. II.16.10-11; Procopius, BG V.xxi.3-13, xxiv.4, VI.ix.12, xii.1-5, VIII.xxxv.9; Agathias, Hist. I.9

<sup>212</sup> Naissus, Priscus, fr.6.2; however, see the cautionary note of Cameron, A. and A., 'Christianity and Tradition in the Historiography of the late Empire', CQ ns XIV (1964), 316-328 at 321-322; Tausend, K., 'Hunnische Polorketik', Grazer Beiträge XII-XIII (1985-1986), 265-281; Blockley, R.C., 'Dexippus, Priscus and the Thucydidean account of the siege of Plataea', Phoenix XXVI (1972), 18-27; Thompson, E.A., 'Priscus of

It seems unlikely that some barbarians had the knowledge of how to build siege equipment, but only used it during limited periods. It seems more likely that this equipment was built by Roman prisoners or deserters, as happened at the siege of Vetera during Civilis' revolt in AD 70. This hypothesis would account for its rarity of use and tactical misdeployment. Without this equipment the chances of storming a defended site were low and instances of garrisoned Roman sites being successfully assaulted are very rare.<sup>213</sup>

The second problem faced by barbarians was logistical inadequacy. Since they could not storm fortified sites they were compelled to starve them out. For this they had to have supplies for the length of the siege. But if besiegers remained in the same place for any length of time, the countryside would soon be stripped bare of forage. This shortage would be exacerbated by the Roman practice of removing as much foodstuffs as possible into their forts (below p<sup>30</sup>). In addition, by remaining in the same area to blockade a site, the barbarians made it more likely that they would be attacked by a Roman relieving force since their location would be known. Such an attack could be especially effective if some of the barbarians were dispersed around the countryside in foraging parties. This probably helps account for the defeat of Radagaisus while besieging Florence in 406.

Because of the lack of siege equipment, blockade was the usual way for barbarians to capture cities. To be able to operate a successful blockade the wall circuit had to be watched and the defenders stopped from obtaining supplies. Small groups of barbarians would be unable to do this

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Panium, fr.1b', CQ XXXIX (1945), 92-94; Aquileia, Priscus, fr.22.1; cf siege of Arcadiopolis, Malchus fr.2

<sup>213</sup> Vetera, Tacitus, Histories IV.23; Theophylact, Hist. II.16.10; storming, AM XV.8.19 reseratam seems unlikely; Naissus, Priscus fr.6.2

successfully, leading to ineffective sieges such as that of Clermont in the 470s, a city which seems never to have been seriously invested or attacked. In 473 Arcadiopolis fell to Theoderic Triarius.

He took the city not by storm but through severe starvation which wore down those within. For, as they held out in the hope that help would come to them from some quarter, they ate horses, pack animals and corpses, and only despaired when this did not arrive.<sup>214</sup>

But there were other means of capturing fortified sites, treachery, ruse, surprise or infiltration. Thus in 441 the bishop of Margus in Moesia I betrayed the city to the Huns. Treachery was usually carried out by disaffected civilians rather than by military personnel.<sup>215</sup>

One example of barbarians trying to capture a city by ruse is in 378. Here the Goths sent Roman deserters into Adrianople, in an unsuccessful attempt to provide a diversion while they themselves attacked the gates.<sup>216</sup>

Surprise attacks were sometimes successful. These attacks usually focused on the gates of the city, since they were usually the weakest point. Thus in 479, Theoderic the Amal tried to surprise the defenders of Nova Epirus by his swift advance and the city fell.<sup>217</sup>

Cities might be taken by infiltration if a concealed entrance could be found or if it were possible for barbarians to enter the city in disguise. This is not attested in Europe in this period, but in the sixth

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<sup>214</sup> blockaded cities, Arcadiopolis, Malchus fr.2; Philost. XII.3; Cologne, AM XV.8.19

<sup>215</sup> civilian treachery, Priscus fr.6.1; Soz. IX.9; Hyd. 201, 246; Olymp. fr.11.1,3; military treachery, AM XXXI.15.8-9

<sup>216</sup> ruse, AM XXXI.15.8-9; Hyd.115?

<sup>217</sup> surprise attacks, Malchus fr.20.102-109, 113-116; AM XVI.11.4; Julianus, Historia Wambae XII, XVIII; on gates, AM XVI.11.4; Lib. Or. XVIII.43; Malchus fr.20.102-109

century some of the Goths besieging Rome tried to infiltrate through an aqueduct.<sup>218</sup>

The effectiveness of barbarian siege techniques is shown by Alaric's attempts to capture Rome. Between 408 and 410 Alaric laid siege to the city of Rome three times. He was unsuccessful once, was able to force it to capitulate once by a fortuitous capture of vital foodstuffs and was allowed into the city once through treachery. He was never able to storm it.<sup>219</sup>

Although the above arguments make it clear that barbarians had great difficulties in capturing towns, there were occasions when barbarians apparently captured large numbers of cities. Examples are the Alamannic attacks of the early 350s, the invasion of Gaul in 406 and the Hun raids on the Balkans in the 440s. But our sources rarely tell us how the cities fell. It seems unlikely that the captured towns were garrisoned and it is probable that many of the towns were unwalled or ungarrisoned. Of the eight towns listed by St. Jerome as falling to the attackers of 406, two (Arras and Speyer) seem not to have been walled and we do not know if any were garrisoned.<sup>220</sup>

Confirmation of the weakness of barbarian siege capability can be provided in two ways. One is the destruction of captured town or fort walls by barbarians. This occurred in Africa in the fifth century and in Italy in the sixth century. It probably took place because of the difficulties

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<sup>218</sup> infiltration, AM XIX.5.5, XXVIII.2.13; Rome, Procopius, BG VI.ix.1-11

<sup>219</sup> Rome, unsuccessful, November-December 408, Zos. V.38-42; capitulation, late 410, Zos. VI.6; Olymp. fr.10; Philost. XII.3; treachery, Olymp. fr.11.1,3

<sup>220</sup> large scale captures, below p<sup>24</sup>; Jerome, Ep. 123.16

the barbarians might face if the Romans recaptured them and is justified as such in our (Roman) sources. It is difficult to think of another reason.<sup>221</sup>

Secondly, the Romans continued to build and use fortified sites, throughout the fourth and fifth centuries, suggesting that they considered the effort expended in building them was worthwhile (below p<sup>217</sup>).

Overall barbarian capabilities at sieges did not improve in the period under consideration, though there were occasions when they climbed above their usual ineptitude.

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<sup>221</sup> destruction of walls, Thompson, E.A., Romans and Barbarians (Madison, 1982), 84-86; Procopius, BV III.v.8, xvi.9, BG VII.vi.1, viii.10-11, xi.32, xxii.7, xxiii.3, xxiv.29,32-33, xxv.7,11; Jul. Ep. ad Ath. 279A

## DEVELOPMENT

As a whole, barbarian warfare changed little during this period. Those changes that did occur seem only to have made armies more organised, but not able to do what they could not do before. Political developments made larger armies more common, but tactical sophistication and individual equipment changed little.

There seems to have been little need for Roman generals to change the way in which they fought battles, and the tactics of Julian and Constantius II in the 350s would have served the armies of Romulus Augustulus and Anastasius almost as well. What Herodian wrote in the third century was applicable to the fourth and fifth centuries and could as easily have been written by Procopius in the sixth.

Barbarians are bold when others retreat or hesitate, but put up a very different fight if met by resistance. The reason for this is that it is not from set battles that they expect success against an enemy. They believe it is from hit and run tactics that they gain what plunder they get. We [Romans] believe in properly disciplined battle tactics and we have learned to defeat them every time.<sup>222</sup>

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<sup>222</sup> Herodian VI.3.7

## PART II

### THE ROMAN ARMY

This part of the thesis discusses the late Roman Army. It is divided into three sections which discuss the organisation and equipment of the army, its recruiting and ethnic composition and lastly, the types of fortifications used to defend the empire.

## ORGANISATION, ARMS AND EQUIPMENT

### ORGANISATION

The late Roman army was divided into two parts, the field army troops (comitatenses) and the border troops (limitanei). These both had land and marine components. This section examines the organisation of both groups together with various support services and militias.<sup>223</sup>

### THE FIELD ARMY

#### Regular Regiments

The basic unit of the field army was the regiment. Infantry regiments were legiones or auxilia, cavalry regiments vexillationes. These technical terms are preserved in the Notitia Dignitatum. In other sources regiments were referred to as numeri, ἀριθμοί, καταλογοί, ταγματα or ταξείς. Many references to military units are to 'legions', 'maniples' or 'cohorts' and have as much, if not more, to do with style and metre as technical usage. These regiments existed permanently and a number of units are attested both in the Notitia Dignitatum and under Justinian.<sup>224</sup>

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<sup>223</sup> LRE chapter XVII remains indispensable, as do Grosse, R., Römische Militärgeschichte (Berlin, 1920) [hereafter Grosse] and Hoffmann, D., Das spätromische Bewegungsheer und die Notitia Dignitatum (Düsseldorf, 1969) [hereafter Hoffmann]

<sup>224</sup> unit descriptions, Cameron, A. and A., 'Christianity and Tradition in the Historiography of the Late Empire' CQ ns XIV (1964), 316-328 at 326; e.g. AM XVII.13.10 (cohors praetoria), XVIII.8.2 (turma for cavalry regiment), XXV.6.3; cf Zos. VI.8.2, ταγματα; Soz. IX.8.6, ἀριθμοί, both drawing on Olympiodorus; continuity, LRE 654-655

The evidence for the size of these units is limited. What there is suggests that establishments for vexillationes were up to 600 strong, and establishments for auxilia and legiones up to 1200. On the other hand, many recorded strengths were somewhat lower and around 400 for cavalry, 800 for infantry regiments might have been normal. There appears to have been no major changes in unit sizes throughout the period. Regiments were commanded by a tribune, who could also be referred to as a praepositus.<sup>225</sup>

Many infantry and cavalry regiments operated in pairs, forming a brigade under the command of a comes. These brigades seem to have been permanent entities, though no trace survives of any brigade staffs. The brigade of the Celtae and Petulantes served in Gaul with Julian, then marched east with him to Persia. They returned to the west, probably under Valentinian I, and fought in Raetia in 378. According to the Notitia they were in the Italian field army in the early-fifth century. In the Notitia they are recorded next to each other, suggesting that this reflects their tactical relationship.

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<sup>225</sup> cavalry vexillationes, AM XVIII.8.2 (359), 2 turmae totalling 700; Zos. III.3.4 (Julian), ἰλη of 600, probably one unit, though AM XVI.12.39 suggests that more than one regiment was involved; P.Cairo 67321 (Justinian), 508, type unspecified

infantry, there appears to be no difference between legiones and auxilia; levies of 300 from units, AM XX.4.2 (360), XXXI.11.2 (378); levies of 500 from legions, AM XXXI.10.13 (378); Zos. V.45.1 (409), 5 ταγματα totalling 6,000; Paschoud, F., Zosime (Paris, 1986), vol 5, 292n102 considers them cavalry but does not explain why; Zos. VI.8.2 (410), 6 ταγματα totalling 4,000 = Soz. IX.8.6, 6 ἀριθμοὶ of 4,000; cf. Zos. III.14.3, (1,000 scouts), 16.2 (1,500 scouts); 398 campaign vs. Gildo, 3 legiones palatinae, 3 auxilia palatina, Claudian, de Bello Gildonico 418-23; 5,000 men, Orosius VII.36.6; auxilia units could have been six hundred strong using the same evidence; cf AM XIX.2.14, 7 legions and population of Amida totalled 20,000

LRE 680-682; Várady, L., 'New evidences on some problems of the Late Roman Military Organisation', AAASH IX (1961), 333-396 and 'Additional notes on the problem of the Late Roman Dalmatian cunei', AAASH XI (1963), 391-406 are less useful than their titles suggest; see also MacMullen, R., 'How big was the Roman Imperial Army', Klio LXII (1980), 451-460; Duncan-Jones, R.P., 'Pay and Numbers in Diocletian's Army', Chiron VIII (1978), 541-560; command, Grosse 143-150

Mentions of a single regiment from a brigade acting alone are rare. There are no cases in Ammianus' narrative where brigades are definitely split and though regiments are occasionally recorded without their partners, there is no reason to assume that the other regiment was not in the area. New units could be raised as a brigade or singly. These brigades seem to have fallen out of use by the sixth century, though a brigade of scholae may be recorded in 478. However, the μοιραὶ described by Maurice, consisting of several ταγματά may be their successors.<sup>226</sup>

### Foederati

As well as Roman units, the comitatenses included regiments of barbarians. Contemporary terminology used to describe the various barbarian groups who fought for the Romans is confusing. The difficulties are compounded by changes in the meanings of the words used over the period studied. The troops described here as 'foederati' had acquired this title by the sixth century, before which it was applied to the group referred to here as 'allies'. By Justinian's time the term συμμαχοὶ was being used for the allies, though in the fourth and fifth centuries it may have been used to describe the units here called foederati.

But these terms were never used dogmatically by contemporaries and descriptions of groups as foederati or allies need not be prescriptive. In

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<sup>226</sup> brigades, Zos. II.42.2; AM XX.2.5?, XXI.3.2, XXVII.1.2; Malchus fr.18.4 (otherwise why two scholae?); Hoffmann 11-15, 384-386, 505-507, X 181, but caution is necessary using his reconstructions since some depend on the shield emblems which cannot be used as evidence, see 13-14 for this; discussion of shield emblems, Elton, H.W., 'The Shield patterns of the Notitia Dignitatum', (unpublished); Tomlin, R.S.O., 'Seniores-Iuniores in the Late Roman Field Army', AJP XCIII (1972), 253-278, app. V; Celtae-Petulantes, AM XX.4.2, XXI.3.2, XXII.12.6, XXXI.10.4, ND Occ. V.160-161, VII.11-12; for details of other brigades, Hoffmann under unit name; regiments without partners, as reserves, AM XVI.12.45, XXVII.10.10, XXXI.13.9; leading tunnel assault, AM XXIV.4.3; boat raid, AM XVI.11.9; μοιραὶ, Mauricius, Strat. I.4.2

some circumstances the terms might even be synonymous. 'Foederati' was not a technical term with only one definition, though it is too often treated by modern writers as though it were. Thus there is no need to expect all foederati or allies to have identical relations with the Romans, or for their relations to remain identical over time. The definitions here are made on the basis of status and activity, not the terms used to describe them. Even so, great uncertainty remains.<sup>227</sup>

During the late-fourth and fifth centuries foederati regiments were permanently established units of the Roman army, paid and equipped by the government. They may have differed visually from regular Roman regiments, but if so, we do not know how. These units are comparable to the Gurkhas of the modern British army or the King's German Legion of the British army in the Napoleonic wars. For the most part they were deliberately recruited from barbarians and seem to have had an intense *é*sprit du corps. Olympiodorus in the early-fifth century describes them as mixed Romans and barbarians, which might suggest that they were a volunteer force. Some units are identifiable because they had an ethnic identity, e.g. the Saracens used against the Goths in 378, the Alans in the 401-402 campaign or the Huns led by Olympius in 409. This ethnic identity was the result of their recent recruitment and would have become weaker over time as casualties were replaced by men of different origins. Once any special

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<sup>227</sup> terminology, LRE 199-200, 663-666; for the sixth century, Teall, J., 'The Barbarians in Justinian's Armies', Speculum XL (1965) 294-322; for discussion of meanings of 'foederati', Sivan, H., 'On Foederati, Hospitalitas and the Settlement of the Goths in AD 418', AJP CVIII (1987), 759-772; unfortunately Liebeschuetz, J.H.W.G., Barbarians and Bishops (Oxford, 1990) appeared too late to take into full account here. We disagree on the precise role of barbarians in the Roman army and Liebeschuetz recognises only one type, 'federates', though accepting various statuses within this group

character was lost they would be similar to regular Roman units and become invisible to us.<sup>228</sup>

Unfortunately we do not know how large these units were. When we have any details they are described as numeri or  $\iota\lambda\alpha\iota$ , terms similar to those used for regular regiments. From this evidence there is no reason to suppose that they differed from Roman units and as they were part of the regular army they might be expected to be similar in size. We know sizes of only two units. The Unnigardae recorded by Synesius were 40 strong, almost certainly a subdivision of a regiment. The regiment led by Olympius in 409 was 300 strong. At least two of these regiments acquired a title similar to that borne by Roman units, the Honoriaci recorded in Spain in 409 by Orosius and the Unnigardae in Africa in 412. The similarity of these titles to those recorded in the Notitia suggests that the latter recorded both regular and foederati regiments and did not distinguish between them. As a list of units it had no need to.<sup>229</sup>

Foederati regiments were commanded by tribunes in the same way as regular regiments. Thus one Roman officer, Bonifatius, was recorded as 'tribune with a few foederati' in 417. Regiments were also assigned to tasks like regular regiments, e.g. garrisoning Italy against the Vandals or sent to reinforce areas on request, e.g. a Hun regiment sent to Africa in the 420s.<sup>230</sup>

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<sup>228</sup> foederati, Olymp. fr.7.4; Procopius, BV III.xi.2-4, BG V.v.2; Alans, Claudian, de Bello Gothico 400-403, 580-589, de IV Cons. Hon. 487; assuming that the Alans of Zos. V.26.4 (405) are the same, otherwise they could be allies; supplies and pay, Zos. IV.40.1-2

<sup>229</sup> Honoriaci, Orosius VII.40.7; Unnigardae, Synesius, Ep. 78; Huns, Zos. V.45.6; it is often suggested that the Notitia Dignitatum does not include foederati, e.g. Liebeschuetz, J.H.W.G., Barbarians and Bishops (Oxford, 1990), 33-34

<sup>230</sup> commanders, Olympius, Zos. V.45.6; Tribigild, Philost. XI.8; Zos. V.13.2; Drumas, Zos. VI.7.6; Bonifatius, Aug. Ep. 220.7; Italy, NVal IX.1 (440); Africa, Ps.Aug. Ep. IV

Of the few foederati regiments of which we know anything, the Unnigardae were mounted archers and the Huns of Olympius were probably cavalry. The Alan regiment of the fifth century was also cavalry. This suggests that the Romans may have deliberately recruited some units from barbarians with mounted combat skills.

Individual foederati had wives and children living within the empire, often in distinct communities. Some also owned slaves, some deserted from the army. All this was similar to regular regiments. though none of this evidence is conclusive in itself, the similarities to regular regiments appear more apparent than the differences.<sup>231</sup>

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<sup>231</sup> families, Zos. V.34.2, 35.5; Philost. XI.8; slaves, CT VII.13.16 (406); regulars, LRE 630-632; deserters, Prosp. 1330

**Table I: Foederati Regiments in the Roman Army**

Regiment	Area of Operations	Date	Reference
Alamanni	Britain	378	AM XXIX.4.7
Saracens	Thrace	378	AM XXXI.16.5-6; Eunapius fr.42.81-82; Zos. IV.22.1-3
Alans	Gaul	383	Zos. IV.35.2,4? = <u>ND</u> Occ. VI.50
?	Thrace	380s	Zos. IV.40
Goths	Italy		Ambrose, <u>Ep.</u> 20
Unnigardae	Africa		Synesius, <u>Ep.</u> 78
Cavalry	Phrygia	398	Zos. V.13.2
Alans	Italy	401	Claudian, <u>de Bello Gothico</u> 400-403, 580-589, <u>de IV Cons. Hon.</u> 487
Alans	Italy	405	Zos. V.26.4
Huns	Italy	409	Zos. V.45.6
Honoriaci	Spain	409	Orosius VII.40.7
?	Italy	410	Zos. VI.13.2 ?
Huns	Africa	420s	Ps.Aug. <u>Ep.</u> IV [ <u>PL</u> XXXIII.1095]
?	Africa	427	Aug. <u>Ep.</u> 220.7
?	West	437	Prosp. 1330
?	Italy	440	<u>NVal</u> IX.1

#### Guard Units

A number of guard units attended emperors and often participated in operations. There were five scholae regiments in the west at the date of the Notitia, seven in the east. These units were cavalry regiments and, under Justinian at least and probably earlier, were 500 strong. During the fourth century these were elite combat formations and are frequently found in Ammianus' battle narratives. But in the fifth century the lack of campaigning by the emperor meant that they saw less action, though they still served if the emperor took to the field. By Zeno's reign in the east they seem to have become a ceremonial unit with places being sold. A

similar process probably took place in the west and they were pensioned off by Theoderic in 493.<sup>232</sup>

The candidati were the personal bodyguard of the emperor selected from the scholae. In the sixth century the unit was forty men strong which may have been its strength earlier. They were always in close attendance on the emperor.<sup>233</sup>

The excubitores were an eastern guard infantry(?) regiment formed under the emperor Leo. They were 300 strong and initially composed mostly of Isaurians. How long this characteristic was distinctive is unknown since even in its early days it recruited from the Balkans. The excubitores gradually replaced the scholae as the imperial guard in the palace. In the sixth century they served in Africa so were presumably available for field use in the fifth century.<sup>234</sup>

#### PRECEDENCE

The units of the field army were divided into two precedence grades, comitatenses and palatini. Palatini ranked higher than comitatenses, but both were found in all field armies. Under Diocletian and Constantine palatini were probably confined to praesental armies, but transfers brought

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<sup>232</sup> scholae, ND Occ. IX.4-8, Or. XI.4-10; Frank, R.I., Scholae Palatinae (Rome, 1969) and the review by Jones, A.H.M., JRS LX (1970), 227-229; with emperor, AM XVI.4.1; cavalry, Frank, 52; Jul. Or. II.97C; strength, Procopius, HA XXIV.15,19; field army, CT VII.4.22-23 (396); late-fifth century service, Malchus fr.18.4 ?; cf Procopius, HA XXIV.21; places sold, Agathias, Hist. V.15.1-6; Procopius, HA XXIV.18-20; disbanding, Procopius, HA XXVI.27-28; later development of all guard units, Haldon, J.F., Byzantine Praetorians (Bonn, 1984)

<sup>233</sup> candidati, Frank, 127-142; AM XV.5.16, XXV.3.6, XXXI.13.14-16; individuals see Appendix 1; strength, Constantine Porphyrogenitus, de Caer. I.86

<sup>234</sup> excubitores, Lydus, de Mag. I.16; Malalas 371 (in 471); Thracians, Procopius, HA VI.3; in combat, Procopius, BV IV.xii.17

about the situation recorded in the Notitia. Precedence differences could have been reflected in pay, uniform or morale, but we have no details. Within each grade, units were ranked separately as infantry and cavalry, cavalry taking precedence over the infantry. Some units had titles seniores and iuniores and in identically-named pairs seniores outranked iuniores. There also existed an honorific cavalry title, comites (probably derived by extension from the senior vexillatio palatina, the comites), though this seems not to have affected precedence. Guard units presumably ranked above cavalry and infantry. Newly raised units were placed at the bottom of each rank of precedence, suggesting that the precedence system might have been based on seniority by date of formation. If foederati are recorded in the Notitia (above p138), precedence would also have applied to them. Demotion in precedence could be used as punishment and we hear of a unit of cavalry in Africa being downgraded in the 370s.<sup>235</sup>

Units could also be promoted into the field army from the limitanei, in this case receiving the title pseudocomitatenses (below p298). These regiments ranked below comitatenses in precedence. They are first recorded in 365. These transfers reflected field conditions, thus the legions I and II Armeniaca probably became pseudocomitatenses after the Persians captured their base in 360. Other transfers, i.e. those of Rhine frontier limitanei into the Gallic field army in the early-fifth century, may reflect this or they may be the result of the centralisation of western military affairs under the magister peditum. Units could also be transferred out of the

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<sup>235</sup> precedence, AM XXV.6.37; promotion, Veg. I.17(?); demotion, AM XXIX.5.20, cf XXIV.5.10

comitatenses into the limitanei as was threatened to the Unnigardae in the early-fifth century (below p150).<sup>236</sup>

Many comitatenses regiments seem to have been divided into seniores and iuniores at some point in the evolution of the army. The date is unknown, but seems to have been before 356 according to recently advanced epigraphic evidence. Previously, the division was thought to have occurred in 364.<sup>237</sup>

#### ALLIES

The Roman army often used groups of barbarians to fight for them as allies (below p262, p322). They differed from foederati (above p136) in two ways. Firstly, they were not a permanent part of the army, but were summoned by the Romans for a particular campaign, often through treaty obligations, and were then dismissed at the end of it. Thus the Goths used against Eugenius in 394 had dispersed back to their settlements by the end of the year. Secondly, they were not formed into regiments, but were used as single large units, suggesting that they could not be easily subdivided. These troops were known to contemporaries as foederati, auxilia, συμμαχοι or ὁμοιχμιοι. Here they are referred to as 'allies'.<sup>238</sup>

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<sup>236</sup> pseudocomitatenses, CT VIII.1.10 (365), (not mentioned in Ammianus); I and II Armeniaca, ND Or. VII.49,50; AM XX.7.1; to limitanei, Synesius, Ep. 78

<sup>237</sup> division, Drew-Bear, T., 'A Late-Fourth Century Latin Soldier's Epitaph at Nakolea', HSCP LXXXI (1977), 257-274 superseding Tomlin, R.S.O., 'Seniores-Iuniores in the Late Roman Field Army', AJP XCIII (1972), 253-278

<sup>238</sup> allies, Liebeschuetz, J.H.W.G., 'Generals, Federates and Buccelarii in Roman Armies around AD 400', The Defence of the Roman and Byzantine East, BAR S297, eds. P.W. Freeman and D.L. Kennedy, (Oxford, 1986), 463-474; Anon. PS 6; dismissal, RPF fr.1; J.Ant fr.203; evidence for dismissal is minimal, but if it did not occur then these barbarians must have remained in Roman service, a hypothesis for which there is even less evidence; contrast with regulars, AM XXIII.2.7

Allies came under Roman strategic command, being subordinate to the highest ranking Roman officer present. However, at a lower level they were led by their own nobility. Thus in 394 the Roman officers Bacurius (dux or magister militum), Gainas (comes) and Saul (rank unknown) commanded the allied contingents, while at a lower level Alaric led some of the allied Goths. During the late-fifth century in the east the title of comes foederatorum had emerged for the general leading allied contingents, e.g. of Ostrogoths.<sup>239</sup>

These contingents fought in their own fashion, though they were supplied and paid by the Romans. In the early-sixth century, and perhaps earlier, they came under Roman discipline. Nothing is known of their organisation, but it may have been the same as that of barbarians outside the empire, i.e. by family.<sup>240</sup>

#### THE FLEET

The late Roman navy consisted of a number of fleets based at various ports, each composed of warships (for fighting) and merchantmen (for supply and transport of troops).<sup>241</sup> Nothing is known about the normal command structure. However, several prominent generals are found commanding fleets as well as armies, suggesting that the navy was seen as part of the army, not as a separate service. Thus Magnus Maximus' magister equitum commanded

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<sup>239</sup> leadership, I: Bacurius, Gainas, Saul; II: Patriciolus, Vitalianus  
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<sup>240</sup> payment, Them. Or. X.135B; Huns, 425, Philost. XII.14, RPF fr.1; Goths in 470s, Malchus fr.2,16,17; discipline, Procopius BV III.xii.8-10; supplies, J.Ant. fr.203 and 214.5.1, but see note under II: Vitalianus 2

<sup>241</sup> fleet, Kienast, D., Untersuchungen zu den Kriegsflotten der römischen Kaiserzeit (Bonn, 1966); Moss, J.R., 'The Effects of the Policies of Aetius on the History of Western Europe', Historia XXII (1973), 711-731; Redd, M., Mare Nostrum (Rome, 1986) and review by Le Bohec, Y., JRA II (1989), 326-331

a fleet in the Adriatic in 388 and the otherwise unknown Constantius had victories on both land and sea in the fifth century. In the 450s-470s the magister militum Ricimer also commanded on both land and sea. Individual fleets were commanded by praefecti according to the Notitia. Several small fleets were probably combined under a magister militum for major operations.<sup>242</sup>

We know nothing of the size of individual fleets. However, we have some data which indicate total fleets (transports and warships) or lift capacity at certain dates. In 398 Stilicho sent 5,000 infantry to Africa from Pisa and in 410 4,000 men sailed into Ravenna. These are of the same order of magnitude as the two expeditions to Britain, in 360 and 367, each of 4 regiments (2,000-5,000 men). In 413 Heraclian sailed from Africa to Italy with a fleet, according to the manuscripts, of 3,700 ships. If the total is correct, it probably includes cargo vessels for transporting grain to Rome. The 468 expedition against the Vandals apparently totalled 1,100 ships and in 508 a naval expedition against Italy was composed of 100 (transport ?) ships, 100 dromones and 8,000 men.<sup>243</sup>

These fleets were based in a number of ports. In the west, Ravenna is recorded as being used by Honorius to receive convoys and with Misenum is mentioned as a fleet base by Vegetius and in the Notitia. Arles was used as a departure point for Theodosius' expedition against Firmus in 373. The

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<sup>242</sup> commanders, individual fleets, ILS 5902 ?; operations, I: Andragathius 3, Maximinus 4; II: Ardabur 3, Constantius 9, Ricimer 2

<sup>243</sup> 398, Claudian, de Bello Gothico 418-423; Orosius VII.36.6; 410, Zos. VI.8.2; 360, AM XX.1.3; 367, AM XXVII.8.7; 413, Oros. VII.42.13; 468, Priscus fr.53.1 (Blockley, vol 2, n183); 508, Marc. Com. sa 508

Notitia also records fleets at Aquileia, Como, Ravenna, Misenum, Arles and the mouth of the Somme.<sup>244</sup>

No fleets are recorded in the east in the Notitia, but this must be a textual omission, not proof that there was no fleet, since numerous naval actions are known from the east. In 365 Cyzicus was stormed from the sea and in 388 an eastern fleet sailed into the Adriatic and landed in Sicily. In 400 Fravitta was using a fleet in the Hellespont, and in 425 Aspar led a fleet against Italy. Eastern fleets also sailed west in 431, 441 and 468. Constantinople was the major eastern fleet base, containing (military ?) docks.<sup>245</sup>

A manual for fleet tactics written by Syrianus survives, probably dating to the late-fifth century and Vegetius also has a number of recommendations (below p362).<sup>246</sup>

Fleets consisted of two types of ships, warships and transports. Warships had oars, sails and rams and were probably similar to most Mediterranean galleys. The number of banks of oars varied, but Vegetius suggests as many as five. Some carried bolt-throwing artillery. Transports had sails only and would be almost defenceless if attacked. Both cavalry

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<sup>244</sup> bases, Somme, ND Occ. XXXVIII.8; Como, ND Occ. XLII.4; Aquileia, ND Occ. XLII.9; Ravenna, Zos. VI.8.2; Veg. IV.31; ND Occ. XLII.7; AE 1975.402; Misenum, Veg. IV.31; ND Occ. XLII.11; Pisa, Claudian, de Bello Gildonico I.483; Arles, AM XXIX.5.5; ND Occ. XLII.14

<sup>245</sup> Fravitta, Zos. V.20.3-21.4; Constantinople, Evagrius, HE II.13; Claudian, in Rufinum II.59-60; Alexandrian and Carpathian (Black Sea ?) fleets, CT XIII.5.32 (409)

<sup>246</sup> Syrianus, Dain, A., Naumachica (Paris, 1943); Vegetius IV.31-46

and infantry were transported, the mounts for the cavalry being carried in specially designed ships.<sup>247</sup>

Though there was a standing fleet, on a number of occasions when the Romans needed a fleet frantic construction took place, as in 459 for Majorian's expedition against the Vandals. Some sources also state that the Romans had no fleet. From this it seems that fleets were not in commission permanently. Triremes could be left as hulls in dockyards when not in use, with stores kept elsewhere. In this case ships had a life of up to twenty years. In addition, fleets were not needed for day-to-day defence, at least not until the Vandal kingdom emerged in Africa, so would naturally decline when out of use.<sup>248</sup>

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<sup>247</sup> ship types, Procopius, BV III.xi.15-16; Veg. IV.37; horse transports, Menander fr.23.1; illustrations similar to trireme, Ilias Ambrosiana (Berne and Olten, 1953), pl.XI

<sup>248</sup> standing fleet, Veg. IV.31; construction when needed, SA Carm. V.441-448; Jul. Or. I.42CD, Ep. ad Ath. 280A; J.Ant. fr.214.2; Zos. III.5.2; lack of fleet, SA Carm. II.384-386; Priscus fr.39.1; Jul. Or. I.42CD, Ep. ad Ath. 280A; ship life, Casson, L., Ships and Seamanship in the Ancient World (Princeton, 1971), 90, 119-120

## BORDER TROOPS

The border troops are referred to here as limitanei, but were also known as riparienses, ripenses, castellani or burgarii. These terms seem to be synonymous, but there may have been differences between them of which we know nothing. Apart from their organisation, deployment and use, they differed from the field army only in minor ways such as physical standards, tax benefits on retirement and pay.<sup>249</sup>

The limitanei contained a greater variety of units than the comitatenses as a result of their long period of evolution. These were cohortes and legiones for the infantry and alae and equites for the cavalry, as well as units vaguely titled limites, milites, auxilia, gentes and numeri which were all probably infantry. This terminology was not always used precisely and the Notitia Dignitatum referred to both full legions and their detachments in the same way (above p134).<sup>250</sup>

As with the comitatenses it is difficult to estimate unit sizes. In the third century cohortes and alae were about 500 strong and John Lydus in the sixth century records alae as 600. Assuming Lydus is correct, this may have been their size in the intervening period. The few milliary units recorded in the Notitia may have been around 1,000 strong as in the third century. Border equites, and perhaps auxilia, might have had the same

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<sup>249</sup> limitanei, Bell, H.I. et al., The Abinnaeus Archive (Oxford, 1962) for the papers of a limitanei officer of the mid-fourth century; on term 'limitanei', Isaac, B., 'The Meaning of the Terms Limes and Limitanei', JRS LXXVIII (1988), 125-147; first appearance of 'limitanei', CT XII.1.56 (363); probable synonymity, CT VII.20.4 (325); differentiation, van Berchem, D., L'Armée de Dioclétien et la Réforme Constantinienne (Paris, 1952); rations, CT VII.4.14 (365), VIII.1.10 (365); physical standards. CT VII.22.8 (372); Synesius, Ep. 78

<sup>250</sup> at some point before the drawing up of the Notitia, cunei equites and cunei apparently became synonyms for equites and should not be considered as different types of unit; cf CT V.6.1 (347), VII.13.1 (353)

establishment as their field army counterparts, i.e. 600 and 1200 (or 600) respectively. Legiones were often broken up into detachments, in some cases as many as six from the same legion. These varied in size and had up to five cohorts. Full-strength legions may have been the same strength as field army legions, but we don't know. If they were this small, some of their detachments would have been very small indeed. These guesses are establishment strengths and the real strengths would have been somewhat lower.<sup>251</sup>

Classes (flotillas) were also part of the limitanei. Each flotilla had its own base at a fort on the Rhine or Danube which was garrisoned by an infantry or cavalry unit. We do not know how big these flotillas were, though in 359 Julian assembled forty boats while campaigning on the Rhine. In 412 Moesia II had 100 lusoriae and Scythia had 125 lusoriae of two types, iudicariae and agrarienses, the latter outnumbering the former by approximately two to one. Some of these boats could be equipped with bolt-shooters, but most were small. Roman longboats from Mainz at this period were c.10 m long and c.4 m in width with a shallow draught and were probably the same type as Julian's forty boats which carried fewer than 300 men.<sup>252</sup>

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<sup>251</sup> sizes, LRE 680-682; Duncan-Jones, R.P., 'Pay and Numbers in Diocletian's Army', Chiron VIII (1978), 541-560; the reduction in size of late Roman forts does not automatically mean a reduction in the size of units. The increased number of forts and known outpostings suggest a more spread out army. In addition, many large forts continued to be used; Zuckermann, C., 'Legio V Macedonica in Egypt', Tyche III (1988), 279-287 suggests strengths of either 400 or 800; ala, Lydus, de Mag. I.46; MacMullen, R., 'How big was the Roman Imperial Army?', Klio LXII (1980), 451-460; Várady, L., 'Additional notes on the problem of the Late Roman Dalmatian cunei', AAASH XI (1963), 391-406 is of little use

<sup>252</sup> flotillas, Danube, CT VII.17.1 (412), possibly a shake up after the attack of the Sciri in 411; ND Occ. XXXII.50-52, 55-6, XXXIII.58, XXXIV.26-28, 37, 40, 42-43; AM XVII.13.17, XIX.11.8; Zos. IV.39.1-2; Veg. IV.46; Rhine, AM XVI.11.8, XVII.1.4 (800 men), 2.3, XVIII.2.11-12 (40 lusoriae, 300 men); Symm. Laud. in Valent. II.28; Gaul, ND Occ. XLII.14,15,21,23; ships, Höckmann, O., 'Rheinschiffe aus der Zeit Ammianus:

There were a number of sites on both sides of the Rhine and Danube which combined small towers with harbour areas, so-called fortified landing places (below p<sup>254</sup>). As well as providing safe docking sites for elements of a flotilla, these would also serve as harbours for the small boats probably used by land regiments for communication and supply purposes (and perhaps patrolling), providing shelter in bad weather.<sup>253</sup>

Precedence probably did not exist among limitanei regiments because of their static nature. Only a few seniores-iuniores exist and these are probably transferred comitatenses. Similarly, there was no need for a brigade structure. Cohorts were commanded by tribuni, legions and their detachments, vexillationes, alae, numeri, and classes by praefecti. Both tribuni and praefecti were also described as praepositi, itself not a rank. In an official letter Abinnaeus, commander of an ala in Egypt, is referred to as praepositus in the address and praefectus in the text. The Notitia refers to the commanders of milites, gentes and some other types of unit as praepositi.<sup>254</sup>

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neue Funde in Mainz', Antike Welt XIII.3 (1982), 40-47; Die Mainzer Kriegerschiffe, ed. G. Rupprecht, (Mainz, 1986); artillery, Mauricius, Strat. XII.8.21.2

<sup>253</sup> regimental boats, cf ND Occ. XXXIV.26-27,37,40,41, XLII.16, Or. XXXIX.20,35, XL.22,28,36

<sup>254</sup> seniores-iuniores, ND Occ. XXXV.14-16, XLII.6; Tomlin, R.S.O., 'Seniores-iuniores in the Late-Roman Field Army', AJP XCIII (1972), 253-278 at 254n3; command, Grosse 143-151; titles, P.Abinn. 3

## SUPPORT SERVICES

In addition to combat units, a number of other bodies were important to the fighting strength of the army. Here the domestici and protectores are discussed as well as provisions for remounts and equipment. Organisation of supply and intelligence services are discussed below (p332-342, p349).

### Protectores and Domestici

In the mid-fourth century the protectores and domestici could be described as staff colleges since all tribunes and praefecti (unless directly commissioned) served in them before commanding their own units. The domestici were attached to the emperor and usually accompanied the comitatus on campaign. Administratively, they were divided into domestici peditum and equitum and the Notitia records these regiments for each Augustus. Groups of protectores were attached to each magister militum. Precise duties for protectores and domestici are hard to define. They performed functions such as rounding up deserters, planning and supervising exports from the empire. They seem never to have had a function as combat regiments. Both groups performed the same types of work, often together, accounting for some of the confusion as to their status. After a variable period (averaging five years), they were promoted to tribuni or praefecti.

By the early-fifth century the character of the domestici and protectores had changed. Instead of having a transitory composition, members were attached permanently and the units became more ornamental, a part of the palace rather than of the field army. The process appears to have affected protectores as much as domestici. In the west they were both

pensioned off by Theoderic in 493, though the units continued to exist in the east.<sup>255</sup>

#### Remounts

Horses could be provided by troopers in cavalry regiments when enlisting, but were usually supplied by the government. They came from two sources, levies from provincials (sometimes commuted) and honorati, and from imperial horse farms. Their supply was the duty of the tribunus (later comes) stabuli who was responsible for supplying all government horses.<sup>256</sup>

#### Equipment Production

The state provided equipment for troops by production from arms factories (fabricae). State production also eased control of weaponry, since any production that was not carried out in a fabrica was clearly illegal, and perhaps hindered (illegal) export beyond the frontiers.

The production seems to have been related to the administrative network of the empire, at least as it appears in the Notitia. Each frontier province in Europe had a fabrica scutaria, while each frontier diocese had two general factories, producing body armour and other equipment. We do not know when this system was created or how it developed after the time of the

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<sup>255</sup> protectores and domestici, ND Or. XV, Occ. XIII; Frank, R.I., Scholae Palatinae (Rome, 1969) and the review by Jones, A.H.M., JRS LX (1970), 227-229; duties, Matthews, J.F., The Roman Empire of Ammianus (London, 1989), 75-76; pensioning off, Procopius, HA XXVI.27-28

<sup>256</sup> enlisting with horses, CT VII.22.2 (326); levied horses, CT XI.11.1 (323), 16.12 (380), XIII.5.14 (371); commutation, CT XI.17.1 (367), 17.2-3 (401); Pan.Lat. XI(3).9; from honorati, LRE 1259n37; horse farms, ND Or. XIV.6; Thrace, Procopius, BV III.xii.6; Sardinia, AM XXIX.3.5; Asia Minor, Theophylact, Hist. III.1.13; Justinian, Nov. XXX.5.1; Phrygia, CT VI.4.19 (372)?

Notitia. Lastly, specialised factories produced swords, bows, arrows, cataphract equipment and artillery.

The fabricae themselves were set back from the frontiers for security, and were placed on major road networks to avoid delays in transporting their products. They were probably placed within wall circuits, though as we have no idea what a fabrica looked like, none has yet been identified archaeologically (below p234).<sup>257</sup>

Though production seems highly centralised, it is probable that all factories produced some other equipment in small quantities, and that units could produce some of their own equipment. Arrows, javelins and spears were simple to make and/or repair and regimental armourers probably existed. They are mentioned in Vegetius' list of members of the legion and also in Mauricius' Strategikon.<sup>258</sup>

#### Regimental Officials

In addition to the fighting personnel, a number of 'service' troops were attached to army regiments, doctors, chaplains and staff-officers.

We know virtually nothing about military medical services save the fact that they existed. In the sixth century doctors were attached to regiments and this practice probably existed earlier. Unit doctors are attested as late as AD 199.<sup>259</sup>

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<sup>257</sup> James, S., 'The Fabricae', Military Equipment and the Equipment of Roman Soldiers, BAR S394, ed. J.C. Coulston, (Oxford, 1988), 257-331 discusses the fabricae in depth

<sup>258</sup> regimental armourers, Veg.II.11; Mauricius, Strat. XII.8.7

<sup>259</sup> medics, Veg. III.2; Ausonius, Grat. Act. XVII; AM XVI.6.2, XIX.2.15, XXV.3.7, XXX.6.4-5; ILS 7797? buried at Concordia; later, Mauricius, Strat. II.9; P.Monac. 9; Procopius, BG VI.ii.25-32; earlier, Davies, R.W., 'The Roman Military Medical Service', Saalburg Jahrbuch XXVII (1970), 84-104 [= Service in the Roman Army (Edinburgh, 1989), 209-236]

Regimental chaplains are first heard of in the mid-fifth century in the east though they may have appeared earlier. They probably replaced pagan priests (who may not have been attached to regiments), though these still appeared occasionally in connection with the army. Thus Litorius consulted soothsayers in 439 before attacking at Toulouse.<sup>260</sup>

The regimental staff would have kept the voluminous amounts of paperwork the army produced. We know that individual soldiers had enrolment papers (probatoriae) and dogtags (bullae) and that units had troop rosters and produced (theoretically) daily ration indents.<sup>261</sup>

### Bucellarii

Bucellarii formed the private bodyguards of many generals in the late-fourth and fifth centuries. According to Olympiodorus 'in the days of Honorius, the name bucellarius was borne not only by Roman soldiers, but also by some Goths'. The term is not found in the fourth century though the institution may have existed then.<sup>262</sup>

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<sup>260</sup> chaplains, Cyril of Scythopolis, V.Saba.9; Theoderet, Ep. 2; P.Nessana 35; Jones, A.H.M., 'Military Chaplains in the Roman Army', Harvard Theological Review XLVI (1953), 249-50; pagans, Prosp. 1335

<sup>261</sup> probatoriae (enlistment papers), CJ XII.35.17 (472); dogtags, Acta Maximiliani II.6 (cited from LRE 617); tattoos, Veg I.8, II.5; Acta Maximiliani I.5; CT X.22.4 (398); Aug. C.Ep.Parm. II.29; Jones, C.P., 'Stigma: Tattooing and Branding in Graeco-Roman antiquity', JRS LXXVII (1987), 139-155 at 149; troop rosters, AM XVIII.5.1; Evagrius, HE II.1; Procopius, BV IV.xvi.3; Zos. IV.31.1; CT VI.24.2 (365), 5 (393); ration indents, CT VII.4.13 (365); lodging rosters, Procopius, BV III.xxi.10; Watson, R., 'Documentation in the Roman Army', ANRW II.1 (Berlin, 1974), 493-507; other records, Veg.II.5,7,19; Eunapius fr.84

<sup>262</sup> bucellarii, Olymp. fr.7.4, 12; Diesener, H.-J., 'Das Buccelariertum von Stilicho und Sarus bis auf Aetius', Klio LIV (1972), 321-350; neither the Thesaurus Latinae Linguae nor Lewis and Short's Latin Dictionary record the word before the fifth century; it is common to associate the bucellarii with the Germanic comitatus, antrustiones, etc. The fact that some of the men in the bodyguard were German does not make it a Germanic institution; Liebeschuetz, J.H.W.G., Barbarians and Bishops (Oxford, 1990), 43-47

Such men would have had little impact on the army and probably saw little action in the field. They are not attested as being involved in any field battles in the fifth century. Bucellarii were few in number and we hear of no groups larger than 200-300 strong and usually fewer. They were probably mounted. Belisarius' oft-cited bucellarii in Italy, a force 7,000 strong, was exceptionally large. They were so strong because Belisarius thought his expedition needed reinforcing and could only do this privately; if he could have taken more regulars he would have done so.<sup>263</sup>

#### MILITIA

It seems unlikely that there was a universal official militia in the late Roman empire for several reasons. Most importantly, there is no explicit mention of such an organisation in our sources. It seems unlikely that it would be omitted from legal sources, since militia membership would require weapon ownership, frowned on, if not illegal.<sup>264</sup>

Secondly, on many occasions when we would expect to hear of militias, none are recorded. When there were no troops present, urban defence was carried out by various groups, armed citizens and slaves, or occasionally veterans. In such cases the defence seems to be an ad hoc affair, put together on the spur of the moment, as would not be the case if there was

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<sup>263</sup> bucellarii, Eusebius, HE VII.30.8, VIII.9.7, 14.9; Rufinus, Claudian, in Rufinum II.76-77; Stilicho, Zos. V.11.4, 34.1; Sarus, Zos. VI.13.2 (300), Olymp. fr.18 (18/20); Gerontius, Soz. IX.13.1; Bonifatius, Aug. Ep. 220.6; Aspar, Malalas 371; Ricimer ?, J.Ant. fr.209.1; Titus, V.Dan. Stylit. 60-61; Trocundes, J.Ant. fr.214.5.12; Sabinianus, Malchus fr.20.131-132; Belisarius, Procopius, BG VII.i.18-20 (7,000), cf Africa, BV III.xvii.1 (300) + III.xix.24 (800) = 1100; Leo, CJ IX.12.10 (468)

<sup>264</sup> Webster, G., 'The function and organisation of late Roman civil defences in Britain', Roman Urban Defences in the West, CBA 51, eds. J. Hobley and B. Maloney, (London, 1983), 118-120; Birley, E., 'Local Militias in the Roman Empire', Roman Army Papers IV (Amsterdam, 1988), 387-394; MacMullen, R., Soldier and Civilian in the Later Roman Empire (Cambridge, Mass., 1963), 132-139; prohibition on arms, CT XV.15.1 (364); Synesius, Ep. 107

a militia and the leaders of these defenders have no special titles. Thus when Alaric approached Rome in 409, the citizens claimed to have formed a militia, suggesting there was not one already.<sup>265</sup>

However, some areas did have some form of militia. We hear of 'farmers and slaves' trained to fight robbers in Bithynia in 399 and similar groups existed elsewhere, for example the men levied in emergencies by bishop Synesius in Cyrenaica.

The effectiveness of such militias is uncertain. Outside Rome in 408, when Alaric heard that the people were trained and ready to fight, he said 'thicker grass was easier to mow than thinner' and guffawed at the ambassadors.

The equipment of militias that we hear of is always basic or improvised. Slings and spears were most common and swords, bows and armour seem rare to non-existent.<sup>266</sup>

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<sup>265</sup> ad hoc groups of citizens, Zos. II.43.3, V.40.3, VI.4.3; Malchus fr.20.17-19; Claudian, de Bello Gothico 463-468; SA Ep. III.3,7; Dexippus fr.28; AM XXXI.6.2; HA Marcus Aurelius XXI.7; cf Synesius, Ep. 104,122,125; veterans, AM XVI.2.1; Lib. Or. XVIII.43; urbani milites [=militia?], CT IV.13.3 (321); slaves, Zos. VI.4.3

<sup>266</sup> militias, Zos. V.15.5, 16.1-5; AM XXVII.9.6?; Alaric, Zos. V.40.3; equipment, Synesius, Ep. 108; slings, Zos.V.16.1,3; bows, Synesius, Ep. 133

## TROOP TYPES AND EQUIPMENT

This section discusses the troop types and equipment of the late Roman army. When the attention given to the equipment of early imperial troops is considered, the small volume of work on equipment of the late Roman army is surprising. There is less evidence, particularly archaeological and monumental, than for the early period. Nevertheless, there is enough to present an overview of troop types and their equipment.

### TROOP TYPES

The troops of the army can be divided into Infantry and Cavalry, of whom the former greatly outnumbered the latter. From the Notitia Dignitatum we can suggest a ratio of two infantry units to one cavalry unit and cavalry regiments were smaller than infantry regiments.

We know of no differences in troop types between comitatenses and limitanei or of any change in practice in this period. As far as we can tell, the status of a regiment, as either auxiliary or legionary, palatina, comitatenses or pseudocomitatenses, seems not to have affected its type. The only possible case is that of the higher precedence vexillationes palatinae which seem to have been composed mostly of heavy cavalry with only two light cavalry units (sagittarii) recorded out of twenty-four regiments. But it must be stressed that most of these conclusions are drawn from the Notitia alone and are no more than hypotheses.

### Infantry

The majority of Roman infantry regiments fought in close order in the main line of battle. Few units had special roles and although a number of regimental names such as exploratores or lancearii point to units having

specialised functions of some sort, there is no evidence for them being carried out. These titles probably reflect special functions during an earlier period. This is similar to the Dragoon, Hussar and Lancer regiments of the modern British army, once different in tactical functions, but now no different in tactical roles from each other or other RAC regiments.<sup>267</sup>

Hand-to-hand troops were supported by specialist missile regiments. Missile fire would be highly effective since few barbarians wore armour (above p88, 102). Some units were composed totally of archers (sagittarii) and most infantry units seem to have had their own missile-armed contingent. Vegetius recommended that this should be between a quarter and a third of recruits should be trained to use bows, possibly reflecting proportions within units. In 351

Constantius immediately sent out Scudilo and Manadus, military tribunes. They chose the best infantry and bowmen that they had under their command.

In Ammianus' account of Procopius' usurpation in 365, a skirmish between two auxilia palatina and a single legion was interrupted while 'they were exchanging missiles (missilia) between themselves'. Since the interruption was caused by Procopius rushing between the opposing battle lines the fire was probably from bows; javelins were generally thrown immediately before contact and Procopius could not have stopped fighting at this stage. There is also some weak archaeological evidence. At Housesteads on Hadrian's Wall a late-fourth century deposit of more than 800 arrows has been found and no sagittarii are known from the fort.<sup>268</sup>

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<sup>267</sup> lancearii, Balthy, J.C., 'Apamea in the second and third centuries A.D.', JRS LXXVIII (1988), 91-104 at 101; Hoffmann 218-220

<sup>268</sup> missile troops, Veg. I.14-17; mixed unit, Veg. I.15, III.14; Zos. II.50.2-3; AM XXVI.7.15; cf CIL VI.32994; Welsby, D.A., The Defences of Roman Britain in its Later Phases, BAR 101, (Oxford, 1982), 118; training, Veg. I.15

Some battle accounts show operations by 'light armed' units (expediti, velites, leves armaturae, exculcatores, ferentarii or ψιλοι), e.g. an operation against Sarmatians hiding in marshes in 357, when 'light-armed troops were put into skiffs, and taking the course which offered the greatest secrecy, came up to the lurking places of the Sarmatians'. Legionaries, auxilia and cavalry could all be referred to as 'light-armed'. In the sixth century these light armed troops are always described as being equipped with missiles and it is likely that the fourth-century troops were similarly equipped.<sup>269</sup>

There were also regiments of balistarii which appear to be artillery units. There were seven regiments of balistarii recorded in the Notitia Dignitatum (three legiones comitatenses, three pseudocomitatenses units and one limitanei regiment). In addition, artillery may have been integral to infantry regiments, similar to earlier attachments to legionary centuries, though there is no direct evidence for or against from this period.<sup>270</sup>

The existence of these regiments, together with sagittarii brigades, suggests an ability to concentrate large volumes of firepower in one place. But these units are not conspicuous in battle accounts and we know little of their role. However, the frequent appearance of artillery in sieges

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<sup>269</sup> 'lightly armed troops', Veg. II.2,15; Zos. IV.25.2; AM XVII.13.17, XIX.3.1, 11.8 (legionaries), XX.1.3 (auxilia), 4.5, XXI.4.8 (auxilia), 7.4 (skirmishers), 9.6, 12.9 (skirmishers), 13.8,16, XXIV.1.13 (skirmishers), 2.8 (auxilia), 4.3, 5.5 (skirmishers), 6.9 (auxilia), 7.2, XXV.6.9 (cavalry), XXX.1.11 (archers), XXXI.11.6; Mauricius, Strat. X.1.4, 16, XII.8.3,5,8,9,12

<sup>270</sup> balistarii, ND Occ. VII.97, XLI.23, Or. VII.43, 57, VIII.46, 47, IX.47; AM XVI.2.5; regiments without artillery, probably AM XIX.5.2 where there seems to have been a unit dedicated to the artillery, XVIII.9.1; integral ?, Veg. II.25; Marsden, E.W., Greek and Roman Artillery: Historical Development (Oxford, 1969), 195-198; I am not convinced by Brennan, P., 'Combined Legionary Detachments as Artillery Units in Late Roman Danubian Bridgehead Dispositions', Chiron X (1980), 553-567; no special skills were necessary for use of ballistae (as opposed to maintenance) according to information from the Ermine Street Guard who regularly use a reconstruction

suggests that they may have been integral to (limitanei?) regiments, or at least to units forming town garrisons.

Though other missile weapons such as slings, staff-slings and crossbows were used, they seem not to have made up entire units, with the possible exception of a regiment of funditores, but were part of infantry regiments.<sup>271</sup>

### Cavalry

It is often suggested that the army was increasingly composed of cavalry during this period, though there is little evidence for this in the fifth century. Dennis presents the orthodox view of the fifth-century army.

More emphasis was placed on mobility and thus in cavalry, who could move from one threatened sector to another. The enemies of the Romans were also depending more and more on horses in their attacks.

In 478, an eastern field army was composed of 6,000 cavalry and 30,000 infantry. These proportions were probably similar in the fourth century although precise figures are lacking. However, it can be roughly calculated that at Strasbourg in 357 Julian had 10,000 infantry and 3,000 cavalry. By the time of Justinian cavalry had become much more important, but precisely why or when this change occurred is unknown.<sup>272</sup>

There seems to have been more variety in types of cavalry than of infantry. Cavalry formed a third of the units of the army, in numbers less, as their units were smaller. The proportion of cavalry to infantry units appears to have been higher in the limitanei than in the comitatenses,

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<sup>271</sup> funditores, ND Or. VII.52; Mauricius, Strat. XII.8.4

<sup>272</sup> Dennis, G.T., Maurice's Strategikon (Philadelphia, 1984), viii; 478, Malchus fr.18.2.14-18; the change in the sixth-century appears to have been one of emphasis, not of numbers; Haldon, J.F., 'Some aspects of Byzantine Military Technology from the Sixth to the Tenth Centuries', Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies I (1975), 11-47 at 12-13

possibly because of they were of more use for patrolling. There is no reason to suppose that the empire had particular problems in raising cavalry as has been suggested. Fighting effectively on horseback is simply a matter of training, as the European wars of the nineteenth century show clearly.<sup>273</sup>

Equites sagittarii (15% of comitatenses cavalry) and probably Mauri (2%) and Dalmatae (7%) were light cavalry, used primarily for skirmishing and scouting.<sup>274</sup>

The majority of comitatenses cavalry regiments were shock cavalry (61%) (scutarii, promoti and stablesiani), lance or spear armed and intended to defeat enemy infantry or cavalry in melee.<sup>275</sup>

Finally, there was a third class of cavalry, the cataphracti and clibanarii, (15%) who were more heavily armoured shock cavalry. Some may have had bows, but most were armed for melee. These seem to have been concentrated in the eastern armies, especially on the eastern frontier, though many of them had served in the west at some point in their history, having acquired the names of their stations. These cavalry were concentrated in the field armies.<sup>276</sup>

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<sup>273</sup> limited recruiting, e.g. Liebeschuetz, J.H.W.G., Barbarians and Bishops (Oxford, 1990), 33n15; training, Veg. I.18

<sup>274</sup> Dalmatae, Zos. I.52.3-53.1, cf 50.3-4; there is no evidence for equites Mauri having Moorish connections at this period

<sup>275</sup> Speidel, M., 'Stablesiani: The raising of new cavalry units during the crisis of the Roman Empire', Chiron IV (1974), 541-546 [=Roman Army Studies I (Amsterdam, 1984), 391-396]; some sixth-century cavalry were armed with lance and bow, an innovation, although we do not know the date of introduction; Procopius, BP I.i.8-15, BG V.xxvii.20,27; Mauricius, Strat. I.2, II.8

<sup>276</sup> Coulston, J.C., 'Roman, Parthian and Sassanid Tactical Developments', Defence of the Roman and Byzantine East, BAR S297, eds. P.W. Freeman and D.L. Kennedy, (Oxford, 1986), 59-75; Eadie, J.W., 'The Development of Roman Mailed Cavalry', JRS LVII (1967), 161-173, asserts (170) that cataphracti and clibanarii were not synonymous; Speidel, M., 'Cataphractii Clibanarii and the Rise of the later Roman Mailed Cavalry',

The proportions among European limitanei were different. Light cavalry totalled 47% (sagittarii 9%, Mauri 2%, Dalmatae 36%), shock cavalry 51% and cataphracts 2%. This suggests a troop mix similar to the field army, but lacking the units of very heavy shock cavalry.

The scholae were all cavalry regiments. In the west there were five shock units, in the east five shock, one clibanarii and one sagittarii units.<sup>277</sup>

#### Foederati

As the foederati were equipped by the Romans, types of regiment would follow those outlined above. If the suggestion (above, p138) that the Notitia records foederati is accepted then the proportions of cavalry mentioned above (p161) would include foederati. The only regiment of foederati for which we know type or weaponry is the 'Unnigardae' of Synesius who were mounted archers, though the unit of Huns led by Olympius was probably composed of horse archers.<sup>278</sup>

#### Allies

The troops provided by allies would have been similar to those fielded in barbarian armies. This means that they would have been infantry for the most part, with only a few cavalry (above, p83-107).

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Epigrafica Anatolica IV (1984), 151-156 is probably correct in equating the terms, though he attributes a degree of 'officialness' to the tombstone it probably does not possess. Cataphracti and clibanarii are here treated as identical

<sup>277</sup> ND Occ. IX.4-8, Or. XI.4-10

<sup>278</sup> Unnigardae, Synesius, Ep. 131; Huns, Zos. V.45.6

## EQUIPMENT

During this period there seems to have been no major change in equipment and Roman troops were similarly armed between 350 and 500. In general terms, equipment in the ancient world hardly developed and the basic equipment of a legionary in the mid-fourth century (sword, spear, shield, helmet, metal body armour) was identical to that of a legionary of the mid-second century BC. It also differed little from that of a fifth-century BC Greek hoplite or a tenth-century Byzantine infantryman. Without significant technological development, any major change in equipment, and therefore in tactics, would be unlikely. The only reasons which would induce change during this period would be internal.<sup>279</sup>

### Missile Weapons

Roman weaponry can be divided into distance and hand-to-hand weapons. Most troops with distance weapons were armed with bows. These were usually of composite type similar to those used by the Sassanids and nomads like the Huns and Bulgars. Though Roman bows may have differed somewhat in form, infantry bows being larger than the compact reflex bows favoured by nomads, there would have been little difference in battlefield performance.<sup>280</sup>

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<sup>279</sup> the only survey of equipment is still Couissin, P., Les Armes Romaines (Paris, 1926), 471-518 though see also Grosse 321-338; on later developments, Koliass, T., Byzantinische Waffen (Vienna, 1988); reasons for development of equipment and tactics, Coulston, J.C., 'Roman, Parthian and Sassanid Tactical Developments', Defence of the Roman and Byzantine East, BAR S297, eds. P.W. Freeman and D.L. Kennedy (Oxford, 1986), 59-75 at 59

<sup>280</sup> bows, Coulston, J.C., 'Roman Archery Equipment', The Production and Distribution of Roman Military Equipment, BAR S275, ed. M.C. Bishop, (Oxford, 1985), 220-366; cf Excavations at Dura-Europos, Sixth Season, ed. M.I. Rostovtzeff et al. (London, 1936), 453-456; composite bow, Rosenthal, E., The Illustrations of the Vergilius Romanus (Zrich, 1972), pl. XIV; Grosse 335-336

Some infantry may have been armed with crossbows (manuballistae), but these do not seem to have been common.<sup>281</sup>

In addition to these long range weapons, an assortment of shorter range throwing weapons was used. These can be divided into two groups on the basis of range. The shorter, lighter, darts (martioarbuli or plumbatae) were carried in numbers by (some) infantry, though they are not recorded as being used by cavalry. Vegetius recommended that they be clipped behind shields in groups of five and thrown in the first charge. Reconstructions have a range of 30-65 metres, which would suggest that they were thrown before charging.<sup>282</sup>

The second group was javelins, described as spicula, verruta, hastae, pila, iacula or even tela, thrown immediately before contact. There were several types, though the differences are obscure. Vegetius suggested one spiculum (a heavy, armour-piercing weapon five-and-a-half Roman feet long) and one verrutum (lighter, three-and-a-half feet in length) per man. They were carried by both infantry and cavalry, the latter perhaps having greater numbers of javelins carried in a holder attached to the saddle.

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<sup>281</sup> crossbows, Coulston, J.C., 'Roman Archery Equipment', The Production and Distribution of Roman Military Equipment, BAR S275, ed. M.C. Bishop, (Oxford, 1985), 259-263; Veg. II.15, III.14, IV.21; Mauricius, Strat. XII.8.5; Anon. dRB XVI.5; Dennis, G.T., 'Flies, Mice and the Byzantine Crossbow', Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies VII (1981), 1-5; Campbell, D.B., 'Auxiliary Artillery Revisited', Bonner Jahrbücher CLXXXVI (1986), 117-132 at 126-132

<sup>282</sup> plumbatae, Veg. I.17, II.15, III.14; Anon. dRB X-XI; Mauricius, Strat. XII.8.2,4-5,12,20; Mackay, J. and Barker, P., 'Three Plumbatae from Wroxeter', AJ LIV (1974), 275-277; Barker, P.A., 'The Plumbatae from Wroxeter', De Rebus Bellicis, BAR S63, eds. M.W. Hassall and R.I. Ireland, (Oxford, 1979), 97-100; Sherlock, B., 'Plumbatae, a note on the method of manufacture', Hassall and Ireland, 101-102; Grosse 334-335

Some wall paintings show two javelins carried in the shield hand by both infantry and cavalry.<sup>283</sup>

Slings (fundi) and staff slings (fustibuli) were rarely used. They are more common in descriptions of sieges and irregular troops than in field battles. Lastly, Vegetius recommends that recruits in every unit be trained to throw stones by hand or with slings.<sup>284</sup>

### Melee Weapons

The standard melee weapon of the infantry was the spear. Monuments and manuscript illustrations almost always show soldiers with spears, a contrast with the early empire where the shortsword (gladius) is the most commonly depicted weapon. From surviving artistic evidence, spears seem to have been c.2-2.5 m in length.<sup>285</sup>

As with the infantry, the major weapon of shock cavalry units was the spear. It was either used overarm to thrust or underarm (one or two-handed)

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<sup>283</sup> javelins, Veg. II.15; Mauricius, Strat. XII.8.2,3,5,12,20; multiples, infantry, Grosse 332-334; Dunbabin, K.M., The Mosaics of Roman North Africa (Oxford, 1978), #29, 201; Ferrua, A., Le Pittura della nuova Catacomba di Via Latina (Vatican, 1960), pl. LXXXIV; Anon. dRB XV.4; cf Balthy, J., 'Apamea in the second and third centuries A.D.' JRS LXXVIII (1988), 91-104, pl.XIV.2 for a third-century example; cavalry, Veg. II.15; ILS 9134; Dunbabin, op. cit.; late-second/early-third, Schleiermacher, M., Ähnliche Reitergrabsteine (Bonn, 1984), #114; holder, Josephus, BJ III.97

<sup>284</sup> slingers, AM XIX.5.1, XXXI.15.13; Jul. Or. II.57D; Veg. I.16, II.23, III.14; irregulars, Zos. V.16.1; Griffiths, W.B., 'The sling and its place in the Roman Imperial Army', Roman Military Equipment: The Sources of Evidence, BAR S476, ed. C. van Driel-Murray, (Oxford, 1989), 255-279; staff-slings, Veg. I.16, II.15, III.14; Mauricius, Strat. XII.8.3-4; stones, Veg. I.16, II.23; AM XX.7.10

<sup>285</sup> length, the Monza Diptych shows a spear just longer than Stilicho was tall, but it may be shortened to fit the diptych. It is approximately the same length as spears depicted on plates, coins, monuments and mosaics; for a discussion of some of the factors influencing depiction of soldiers on monuments, Coulston, J.C., 'Roman Military Equipment on Third-Century Tombstones', The Accoutrements of War, BAR S336, ed. M. Dawson, (Oxford, 1987), 141-156; Scott, I.R., 'Spearheads of the British Limes', Roman Frontier Studies 1979, BAR S71, eds. W.S. Hanson and L.J.F. Keppie (Oxford, 1980), 333-343 demonstrates the lack of major change

as a lance. Unless all contemporary artists and graffitists were mistaken, it was used in this way despite the lack of stirrups. This suggests that the lack of stirrups was not important, a suggestion supported by the apparent lack of change in cavalry tactics after their introduction in the sixth century. The cavalry spear seems to have been the same length as the infantry spear.<sup>286</sup>

Many troops also carried the spatha, a straight two-edged sword c.0.7-0.9 m long, used by both infantry and cavalry. It had a point so could be used for thrusting as well as cutting. Spearmen fought in close formation where there would be little room to cut with a spatha (though it might be used to thrust), suggesting it was a secondary weapon. It may have been used more often by officers than by rankers.<sup>287</sup>

Other weapons such as lassoes, axes and maces were used though we know nothing of their distribution. Their rarity suggests that they were not primary weapons.<sup>288</sup>

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<sup>286</sup> cavalry spears, overarm, late-third/early-fourth century, Speidel, M., 'Cataphractarii and the Rise of the Late Roman Mailed Cavalry', Epigraphica Anatolica IV (1984), 151-156, pl XV, XVI; underarm, one-handed, late-third/early-fourth century, Schleiermacher, M., Mische Reitergrabsteine (Bonn, 1984), #49; two-handed, mid-third century, Excavations at Dura-Europos, Fourth Season, ed. M.I. Rostovtzeff et al., (London, 1933), 216-217

detailed discussion of the stirrup is obviously out of place here. However, nothing could be done with stirrups that could not be done without them, though it might be done better or more easily; the Roman horned saddle allowed great flexibility (for throwing) and support (for melee); Furthermore, ancient cavalry had always had been capable of charging and beating infantry in the right circumstances, e.g. as at Plataea or Carrhae archaeological finds show horses from military sites as averaging 14 hands, easily sufficient for military purposes, including carrying horse-  
armour, Luff, R.-M., A Zooarchaeological Study of the Roman North-Western Provinces, BAR S137 (Oxford, 1982), 252-257

<sup>287</sup> spatha, Grosse 330-332; thrusting, Veg. I.12

<sup>288</sup> lasso, Mauricius, Strat. I.2.7; Malalas 364; axes, AM XIV.6.7; Procopius, BP II.xxi.7; carried in baggage, Mauricius, Strat. II.2.10, XII.8.6; insignia of ND Or. XI, Occ. IX; maces (διστρία), Theophylact, Hist. VIII.4.13

## Armour

In 350 most Roman infantry and cavalry wore armour, giving them a distinct advantage over their barbarian enemies. This armour seems mostly to have been mail, though some scale was also used. Later in the fourth century, from the reign of Gratian, Vegetius says that all regiments dispensed with armour, because of the weight of their equipment. This seems unlikely for several reasons. Firstly, the problem was not new to this period. Secondly, it is difficult to think of any tactical reason by which all the infantry would benefit from its abandonment. Thirdly, Vegetius' remark that unprotected soldiers suffered from Gothic archers reinforces the likelihood that this abandonment would not have been widespread. But because of Vegetius' explicit statement, a suggestion that most late Roman infantry were armoured needs some qualification. There are several reasons to suggest that armour was used by infantry throughout this period.<sup>289</sup>

During the mid- and late-fourth century there appear to have been three types of armour in use. The most common was mail, found in two types. The first was a corselet covering the body to below the waist and over the shoulders, sometimes with leather pteruges attached to the skirt and sleeves. The second (much less common) type was a hauberk extending below the knees, to the wrists and sometimes including a coif protecting the head. Helmets were not worn if a coif was attached to the hauberk.<sup>290</sup>

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<sup>289</sup> Veg. I.20; accepted by Liebeschuetz, J.H.W.G., Barbarians and Bishops (Oxford, 1990), 25; rejected by Milner, N.P. (pers. comm.) who is currently writing his thesis on Vegetius

<sup>290</sup> mail, AM XVI.10.8; SA Carm. II.143, 321-322, Ep. III.3.5; corselet, ND Occ. IX, Or. XI insignia; hauberk, Kraeling, C.H., The Synagogue (Yale, 1956), pl. LIV; Fragmenta Virgiliana, Cod. Vat. Lat. 3225, fol.73v, pl.49; cf Mauricius, Strat. X.1.4, possibly referring to detachable hoods and Agathias, Hist. II.8.4; without coif, Kraeling, C.H., The Synagogue (Yale, 1956), pl.LIV, LV; Ferrua, A., Le Pittura della Nuova Catacomba di Via Latina (Vatican, 1960), pl. LXXXIV, CXV; relief from the

The second type of armour was a scale corselet, similar to the mail corselet, again with and without pteruges. A third type was the cuirass, of bronze or iron, usually found with pteruges. Most officers seem to have worn this. Lastly, lamellar armour is known from before and after this period, but is not known in the fourth and fifth centuries.<sup>291</sup>

Evidence for continued use of armour by infantry is widespread. Firstly, the mid-sixth century Byzantine army is known to have had large numbers of armoured infantry. Illustrations of these men and literary descriptions are similar to fourth-century illustrations. It seems unlikely that identical equipment was reintroduced in the sixth century after falling out of use in the fourth.<sup>292</sup>

Secondly, armour continued to be produced. The Notitia Dignitatum, whose drawings postdated Gratian's reign, records numbers of fabricae producing scutaria et armorum, with armorum here probably meaning armour rather than weapons. Two factories are also recorded as producing loricaria. Though production of armour continued, this does not prove it was used by infantry. The illustrations (for eastern and western fabricae)

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Vatican dated by Dr. R.S.O. Tomlin (pers. comm.) to fourth-century, Koppel, G.M., 'Die historischen Reliefs der römischen Kaiserzeit IV', Bonner Jahrbucher CLXXXVI (1986), 1-90, #48 [=Vatican Inv. 1671]

<sup>291</sup> scale, SA Carm. VII.242, XV.13; cuirass, ND Or. XI, Occ. IX; AM XXIX.3.4; Ilias Ambrosiana (Berne and Olten, 1953) pl. XII; a relief in the Vatican (above n290) shows a suit of scale extending to the wrist; Rosenthal, E., The Illustrations of the Vergilius Romanus (Zrich, 1972), pl. XIV

<sup>292</sup> sixth century, Haldon, J.F., 'Some aspects of Byzantine Military Technology from the Sixth to the Tenth centuries', Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies I (1975), 11-47 at 13-20; Procopius, BP I.xxiv.51; Anon. PS 16; Mauricius, Strat. XII.8.4; Agathias, Hist. II.8.4; Wealth of the Roman World, eds. J.P.C. Kent and K.S. Painter, (London, 1977), #179, 181-182, 185

in the Notitia show mail shirts, muscle cuirasses and jointed plate limb defences.<sup>293</sup>

Thirdly, artistic evidence shows many fifth-century soldiers wearing armour. The representations may be stylised, but the consistency of representation and the differences from illustrations of the early empire suggest little distortion occurred. This evidence can be divided into four groups, manuscript illustrations, official monuments, mosaics and wall-paintings and plates, dishes, woodcarvings etc.

Firstly, western manuscript illustrations from this period show some figures with armour, though many without. The lack of illustrations of armoured soldiers does not prove a lack of armour, but should be compared with epigraphic depictions from the third century, where soldiers are almost always shown unarmoured, though fully armed. Similarly, most soldiers on the early-fourth century Arch of Constantine are shown unarmed, though most of the figures in combat are wearing armour. The Vatican Virgil, a manuscript from the early-fifth century with contemporary illustrations, shows some soldiers wearing mail (including some with hauberks and coifs) and others with muscle cuirasses.<sup>294</sup>

Secondly, official monuments show a similar picture. Drawings of the (now lost) Column of Arcadius (386/408) in Constantinople depict armoured infantry, (most in muscle cuirasses with pteruges, some in mail or scale).

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<sup>293</sup> fabricae, ND Or. XI.18-39, Occ. IX.16-39 (Paris MS best for details of armour); on production of armour, James, S., 'The Fabricae', Military Equipment and the Identity of Roman Soldiers, BAR S394, ed. J.C. Coulston, (Oxford, 1988), 257-331 at 261

<sup>294</sup> Vatican Virgil, De Wit, J., Die Miniaturen des Vergilius Vaticanus (Amsterdam, 1959); cf Ambrose Iliad, Ilias Ambrosiana (Berne and Olten, 1953); Bianchi Bandinelli, R., Hellenistic-Byzantine Miniatures of the Iliad (Olten, 1955); Rosenthal, E., The Illustrations of the Vergilius Romanus (Zrich, 1972); third-century soldiers, Coulston, J.C., 'Roman Military Equipment on Third-Century Tombstones', The Accoutrements of War, BAR S336, ed. M. Dawson, (Oxford, 1987), 141-156

Similar figures are shown on the fourth-century panels on the Arch of Constantine. This also shows scale or mail. Such detail was time-consuming (and therefore expensive) to carve, and may have been painted. A comparison with the depiction of mail on Trajan's Column is relevant here. Many of the figures on the column were depicted as wearing mail, but the chisel marks were very shallow and are often lost or only visible to the naked eye. Any similar representation would probably be lost on sketches of the columns of Arcadius and the heavily weathered Column of Theodosius.<sup>295</sup>

Thirdly, fifth-century mosaics, such as those in the basilica of St. Maria Maggiore also illustrate soldiers with body armour and helmets. Wall paintings of the same date often show soldiers, frequently in biblical scenes such as the Crossing of the Red Sea.<sup>296</sup>

Lastly, armoured infantry are shown in other artwork. The early-seventh century 'David' plates show Byzantine infantry wearing mail corselets with pteruges. A wood carving, probably of the fourth century, from Egypt shows infantry wearing mail corselets.<sup>297</sup>

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<sup>295</sup> column of Arcadius, two main sources, [1] Louvre MS inv.4951, illustrated in Becatti, G., La Colonna Coclide Istoriata (Rome, 1960) and Giglioli, G.O., La colonna di Arcadio a Constantinopoli (Naples, 1952); [2] Trinity College Cambridge MS, illustrated in Freshfield, G.H., 'Notes on a Vellum Album', Archaeologia LXII (1921-1922), 87-104; Bibliothèque Nationale Inv. 6514, Kollwitz, J., Oströmische Plastik der theodosianisch Zeit (Berlin, 1941); now Liebeschuetz, J.H.W.G., Barbarians and Bishops (Oxford, 1990), 120-121, 273-278; the iconography of the column base is very similar to that of the magister officiorum in the Notitia, Occ. IX, Or. XI; Trajan's Column, Coulston, J.C., 'The value of Trajan's Column as a source for Military Equipment', Roman Military Equipment: The Sources of Evidence, BAR S476, ed. C. van Driel-Murray, (Oxford, 1989), 31-44; Arch of Constantine, L'Orange, H.P., and Von Gerken, A., Der spätantike Bildschungen des Konstantinsbogens (Berlin, 1939)

<sup>296</sup> early/mid-fourth century catacomb paintings, Ferrua, A., Le Pittura della Nuova Catacomba di Via Latina (Vatican, 1960), pl. LXXXIV, CXV

<sup>297</sup> 'David' plates, Wealth of the Roman World, eds. J.P.C. Kent and K.S. Painter, (London, 1977), #179-187; Age of Spirituality, ed. K. Weitzmann, (New York), 1979) #69 and Archaeology XXX (1977), front cover, November

The argument for large numbers of armoured infantry is complicated by the lack of archaeological evidence. There is no surviving armour dating from this period. According to Robinson, 'actual Roman mail has survived in rare instances'. Since it is composed of intrinsically undatable iron rings, vulnerable to corrosion, this is not surprising. Archaeological evidence for lorica segmentata is much more common. However, this is so widespread only because of the survival of the easily broken bronze hinges and fasteners, and there are only a few surviving iron plates in exceptional cases such as Corbridge. Before lorica segmentata was introduced, from the second century BC to at least the mid-first century AD, the entire Roman army wore mail. After this, though segmentata was used by most legionaries, auxiliaries, cavalry and some legionaries continued to wear mail. However, there is little archaeological evidence for their armour throughout this period and the only surviving complete coats come from a collapsed mine at Dura-Europos. This scarcity suggests that a lack of surviving late Roman armour is not conclusive.<sup>298</sup>

Shock cavalry were armoured similarly to infantry and wore body armour, shields and helmets. The armour of the cataphracti and light cavalry was slightly different. Cataphracti wore either a cuirass or mail body armour and their limbs were protected by segmented plate armour. They also had face masks on their helmets. They are not described as carrying shields, though an early-fourth century relief shows a cataphract with a shield.<sup>299</sup>

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<sup>298</sup> mail, Robinson, H.R., The Armour of Imperial Rome (London, 1975), 164-173 at 171; Excavations at Dura-Europos, Sixth Season, ed. M.I. Rostovtzeff et al., (London, 1936), 194-197

<sup>299</sup> cataphracts, AM XVI.10.8; Jul. Or., I.37D-38A, II.57B-C; Claudian, de VI Cons. Hon. 569-577; Lib. Or. XVIII.206; illustrations in De Rebus Bellicis, BAR S63, eds. M.W. Hassall and R.I. Ireland, (Oxford, 1979), pl.

Some cataphracts, though probably not all, rode armoured horses. Horse armour was made of scale (third-century examples of which have been found at Dura-Europos) or mail, though leather or felt barding or cloth caparisons may also have been used. Caparisons would have considerably reduced the effect of missile fire, but would be unlikely to survive in the archaeological record.<sup>300</sup>

Light cavalry were probably armoured, though there was no need for them to have been and they could have carried out their duties effectively with little armour. Their shields, if any, may have been smaller than those of the shock cavalry. Some may not have worn any protection at all.<sup>301</sup>

Overall, continued use of body armour by late Roman troops, both infantry and cavalry, seems likely.

Vegetius also claims that helmets were abandoned under Gratian. The same arguments as above apply. Furthermore, a number have actually survived, dating to the late-fourth and early-fifth centuries, i.e. past Gratian's reign. Helmets also appear frequently in later illustrations. Their simplicity and similarity suggest mass production in the fabricae.

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V, VI, X-XV; segmented limb defences, ND Or.XI, Occ.IX; most recently, Coulston, J., 'Roman, Parthian and Sassanian Tactical Developments', The Defence of the Roman and Byzantine East, BAR S297, eds. P. W. Freeman and D.L. Kennedy, (Oxford, 1986), 59-75; see also Hoffmann 69-72, 265-277; cataphract with shield, Schleiermacher, M., Römische Reitergrabsteine (Bonn, 1984), #49; lamellar, Excavations at Dura-Europos, Sixth Season, ed. M.I. Rostovtzeff et al., (London, 1936), 450-452

<sup>300</sup> horse armour, Claudian, de VI Cons. Hon. 569-577; Lib. Or. XVIII.206; Anon. PS 17.12-16; Mauricius, Strat. I.2.6; third-century horse armour, Robinson, H.R., The Armour of Imperial Rome, (London, 1975), 194, and Excavations at Dura-Europos, Sixth Season, ed. M.I. Rostovtzeff et al., (London, 1936), 439-452; leather horse armour (Persian), AM XXIV.6.8; felt (Hunnic), Mauricius, Strat. XI.2.7

<sup>301</sup> armoured light cavalry, Excavations at Dura-Europos, Fourth Season, ed. M.I. Rostovtzeff et al., (London, 1933), 215-216

Two distinctive types are known and it is possible that the helmets worn by cavalry may have been different from infantry helmets or officers' helmets differed from those worn by other ranks.<sup>302</sup>

Greaves seem to have been worn occasionally by infantry, though they do not seem common. Only one (?) illustration exists, of Hector outside Troy in the illustrations of the Ambrose Iliad.<sup>303</sup>

Most troops carried large oval shields. The examples on the David Plates, the Monza Diptych and the Missoria of Theodosius and Valentinian are all similar in size, c.1.00-1.2 m high, 0.8 m wide. This is slightly smaller than the 1.6 m length suggested by the sixth-century Anonymous Byzantinus. These shields were used by both infantry and cavalry. Round shields also existed, though they seem only to be used by those in close attendance on the emperor and may have been confined to the candidati. According to Vegetius, shields had the owner's name, cohort and century written on the back. The terminology may be anachronistic but the practice probably continued.<sup>304</sup>

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<sup>302</sup> helmets, James, S., 'Evidence from Dura-Europos for the origins of Late Roman Helmets', Syria LXIII (1986), 107-134 is a good summary; for details, Klumbach, H., Spätrömische Gardehelme (Munich, 1973); Johnson, S., 'A Late Roman helmet from Burgh Castle', Britannia XI (1980), 303-312; crests (of coloured feathers? Ilias Ambrosiana (Berne and Olten, 1953), pl. XXV); AM XXIV.6.10, could be attached for special occasions

<sup>303</sup> greaves (ocreae, κνημιδες), Grosse 327-328; Veg. II.15, IV.44; SA Carm. VII.264, Ep. III.3.5; Lib. Or. XVIII.280; Anon. PS 16.14,55, 39.31-33; Mauricius, Strat. XII.8.1,4,16; Lydus, de Mag. I.46; Procopius, BP I.i.12; Ilias Ambrosiana (Berne and Olten, 1953), pl. LIV

<sup>304</sup> shields, size, Anon. PS 16.1-13; Missorium of Valentinian, Delbrück, R., Spätantike Kaiserporträts (Berlin, 1933), Inf.79; cf Couissin, P., Les Armes Romaines (Paris, 1926), 197; round shields, Constantius II plate, Wealth of the Roman World, eds. J.P.C. Kent and K.S. Painter, (London, 1977), #11; oval shields are shown on Honorius and Valentinian's missoria, the Column of Theodosius, Delbrück, inf. 94, 79, 86, and at San Vitale (sixth century), Deichmann, F.W., Früchristliche

### Other Equipment

In addition to arms and armour, soldiers also carried other equipment. Every man should have carried a waterbottle, blanket, twenty days' rations and probably a pickaxe, tent quarter and stake. To this load must be added any spare clothing, boots, etc. as well as personal items. Uniform items included dogtags, boots and woollen tunic, military cloak (chlamys), trousers. The basic fighting load would have been in the range of 25-30 kg, little different from the loads carried by legionaries of the early empire.<sup>305</sup>

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Bauten und Mosaike von Ravenna (Baden-Baden, 1958), pl.368; name etc., Veg. II.18

<sup>305</sup> loads, Veg. I.19; waterbottle, Suda E.2310; pickaxe, Anon. PS 18.42-46; rations, CT VII.4.5 (359); AM XVI.2.8, XVII.8.2, 9.2; Procopius, BV III.xiii.15; tents, AM XVII.13.33, XVIII.2.10, XIX.5.8, XX.11.6, XXIV.1.11, 4.2, XXV.1.18, XXIX.4.5; Pan.Lat. XII(2).10.2; Ilias Ambrosiana (Berne and Olten, 1953), pl. XXVII; Procopius, BV III.xvii.10; stakes, AM XVIII.2.11; blankets, AM XXIX.4.5; dogtags, Acta Maximiliani II.6 (cited from LRE 617n20); cf sixth-century loads, Mauricius, Strat. V.4, VII.11

## RECRUITING

During the fourth and fifth centuries AD the Roman army recruited soldiers from both inside and outside the empire. In this section the phrase 'Roman army' refers to Roman regiments. It does not refer to ethnically homogeneous units of allies fighting under their own leaders, though it does include regiments of foederati (above p143).

The Roman army in the late-fourth and early-fifth centuries was at least 300,000 strong. Recruits theoretically served for twenty years. Given an even distribution of discharges, there was a minimum requirement of 15,000 men per year. This does not take losses in battle, to disease, desertion etc., into account. If the army was 600,000 strong then imperial requirements would be at least 30,000 men annually. These recruits were drawn from both inside and outside the empire.<sup>306</sup>

### RECRUITS FROM WITHIN THE EMPIRE

There were two main sources of recruits from within the empire, volunteers and conscripts. It is difficult to know what proportion of recruits from within the empire were volunteers. This is because it is hard to compare the evidence for volunteers with that for conscripts. Most evidence for volunteers is anecdotal, for example the story concerning the future emperor Justin I and his friends joining the excubitores in the late-fifth century. Conversely, evidence for conscripts is mostly found in lawcodes. Furthermore, evidence for volunteers usually concerns individuals, that for conscripts groups. Volunteers are found throughout

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<sup>306</sup> establishment, LRE 679-684

this period but there is so little evidence that any changes in the pattern cannot be detected.<sup>307</sup>

Conscription took three forms. Firstly, the sons of soldiers were required to enlist. Providing every soldier had at least one son, (and most married soldiers would have had at least one) this ought to have kept the manpower level roughly constant. However, some sons of veterans, the most famous being St. Martin, tried to evade service, though the government tried to root out such defaulters. Most of the evidence for this defaulting comes from the Codex Theodosianus, which shows that the problem existed, but gives no idea of its extent.<sup>308</sup>

We do not know whether sons of soldiers of extra-imperial origin (who might be foederati) were required to enlist, though since we know of no legal exceptions this seems likely. We know of a number of soldiers who were the sons of such men, e.g. Silvanus, Stilicho and Aspar, though their fathers, where known, were of officer rank. No serving sons of barbarian other ranks are known, though they probably existed.<sup>309</sup>

The second type of conscription was annual levies of recruits. We have no idea of their numbers or of their proportions compared with sons of serving men. These levies of recruits were apparently taken annually, but could be commuted to a payment.<sup>310</sup>

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<sup>307</sup> volunteers, Evagrius, HE II.1; Procopius, HA VI.2; CT VII.2.1 (383), 2 (385)

<sup>308</sup> sons required to enlist, CT VII.1.5 (364), 8 (365), 11 (372), 18.10 (400), 20.12 (400), 22.1 (319), 2 (326), 4 (332), 7-11 (372-380), (11 suggesting that if more than one son available and family rich enough, municipal obligations also applied); CJ XII.47.2; son following father, ILS 2787; CIL 14189; Evagrius HE II.1; attempts to avoid conscription, Sev. V.Mart. II.1-6; CT VII.1.8 (365), 22.1 (319), 2 (326), 7-9 (372-380)

<sup>309</sup> PLRE I: Silvanus, Stilicho; II: Iordanes 3, Aspar

<sup>310</sup> conscription, CT VII.13.12 (397), 18 (407); NVal VI.1 (440), 2 (443); Zos. IV.12.1; annually, AM XXXI.4.4; commutation, CT VII.13.2 (370), 13 (397), 14 (397); NVal VI.3 (444); AM XIX.11.7, XXXI.4.4

A third type of conscription was instituted in the early-fifth century. This allowed for a supplementary levy to be raised from the honorati (the classes of illustri and clarissimi). This was often commuted to a simple levy of 30 solidi and used to provide extra funds for the government. Such levies seem to have been occasional rather than annual, and commutation occurred in 407, 410, 412 and 444, while recruits were levied in 402, 412, 413, 423 and 428. The laws recorded in the Codex Theodosianus concerning recruiting were all issued in the west and this practice may not have been carried out in the east.<sup>311</sup>

Recruits were also levied from barbarian prisoners of war settled within the empire. The sources use several words for these settlers, laeti, gentiles, dediticii and tributarii.<sup>312</sup> The distinctions between these terms are unclear. The only source which might allow any discussion of these words as technical terms is the Codex Theodosianus, the only government record for the mechanics of the settlements. A law of 409 concerning the settlement of some prisoners from the Sciri defines their position. The settlers should have the status of coloni, pay taxes, not be placed in border territory close to their home and should not be required to provide recruits for the army for twenty years. The restrictions were 'because of a shortage of farm produce' and imply that agricultural production was of great importance and that in other circumstances the settlers would be required to do military service earlier. The settlers are

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<sup>311</sup> honorati, LRE 616; CT VI.23.2 (423), 26.14 (412), 30.20 (413), VII.13.15 (402), 18 (407), 20 (410), 22 (428), XI.18.1 (412); NVal VI.3 (444)

<sup>312</sup> best recent discussion, Whittaker, C.R., 'Labour Supply in the Late Roman Empire', Opus I (1982), 171-179; collection of evidence, de Ste. Croix, G., The Class Struggle in the Ancient Greek World (London, 1981), App. III

not referred to as dediticii, laeti etc., instead, 'they shall have no title other than coloni'. Here at least, there was no difference between the settlers and any other coloni. The same situation is implied in the late-third century, when the panegyrist to Constantius I referred 'the Frank, received into the laws', (receptus in leges), i.e. subject to the same laws as Roman citizens.

A historical record of this settlement also exists. The historian Sozomen recorded that the Sciri were settled as farmers, in certain areas, including Bithynia, and he himself had seen them farming. Sozomen's history was written between 409 and the 440s, so shows that the settlements were distinctive enough to stand out up to a generation later and were curious enough to remark upon when commenting on events leading up to their settlement. Sozomen does not use any technical terms, he simply says that the Sciri were farming. His vocabulary is the same as that of other authors recording other settlements, but it is only in this case that we have an imperial edict to compare with a historical account. The two sources reveal circumstances which may have been normal for other settlements.<sup>313</sup>

However, there is no reason to expect the terms of all settlements to be identical. Unless we are to suppose that there was a set of imperial regulations regarding settlements, the terms would have been decided by the men on the spot. Thus Julian's settlement of the Salii in 358 occurred during the campaigning season and there could have been little time for elaborate planning. Previous settlements could influence subsequent settlements, but not determine them (below p256).<sup>314</sup>

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<sup>313</sup> Sciri, CT V.6.3 (409); Soz. HE IX.5; Franks, Pan.Lat. IV(8).21

<sup>314</sup> Salii, AM XVII.8.3-4; Lib. Or. XVIII.75

The edict of 409 suggest that any military service carried out by the Sciri would have been as normal recruits. This conflicts with orthodox (archaeological) opinion of special units for settlers. The evidence for orthodoxy comes from the Notitia Dignitatum in the chapter of the western magister peditum (Occ. XLII) where, after a list of units under the command of the magister in various provinces, there is recorded a list of praefecti laetorum and praefecti Sarmatarum gentilium. These officers are assumed to have commanded military units on the grounds that they appear under the command of the magister peditum. Most have stations noted, so if they were army units, they would be limitanei, rather than comitatenses. Most of these groups are found at a distance from the frontier and some are allocated to vague areas, 'between Rheims and Amiens' or, in Italy, 'Apulia and Calabria'. It thus seems likely that some at least did not have formal headquarters, casting doubt on their being units. These locations, however, would suit farmers scattered through a region.<sup>315</sup>

The impression that these groups were not combat units may be confirmed by one of the few pieces of relevant legislation from the Codex Theodosianus. A law of 369 refers to the praepositi fabricae, classi and laetis, before contrasting these with praepositi and tribuni of legions and cohorts. This is probably a distinction between officers of combat troops and those of other military services. Furthermore, a law of 400 refers to Alamannic or Sarmatian laeti, along with other groups (including the sons of veterans) who ought to be enrolled in the army. There is no mention of

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<sup>315</sup> special units, e.g. James, S., 'Britain and the late Roman Army', Military and Civilian in Roman Britain, BAR 136, eds. T.F.C. Blagg and A.C. King, (Oxford, 1984), 161-186 at 171-172; originally from Mommsen, T., Gesammelte Schriften (Berlin, 1910), VI 256-260; distribution, de Ste Croix, G., The Class Struggle in the Ancient Greek World (London, 1981), IV.17,19, App. III; ND Occ. XLII.33-70, though there is no title for this section and an unknown quantity of text is missing between lines 32 and 33

any special laetic units for them, but they are treated as recruits in the same way as other Romans.

In this case, what sort of organisations are recorded in the Notitia and the law of 369 ? Roman officers were attached to these groups, though we do not know in what capacity. The laws of 369 and 409 were addressed to a Praetorian Prefect, not a magister militum, which may mean they were not just a military responsibility, though the law of 400 was addressed to the magister militum. Only the last directly concerned recruiting.<sup>316</sup>

Other evidence for laeti as combat units is not conclusive. A unit called 'laeti' does appear in Julian's 361 campaign against Constantius II. However, laeti was also the name of an Alamannic canton and we know of other Roman regiments named after Alamannic cantons, e.g. the Brisigavi iuniores and seniores and the Bucinobantes. Another possible case of laeti as a regiment is Jordanes' mention of some Sarmatians among the Roman allies at the battle of the Catalaunian Fields in 451. If these really were Sarmatians, then they might have been laeti, but could also have been foederati. Laeti are not recorded in any inscriptions, but the epigraphic record is hardly complete.<sup>317</sup>

Gentiles were grouped with laeti in the Notitia suggesting they were similar in type. Laws in the Codex Theodosianus describe them in the same breath as laeti. In Africa, gentiles were barbarians assigned to defend sectors of the border. However, the situation was probably different in

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<sup>316</sup> praepositi laetorum, CT VII.20.10 (369); cf Lib. Or. LIX.127; laeti, CT VII.20.12 (400); to PPO, CT V.6.3 (409), VII.20.10 (369)

<sup>317</sup> combat unit, AM XXI.13.16; cf XX.8.13; Alamannic canton, AM XVI.11.4 (presumably not those of XX.8.13); Alamannic units, ND Occ. VII.25, 128 (Brisigavi), Or. VI.58 (Bucinobantes); Alamannic cantons, Bucinobantes, AM XXIX.4.7; Iuthungi, AM XVII.6.1; Ambrose, Ep. 24.8; LV XIII.22; ND Or. XXVIII.43, XXXIII.31; 'Liticiani' of Jordanes, Getica 191 also seem unlikely to be laeti

Europe where the gentiles we know of were not deployed on the frontier.<sup>318</sup>

Although they did not serve as units, laeti and gentiles certainly served as Roman soldiers. Evidence for this service comes from a panegyric description of one of Constantius I's settlements.

The barbarian farmer pays taxes. What is more, if he is called for military service, he hurries up, is improved by the discipline and is proud to serve under the name of soldier.

This sounds like normal conscription, not a short term levy or militia service. It seems unlikely that individuals would be summoned to serve and then be allowed back to farming after a while. This accords with the evidence of the law concerning the Sciri and other laws discussing the liability of coloni for military service.<sup>319</sup>

If most settlements were made under similar conditions to that of the Sciri, they would probably have been quickly assimilated into Roman society. One example of the inability of these settlements to retain their identity is shown by some Taifali. They are recorded by the Notitia as gentiles settled in Poitou. By the sixth century, the area had become known as Taifalia and Taifali are recorded as killing a Merovingian noble at Poitiers. Both of these facts are recorded by Gregory of Tours, but he calls these men Taifali only because that is what their pagus is called; the term for him has nothing to do with their ethnic origins and they act just as other Franks do. They seem to have lost all trace of their origins

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<sup>318</sup> Gentiles, CT VII.15.1 (409), XI.30.62 (405)

<sup>319</sup> militia, e.g. Cunliffe, B., Greeks, Romans and Barbarians (London, 1988), 192; Pan.Lat. IV(8).9.3-4, VII(6).2; Simpson, C.J., Foederati and Laeti in Late Roman Frontier Defence, unpublished M.Phil, (Nottingham, 1971); as coloni? NSev II.1 (465), but problems with text

and if they had been recorded as Pictavi rather than as Taifali, we would not have noticed them.<sup>320</sup>

Elsewhere however, some settlements appear to have kept themselves distinct. Jordanes writing in the sixth century mentions a group of Goths living around Nicopolis who stood out from the local population, despite having been settled there for over half-a-century.<sup>321</sup>

It has been thought that traces of these settlers can be found in finds of 'Germanic' metalwork, burial styles, etc., principally in the Reihengraber of the (late-)fifth century in north Gaul. Though these burials have generated an extensive archaeological literature, the association of these settlements with immigrants is still uncertain and it has recently been argued that these graves are in fact those of the indigenous Roman population and that the 'Germanic' metalwork is in fact derived from that of the Roman Empire and not vice versa.<sup>322</sup>

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<sup>320</sup> Taifali, ND Occ. XLII.65; GT HF IV.18, Vita Patrum XV.1

<sup>321</sup> Jordanes, Getica 267; cf Procopius, BG V.xii.9-19

<sup>322</sup> doubts, Halsall, G., 'Reihengraber: Forty Years on', GAUL; James E., 'Cemeteries and the problem of Frankish settlement in Gaul', Names, Words, and Graves, ed. P.H. Sawyer, (Leeds, 1979), 55-89; orthodoxy, summarised in Gnther, R., 'Laeti, foederati und Gentilen in Nord- und Nordost Gallien im Zusammenhang der sogenannten Laetizivilisation', Zeitschrift für Archologie V (1971), 39-59; belt-fittings, Tomlin, R.S.O., 'Notitia Dignitatum omnium, quam civilium tam militarium', Aspects of the Notitia Dignitatum, BAR S15, eds. R. Goodburn and P. Bartholomew, (Oxford, 1976), 189-209 at 191; distributions mapped in Böhme, H., Germanische Grabfunde zwischen unterer Elbe und Loire (Munich, 1974); Hawkes, S.C. and Dunning, G.C., 'Soldiers and Settlers in Britain, Fourth to Fifth centuries', MA V (1961), 1-70; Hawkes, S.C., 'Some Recent Finds of Late Roman Buckles', Britannia V (1974), 386-393; Simpson, C.J., 'Belt Buckles and Strap Ends of the Late Roman Empire', Britannia VII (1976), 192-223 and Welsby, D., The Roman Military Defences of the British Provinces in its Later Phases, BAR 101 (Oxford, 1982), 157-164 express some doubts as to their association with laeti, doubts very tentatively shown in Hawkes, 1974 and Simpson, C.J., Foederati and Laeti in Late Roman Frontier Defence, unpublished M.Phil. (Nottingham, 1971), I.130-131

In conclusion, most of the (admittedly tenuous) evidence suggests that recruits drawn from settlements of prisoners within the Roman empire were treated in the same way as other recruits from inside the empire.

#### ORIGINS

Though it is difficult to form an assessment of the geographical origins of internal recruits for the army, some impressionistic judgements can be made. Gaul and Illyricum were famous for producing good soldiers. From the 460s in the eastern empire Isaurians supplied numbers of good troops. These vague conclusions can be supported by tabulations of known origins of field army officers from within the empire, though the sample is too small to have much value (Table II).<sup>323</sup>

Table II Geographical Origins of Field Army Troops, AD 350-475, by Diocese

GALLIAS		ILLYRICUM		ITALIAE		ORIENS	
Gaul (unspecified)	3	Macedonia	0	Italy	1	Pontus	3
Gallia	1	Illyricum	9	Suburbicaria	0	Oriens	12
Septemprovinciae	3	Dacia	7	Africa	4	Asia	1
Hispania	4					Thracia	9
Britannia	1					Aegyptus	0

<sup>323</sup> good areas, Thrace, Illyricum, Expositio Totius Mundi.50; Claudian XXX.62; Gaul, AM XV.12.3; Jul. Or. I.34CD, II.56AB; Claudian XXX.61-62; this table is only provisional and should be updated by further work

## RECRUITS FROM OUTSIDE THE EMPIRE

Men from outside the empire could join the army in three ways. They could volunteer to join the army, be conscripted as a result of a treaty, or be recruited from prisoners-of-war. Recruits seem mostly to have come from beyond the Rhine and Danube, though occasionally Moors, Armenians or Persians are found. Recruits from independent groups settled in the empire are rare and we know of none from the Visigothic kingdom in Aquitaine for example. The regularity of recruiting from outside the empire is unknown, but was clearly substantial.

Barbarians could cross the borders of the empire to volunteer for military service, though their reasons for doing so are unknown. Sarus, a Gothic noble, probably joined the army because he was forced to leave his people, but others may have joined for the prospect of regular pay and food or even to see the world. Some joined with contracts limiting their area of service, in one case men from beyond the Rhine being limited to the area north of the Alps. The importance of volunteers is uncertain. During the fourth century Julian promised to send barbarian volunteers (referred to as dediticii, though probably not in a technical sense) to Constantius II, i.e. they could be offered as a bargaining counter. This is often cited as evidence of their importance, though the simultaneous offer of Spanish horses for Constantius' triumphal chariots makes the value of this offer suspect. Volunteers seem to have become less common in the west with the rise of barbarian kingdoms, though they continued to be found in the east into the sixth century.<sup>324</sup>

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<sup>324</sup> individual volunteers, AM XX.4.4, 8.13; Zos. IV.30.1; Claudian, de Cons. Stil. I.233-234; contracts, AM XX.4.4

After defeating some tribes the Romans obtained conscripts from them as part of the peace treaty. These recruits may have been referred to as tributarii or dediticii though the evidence is too thin to be conclusive. Unfortunately we do not know if they were used as groups or split up between regiments. However, one passage of Ammianus suggests that they were split into small contingents and mixed with Romans. Evidence for this practice is confined to the fourth century.<sup>325</sup>

Prisoners could be drafted wholesale into the army as happened after Stilicho's defeat of Radagaisus in 406, when he was said to have taken 13,000 barbarians into service. This may have been an emergency measure since on this occasion Alaric threatened Italy.<sup>326</sup>

Individual prisoners could also be recruited, men such as the Alamannic king Vodomarius who was kidnapped in Gaul, but later served as a dux on the eastern frontier (below p202). Defectors also joined the army, for example Pusaeus, a Persian officer who surrendered to Julian in 363 and who later achieved the rank of tribune.<sup>327</sup>

#### TRIBAL ORIGINS

Although we know of numbers of barbarian soldiers in the army, we have few precise details as to their origin. The information we have is shown in Table III. Though the evidence is very thin, it seems that trans-Rhenane barbarians were most common in the fourth century, trans-Danubians

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<sup>325</sup> conscripted barbarians, Zos. III.8.1, IV.12.1?, V.26.5; AM XVII.13.3, XXI.4.8?, XXVIII.5.4?, XXX.6.1, XXXI.10.17; mixing, AM XXXI.10.17; dediticii, AM XX.8.13; CT VII.13.16 (406); ILS 9184

<sup>326</sup> Olymp. fr.9; Zos. IV.39.5; AM XVII.2.3; cf Iustinianivandali, Procopius, BV IV.xiv.17

<sup>327</sup> I: Pusaeus, Vodomarius

in the fifth.<sup>328</sup> A number of these barbarians were of royal status, though some of these, e.g. Attila, cannot really be counted as Roman soldiers.<sup>329</sup>

**Table III: Tribal origins of Non-Roman Soldiers, AD 350-500. Royalty excluded from parenthesised figures**

NON-GOTHS		GOTHS		NON-EUROPEANS	
Alamanni	7(6)	Goths	9(8)	Persians	2(1)
Alans	1	Tervingi	1	Armenians	2
Burgundians	4(2)	Visigoths	1	Iberians	2(1)
Franks	9	Ostrogoths	2(0)	Colchians	1
Huns	2(1)				
Sarmatians	1				
Suevi	1				
Vandals	2				

<sup>328</sup> origins, Waas, M., Germanen im römischen Dienst (Bonn, 1965), 14-15; royalty, Hoffmann, D., 'Wadomar, Bacurius und Hariulf', Museum Helveticum XXXV (1981), 307-318

<sup>329</sup> Alamanni, I: Agilo, Bitheridus, Fraomarius, Hortarius 2, Latinus, Scudilo, Vadomarius (R)  
 Alans, II: Ardabur 3  
 Burgundians, I: Hariulfus (R); II: Chilperic II (R), Gundioc (R), Gundobaudes (R)  
 Franks, I: Arbogastes, Bauto, Laniogaisus, Malarichus, Mallobaudes, Richomeres, Anon. (Jerome, V. Hilarionis 22), Anon. (ILS 2814); II: Edobichus  
 Huns, II: Attila (R), Chelchal  
 Sarmatians, I: Victor 4  
 Suevi, II: Ricimer 2  
 Vandals, I: Anon. 209; II: Ioannes 13  
 Goths, I: Gainas, Fravitta; II: Alaric (R), Andragathias, Areobindus 2, Blivila, Ostrys, Plinta, Tribigildus  
 Tervingi, I: Munderichus  
 Ostrogoths, II: Theoderic 5 (R), Theoderic 7 (R)  
 Visigoths, II: Fredericus  
 Persians, I: Hormisdas 2 (R), Pusaesus  
 Armenian, II: Vardan, Vasak  
 Iberians, I: Bacurius (R), Pharasmanes 2  
 Colchians, I: Subarmachius

## BARBARIZATION

The late Roman army contained large numbers of 'barbarians', here defined as men recruited from areas beyond the empire's direct administrative control. These barbarian recruits are often said to have 'barbarised' the army. In a passage typical of modern historians, A.H.M. Jones describes this barbarization in the late-fourth century.

Among the generals Germans came very much to the front in the west under Gratian and Valentinian; a leading role was played by two Franks, and most of the other generals have German names. In the east Theodosius kept a better balance. He employed a number of Romans, as well as Germans, two Goths and the Vandal Stilicho who became his right-hand man at the end of his reign. He also promoted Orientals.

Other historians are more explicit. MacMullen for example states that

the men credited with victory in one engagement after another from 312 on, came from outside the empire; Celts, Germans, Huns, Saracens and Goths. No general wanted...Romans. By the mid-fourth century the typical fighting force...appears to have been half-imported. A generation later, imported soldiers formed the majority.

Modern historians appear convinced that this 'barbarization' was both widespread and deleterious in its effects. Before discussing the impact of barbarians on the Roman army, the extent of their presence must be examined.

Despite MacMullen's confident assertion, there has been no systematic quantification. Indeed, according to Gerhart Ladner, 'this development is so well-known that references are superfluous'. But it is worth discussing the extent of the 'barbarization' (or the extent to which barbarians were permanently present in the field army) precisely because it is not a well-documented process.<sup>330</sup>

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<sup>330</sup> LRE 160; MacMullen, R., Corruption and the Decline of Rome (London, 1989), 176; Ladner, G.B., 'On Roman Attitudes towards Barbarians in Late Antiquity', Viator VII (1976), 1-26 at 8

Barbarization is said to have occurred for three reasons. The first is the increasing use of barbarian allied contingents. However, as argued elsewhere, these were not a permanent part of the Roman army (above p143, p262) and so are not here regarded as causing barbarization. Secondly, some contemporaries, such as Synesius, complained about the numbers of barbarians. These men have two features in common. They were civilians for the most part, not greatly knowledgeable about the army, and they were writing for political reasons, usually at the imperial court. To interpret these comments as evidence for an army mostly composed of barbarians is methodologically weak. But they were there, and their statements must be taken into account. However, it must also be remembered that no soldier, e.g. Ammianus or Procopius, or any theoretical writer, suggests that this is a problem.<sup>331</sup> Thirdly, barbarian names stand out in descriptions of soldiers, much more so than Roman names and give the impression of being preponderant.

None of this evidence for the orthodox position proves the case and none of it gives an idea of the extent of barbarization. This does suggest that the problem is worth examining more closely, if only to see how strong the evidence for the orthodox position is.<sup>332</sup>

#### EXTENT

The names of individuals (and on some occasions, historical information) can be used in an attempt to assess the extent of barbarization. Here the methodology used is discussed before examining the

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<sup>331</sup> Synesius, De Regno 1089B-1093B mostly referring to scholae, Ep. 95; cf AM XXXI.16.8, a unique statement by a military writer

<sup>332</sup> modern 'analyses' usually take the form of lists, e.g. MacMullen, R., Corruption and the Decline of Rome (London, 1989), 176 and App. A; Waas, M., Germanen in römischen Dienst (Bonn, 1965); LRE 135, 142, 160, 177, 181-182, 613-614

results of its application. By using their names, five nationality divisions can be created. These are 'Definitely Barbarian', 'Probably Barbarian', 'Definitely Roman', 'Probably Roman' and 'Others'.

'Definitely Barbarian' covers those soldiers who are attested as European barbarians by the sources, i.e. a historian says that so-and-so is a Goth. The same definition applies to the 'Definitely Roman' individuals. The last section, Others, includes Persians, Iberians and other easterners from outside the empire. Men born or brought up in the empire, e.g. Stilicho or Silvanus, are treated as Romans for the purpose of this analysis (below, p205).

The other known members of the army can only be classified by their names. If a name has a 'Germanic' ending, for example, -gaisus, -marius, -ulfus, or -gildus, then it is counted as 'Probably Barbarian', otherwise as 'Probably Roman'. These divisions into 'Probably Barbarian' and 'Probably Roman' are arbitrary, but is the best way of handling the problems of the evidence. Those individuals classed as 'Probably barbarian' are much more likely to have been barbarians than those classed as 'Probably Roman' were to be Romans. This is because names are known to have been changed from barbarian to Roman forms, but not vice versa. A well-known example of this is Victor the Sarmatian. However, the practice seems not to have been common and out of 110 officers with 'Roman' names and stated racial or geographical origins, only 8 are of barbarian origin, i.e. about 7%. Among other ranks we know of no men with Roman names of barbarian origin, but the total sample (134) is too small to support any meaningful conclusions. It is important to remember that barbarian names were changed to Roman names, but it should not greatly affect the approximate results presented here. If, in an attempt to compensate for this practice, one were

to add to the 'Probably Barbarian' totals 7% of the 'Probably Roman' totals, there would be little change in the overall results.<sup>333</sup>

The 'probable' cases are used since if only definitely attested cases were used, we would end up with samples too small to be of any value. The 'Definite' cases form only a small number of the known members of the Roman army, some 22% of officers, only 9% of other ranks. More importantly, using only definite attributions would overlook the silent majority here classified as 'Probably Roman', which in almost all groups is larger than the other four divisions put together. However, if 'Definite' cases alone are used, Romans still outnumber barbarians by 102 to 48, a ratio of approximately 2:1. A tabulation of all officers is provided at the bottom of Table IV to allow each group to be compared to the sample as a whole. Given the small size of the sample, significance is obviously a problem and is discussed below (p193).

The discussion is divided into two sections, officers and other ranks.

#### Officers

Table IV divides Roman officers into five groups by rank and into two groups by date. The rank divisions are magistri militum, comites rei militaris and duces, guard officers, (comites domesticorum, comites stabuli, curae palatii and comites scholarum), protectores and domestici and, lastly, regimental commanders, tribuni, praepositi and praefecti (including tribuni scholarum). The date divisions are before and after the division of the empire in 395. This divides the sample into ten distinct groups. Within each group, the first number in each column is the number

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<sup>333</sup> I: Bonitus 1, Latinus, Serapio 3, Silvanus 2, Victor 4; II: Armatius, Ioannes 13, Iordanes 3

**Table IV: Roman Army Officers, AD 350-476**

		350-395		395-476		TOTAL	
		No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
MAGISTRI	B	16	30	29	26	45	27
MILITUM	R	38	70	82	73	120	72
(166)	O	0	0	1	1	1	1
GUARD	B	7	26	1	4	8	16
OFFICERS	R	19	70	21	92	40	80
(50)	O	1	4	1	4	2	4
PROTECTORES	B	9	19	3	9	12	15
DOMESTICI	R	39	81	30	91	69	85
(81)	O	0	0	0	0	0	0
DUCES &	B	16	15	20	18	36	17
COMITES	R	87	82	87	80	174	81
(215)	O	3	3	2	2	5	2
TRIBUNES	B	36	23	7	9	43	18
(227)	R	112	76	70	91	182	81
	O	2	1	0	0	2	1
ALL	B	84	21	60	17	144	19
OFFICERS	R	295	77	290	82	585	80
(739)	O	6	2	4	1	10	1

*B = Barbarians*      *R = Romans*      *O = Others*

of individuals in that category (B,R,O), the second is the percentage of those individuals within that group. Individuals are counted only once in each chronological group, but may appear in more than one rank group. Thus an individual such as Silvanus is recorded in both the regimental commander and magister militum columns and is also recorded twice in the total column. Though there is some duplication of evidence, the number of individuals involved is too small seriously to affect the overall results.

Table V is a fuller version of Table IV, with the Barbarian and Roman categories separated into 'definite' and 'probable' columns and the period 395-476 subdivided into East and West. It is less clear than Table IV, but it is important to show how much of this information is based on 'probables'. The data are drawn from The Prosopography of the Later Roman

Empire volumes I and II. Though there are undoubtedly inaccuracies and omissions in the material collected there, these are probably too few seriously to affect the overall results presented here.

**Table V: Roman Army Officers, AD 350-476 (expanded)**

	350-395		395-476(E)		395-476(W)		395-476(E+W)		TOTAL	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
<b>MAGISTRI MILITUM</b>										
<i>DB</i>	7	13	9	15	6	11	15	13	22	13
<i>PB</i>	9	17	5	8	9	17	14	13	23	14
<i>DR</i>	12	22	14	24	15	28	29	26	41	25
<i>PR</i>	26	48	30	51	23	44	53	47	79	47
<i>O</i>	0	0	1	2	0	0	1	1	1	1
<b>GUARD OFFICERS</b>										
<i>DB</i>	4	15	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	8
<i>PB</i>	3	11	0	0	1	7	1	4	4	8
<i>DR</i>	5	19	2	22	5	36	7	31	12	24
<i>PR</i>	14	52	6	67	8	57	14	61	28	56
<i>O</i>	1	3	1	11	0	0	1	4	2	4
<b>PROTECTORES &amp; DOMESTICI</b>										
<i>DB</i>	1	2	0	0	2	15	2	6	3	4
<i>PB</i>	8	17	1	5	0	0	1	3	9	11
<i>DR</i>	8	17	1	5	2	15	3	9	11	14
<i>PR</i>	31	64	18	80	9	70	27	72	58	71
<i>O</i>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>DUCES &amp; COMITES</b>										
<i>DB</i>	6	5	8	10	0	0	8	8	14	7
<i>PB</i>	10	10	1	1	11	37	12	11	22	10
<i>DR</i>	13	12	12	15	4	13	16	15	29	13
<i>PR</i>	74	70	56	71	15	50	71	65	145	68
<i>O</i>	3	3	2	3	0	0	2	1	5	2
<b>TRIBUNI, PRAEPOSITI &amp; PRAEFECTI</b>										
<i>DB</i>	6	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	6	3
<i>PB</i>	30	19	3	6	4	13	7	9	37	15
<i>DR</i>	10	7	3	6	1	3	4	5	14	6
<i>PR</i>	102	69	41	88	25	82	66	86	168	75
<i>O</i>	2	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	1

*DB*: definitely Barbarian

*DR*: definitely Roman

*O*: others

*PB*: probably Barbarian

*PR*: probably Roman

This analysis suggests that fewer than a third of the army officers were of barbarian origin. Equally importantly, it suggests that the proportions of barbarians in the army did not increase in the period studied. The same conclusion is reached using either 'definite' cases only or 'definites' and 'probables' combined. The proportions of barbarians in each group varies between 4% and 30%. This degree of internal consistency, i.e. no group has, for example, 70% barbarians, together with the disparate nature of the evidence, suggests that the analysis is not wildly inaccurate. The division of the sample into fifteen separate groups, all of which produce the same range of results, also suggests accuracy.

Though the data are mathematically consistent, the statistical significance of the information is difficult to assess. To validate the conclusions it is necessary to find out whether it is mathematically likely that the proportions of barbarians to Romans among the individuals not recorded by history differed from the proportions recorded.

From our evidence we can determine the number of offices for a given period (using the Notitia Dignitatum) and for how many years they were filled. (see Table VI). This is achieved by counting the years that each office existed (the number after the slash) and totalling the attested years for which holders are known for the office. Separate magistri and guards officers have been counted for usurpers, but despite this, the totals of office years cannot be accurate (because of vacantes, honorary posts and vacancies), though the general pattern should not be too inaccurate. This table suggests that the reliability of the data for the higher ranks is very good, but it is not so certain for lower ranks. However, the existence of a similar pattern in the proportions of barbarians among both higher and lower officer ranks suggests that it is

valid. Thus it can be concluded that the proportions of barbarians in all rank groups was similar.

This similar pattern throughout all rank groups and time periods means that it cannot be argued that there existed any policy of deliberately promoting barbarians simply because they were barbarians, something that ~~in~~itself seems unlikely, especially given the lack of comment on barbarian officers in contemporary sources. Where we know of individual careers, they seem to have followed the same path as Roman officers, i.e. protector - tribunus - comes - magister militum.<sup>334</sup>

Table VI: OFFICES AND KNOWN HOLDERS, (including vacantes)

	350-395 (E+W)	395-476 (E)	395-476 (W)	395-476 (E+W)
MAGISTRI MILITUM	237/326	196/425	179/285	375/710
GUARDS OFFICERS	33/627	11/255	24/303	35/558
COMITES & DUCES	120/1472	34/1215	79/1377	113/2592
PROTECTORES & DOMESTICI	No data as to overall numbers			
TRIBUNES, PRAEFECTI & PRAEPOSITI	161/39960	47/36450	32/35478	79/71928

A number of conclusions can be drawn from this analysis. Firstly, there was a high number of magistri militum who were apparently of barbarian origin. This proportion seems somewhat higher than among other officer ranks. As suggested above, it seems unlikely that this resulted from a policy of promoting barbarians through the ranks. However, it may be the result of better evidence for higher ranks.

<sup>334</sup> I: Dagalaifus, Malarichus, Richomeres; II: Ariobindus 2, Arnegisclus, Ricimer 2, Sigisvultus; cf I: Fravitta, Vadomarius; II: Ioannes 13

A second conclusion is that there is no significant change in the balance of Romans and barbarians throughout the period as a whole. In the fifth century, there were no more Roman officers of barbarian origin than in the fourth. This can be illustrated by tabulating officers by decade

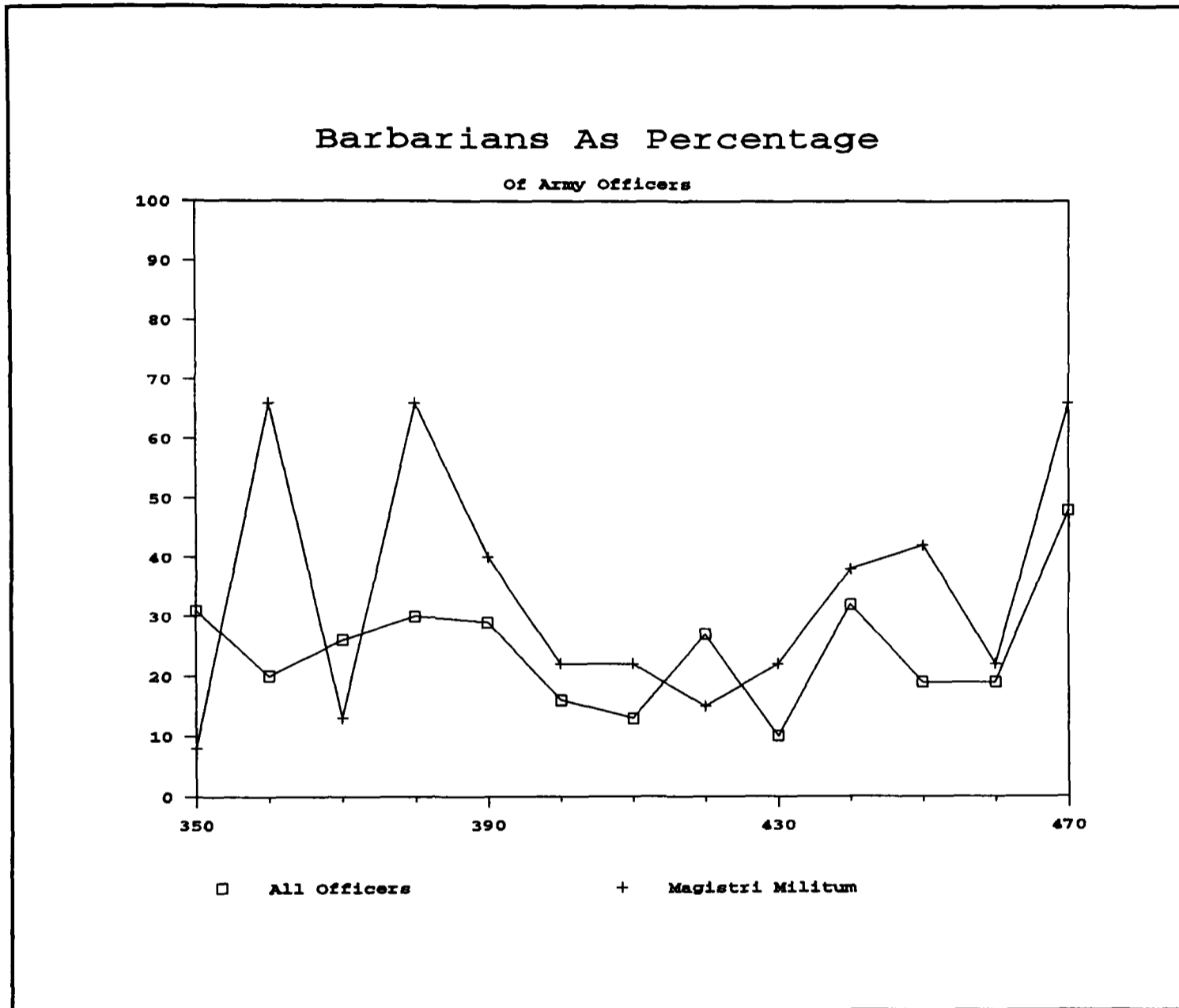


Figure 10: Barbarians as Percentage of Known Army Officers, by decade

(see Figure 10). The small size of the sample means it is easily subject to distortion by a few individual names. The extreme figures for the 360s and 380s could be the result of this, or they could be interpreted as meaning that appointment to the post was at random from candidates and that nationality was irrelevant.

### Other Ranks

The evidence for other ranks, here defined as soldiers below the rank of tribunus or praefectus and excluding protectores and domestici, is more diverse than for officers. Although the results presented here are provisional, they represent a large proportion of written sources, but less of the epigraphic material. This survey has not been exhaustive by any means, and NCOs are probably over-represented, as are literary sources in general.<sup>335</sup>

The largest single source of evidence for other ranks is provided by a cemetery at Concordia, near Aquileia, where thirty-six field army soldiers are buried, between them representing twenty-two regiments. The dated inscriptions range from 362 to 452. All the men buried there could afford stone sarcophagi and were almost all non-commissioned officers or unit commanders. There are no analogous cemeteries with large numbers of soldiers for comparison. The evidence from Concordia can be combined with collections of names of other soldiers from literature and other inscriptions. Though the total sample is much smaller than that for officers, the results are similar. This information is shown in Table VII.

Only field army soldiers are used for this analysis, since the limitanei were usually recruited locally and would thus not contribute towards analyzing barbarization. All thirty-one soldiers named in Abinnaeus' papers have non-Germanic names, as would be expected of men recruited in Egypt in the 340s.

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<sup>335</sup> work is presently being carried out to produce a catalogue of these men using a computer database; a preliminary catalogue is included as Appendix 1

As in Table IV and Table V, the first column is the number of individual other ranks (including members of the scholae regiments), the second the percentage of the group in that category. This information has not been subdivided by date or area because of difficulties in dating many of the individuals.

**Table VII: Other Ranks, Field Army, AD 350-500**

	No.	%
DB	7	5
PB	21	16
DR	10	7
PR	95	71
O	1	1

**Table VIII: Origins of Field Army Other Ranks, AD 350-500**

	350-400	400-450	450-500	undatable
DB	3	2	0	2
PB	1	0	0	20
DR	3	0	5	2
PR	23	9	4	59
O	0	0	0	1

If the evidence is divided into groups of 350-400, 400-450, 450-500 and not precisely datable, the lack of change can be seen, as well as the growing lack of evidence and problems in dating individuals (see Table VIII). However, the small numbers involved, together with the arbitrary chronological divisions, makes drawing any meaningful conclusions from such subdivided data impossible. Between AD 350 and 475, assuming a field army of 300,000 and that (unrealistically) every soldier served a full twenty-year term, there were at least one-and-a-half million serving Roman soldiers! Thus, we know of so few soldiers that any conclusions drawn from such limited data are not statistically significant.

Table IX: Officers and Other Ranks, AD 350-476

		OFFICERS		OTHER RANKS		TOTAL	
		No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Table IX shows the results when the	B	144	19	28	23	176	20
	R	585	80	105	76	690	79
	O	10	1	1	1	11	1

figures for officers and other ranks are combined. Both sets of figures are very similar, which supports the validity of the analysis if it is accepted that there is no reason for the proportions of barbarians in the army to vary according to rank.

The above figures have treated the army as a whole, but tell us nothing about how these barbarians were incorporated into the army. Almost all of these men are from regular regiments (bucellarii, domestici and δικεταί have been excluded from all figures). We do not know whether units were mixed or whether there were separate regiments of Romans and barbarians. (Some foederati regiments may have had distinct characteristics (above p137).) In cases where we have names of more than one man from the same regiment about a third seem to have been of mixed nationality, but the samples are so small that this cannot be relied on. All it really shows is that regiments could be mixed.

Hoffmann has argued that auxilia palatina units were mostly barbarian. Although it is highly probable that a unit was formed from a single source of manpower at the moment of its foundation, (though probably with officers

Table X: Auxilia Palatina Soldiers and Officers

and NCOs from other units), such a character would be likely to be diluted almost immediately by new recruits. And though hard to

	Rankers	Officers
PB	10	3
DB	1	0
PR	19	4
DR	0	2
O	0	1

evaluate because of the small size of the sample, records of individual soldiers do not suggest that the majority of auxilia palatina soldiers were barbarians. Thus Ammianus records that the first two soldiers of the auxilia palatina regiment of the Victores through a tunnel in Persia in 363 were Exsuperius and Magnus, both Roman-sounding names. Of the 28 soldiers and 10 officers known from auxilia palatina regiments, almost two-thirds are 'probably Roman' (Table X). This does not suggest a pure barbarian force, but the evidence proves nothing because of the small size of the sample. All that can be said is that the pattern differs little from that of the army as a whole.<sup>336</sup>

Similarly, it has been suggested, e.g. by Frank, that the scholae regiments were heavily or totally barbarian. This argument is partly based on Synesius' complaint that there were Scythians (i.e. trans-Danubians) in the scholae. The second part of this argument is an assumption based on

**Table XI: Scholares**

	No.	%
DB	5	8
PB	11	17
DR	10	16
PR	36	57
O	1	2

the occurrence of barbarian names among scholares. According to Frank, 'during the fourth century, most of the scholares were Germans, and this was especially true of the enlisted men.' However, when the names of all known scholares are tabulated using the criteria discussed above (p189), the barbarians in the scholae appear to have been few in number (Table XI: figures include officers), hardly more so than in regular regiments. The last argument is the barbarian appearance of the scholares, whose long hair and torcs were prominently featured on the missorium of Theodosius and the column of Theodosius. Assuming that these men are scholares, their

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<sup>336</sup> Hoffmann, D., Das Spätantike Bewegungsheer und die Notitia Dignitatum (Düsseldorf, 1969), 137-141; mixed, Zos. IV.30.1, 31.1, 45.3; AM XXXI.10.17; pure, AM XVIII.9.4 (conclusive??)

appearance does not prove their origin. It cannot be argued that all barbarians had long blond hair and wore torcs.<sup>337</sup>

#### Conclusion

The analysis presented here contrasts sharply with the orthodoxy presented at the beginning of the chapter. However, the basis of orthodoxy is not as strong as it appears at first sight. The impression of the above analysis, that the majority of regular Roman regiments continued to be composed mostly of non-barbarians, must be considered, even if it is not accepted. However, a substantial proportion of the army, around one man in four, appears to have been of non-imperial origins, a proportion that remained similar throughout the period.

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<sup>337</sup> Frank, R.I., Scholae Palatinae (Rome, 1969), 59, 62-72; followed by MacMullen, R., Corruption and the Decline of Rome (London, 1988), 201; Waas, M., Germanen im römischen Dienst (Bonn, 1965), 11; Hoffmann 299-300; barbarians in scholae, Synesius, De Regno 1084A, 1089B-1093B; AM XVII.2.37, XX.8.13; Procopius, HA XXIV.16-17

## IMPACT

Having reached these conclusions concerning the extent of barbarization in the Roman army, the impact of large numbers of barbarians can now be examined. There are two main areas where the impact of these people can be discussed, loyalty and changes in uniforms, equipment, etc.

### Loyalty

Once barbarians joined the army, they seem to have been loyal to the empire. Instances of barbarian treachery were few and far between. They do not appear to have been more treacherous than Romans and, with the exception of Synesius, no contemporaries suggested they were particularly dangerous.<sup>338</sup> E.A. Thompson has stated that 'it is hard to believe that the Romans would have recruited and promoted barbarians on such a scale as they are known to have done if the danger of treachery had been extreme'.<sup>339</sup>

The reasons for barbarians (or Romans) committing treachery are obscure. Many barbarians joined up for an army career, which may explain why so few of them betrayed the army. But not all were volunteers. Some joined the army as a result of being conscripted, either from POWs, or from levies imposed on defeated barbarians by the Romans (above p185). These may not have been so philo-Roman as the volunteers, though they would still receive the same benefits.

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<sup>338</sup> cases of treachery involving barbarians, AM XIV.10.7-8 (suspected), XXIX.4.7; SA Carm. II.280-306; Jordanes, Getica 194-195; Romans, AM XXXI.15.4,8-9; unspecified, AM XVI.4.1, 12.2, XXXI.15.2

<sup>339</sup> Thompson, E.A., Romans and Barbarians (Madison, 1982), 237; Tomlin, R.S.O., The Emperor Valentinian I, unpublished D.Phil., (Oxford, 1975), 135

What would traitors gain from betraying the empire? They would lose all the benefits accrued from being in the empire, pay, regular meals, medical attention etc. In some cases of betrayal, information was passed by letter, suggesting the traitors wished to maintain their Roman positions, though they were prepared to risk passing information.

When we do hear of treachery, it was usually by officers, not by other ranks, when fighting against a canton of their own people. Thus a conflict of interests might be felt when men were opposed to friends and relatives from the same village, but rarely otherwise. These cases were rare and the Romans tried to avoid them by employing such officers away from their own people, a practice recommended in the sixth-century Strategikon.<sup>340</sup>

In this respect the Roman career of Vodomarius is interesting. He was king of the Brisigavi, an Alamannic canton from the area around Lake Constance and Freiburg, opposite Augst. They raided Gaul in 352/353, taking advantage of the disruption following the defeat of the usurper Magnentius. This raiding led to a Roman attack on their territory by the emperor Constantius II in 354. After his victory, peace was imposed on Vodomarius. In 359, after further raiding, Vodomarius made peace again, using the treaty he had made with Constantius in 354 to convince the Romans of his worth and claiming his involvement in anti-Roman activities was because his subjects insisted, not through his own will.

In 361 Vodomarius began raiding into Raetia, against the terms of this treaty, and defeated a Roman force in a small battle. Despite the raids, Vodomarius pretended it to be a time of peace. Julian took advantage

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<sup>340</sup> in writing, AM XXIX.4.7 (presumably in Latin); own people, AM XIV.10.7-8, XXIX.4.7; Mauricius, Strat. VII.1.15; cf Sulpicius fr.1; transfers, I: Bacurius, Fraomarius, Pusaeus, Vodomarius; Zos. IV.30-31; CT V.6.3 (409); but Moorish officers seem to have been employed in Africa and cf ILS 2813

of this and had him arrested when he was dining in the empire with the commander of a local limitanei regiment. After Vadomarius' capture he was sent to Spain, to ensure that he could not disturb the peace when Julian marched east. Following the exile of Vadomarius, Julian crossed the Rhine and defeated his canton, a reprisal for previous raids as well as a disincentive to future action. After Vadomarius' exile, his son Vithicabius succeeded him as king of the Brisigavi. So far, Vadomarius' career was no different from that of many other barbarian kings.

At some point after this, Vadomarius became dux Phoeniciae on the eastern frontier. We do not know why he was given this post (probably by Julian), though we might guess that he was known to be a competent soldier and was thus qualified for the job, as well as being dependent on Julian and thus loyal to him. Vadomarius is next mentioned in 365 as being sent by Valens to besiege Nicaea, which had been captured by the usurper, Procopius. Vadomarius is last heard of in 371, on the eastern frontier again. Here, with the help of the general Trajan, he was able to repel an invasion by the Persian ruler Sapor II.

In these mentions of Vadomarius, though Ammianus referred to him as ex-rege Alamannorum, it seems to have meant little. Ammianus was more impressed by his deviousness than his origin and Eunapius also remarked on his 'strength and daring'. The only way in which he differed from other Roman officers was in being employed away from the Rhine and his own canton. Since his son Vithicabius now ruled Vadomarius' canton, this was probably a wise decision by the Romans.<sup>341</sup>

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<sup>341</sup> Vadomarius, Hoffman, D., 'Wadomar, Bacurius und Hariulf', Museum Helveticum XXXV (1978), 307-318

Similar caution is shown in the case of Fraomarius, former king of the Bucinobantes, another Alamannic canton. Forcibly expelled from his canton, Fraomarius had been taken under Valentinian I's protection and was transferred from the Rhine to Britain, being made tribune in command of a numerus of Alamanni. The dangers of deploying Alamannic officers on the Rhine frontier are shown by the case of Hortarius, an Alamannic noble (almost certainly from the Bucinobantes), who was executed for passing information to Macrianus, king of the Bucinobantes.

Barbarians seem not to have been prone to desert either, according to Roman historians or poets. Desertion often had an explanation that had nothing to do with nationality. Just before the battle of Strasbourg in 357, the Alamanni were informed of the size of Julian's force 'by a deserter from the scutarii [nationality unspecified] who, in fear of punishment for a crime he had committed, went over to them'.<sup>342</sup>

This loyalty to the army was created, at least partly, by an efficient training programme. Once in the army and forced to conform to Roman military standards, (as well as being removed from his homeland and often from his friends) a recruit would swiftly forget his barbarian past. His loyalty was now to his unit, his standard and his emperor. The links with the emperor were hammered home again and again. On joining the army the recruit swore an oath to the emperor and repeated it annually. Frequent donatives increased the moral dependence and loyalty of the troops to the emperor. Orders were given in Latin and most of the soldiers in the west would speak Latin, through lack of any other lingua franca. By the end of

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<sup>342</sup> desertion (unspecified), AM XVI.4.1, 12.2, XXXI.7.7; CT VII.1.10 (367), 16 (398), 17 (398), 13.6.1 (370), 14.1 (398), 18.1-17 (365-412), 20.12 (400); NVal VI.1.1 (440); SA Carm. II.280-306; Roman, AM XVIII.6.16, XXXI.15.4,8; barbarian, Prosp. 1330?

the fourth century, most soldiers in the east spoke Greek, though still received their orders in Latin.<sup>343</sup>

But the isolating effect of this training should not be stressed too strongly. We know of one Alamannic soldier who returned home on 'urgent business', and doubtless there were others. One Frank buried on the Danube described himself as 'Francus civis, Romanus miles', 'A Frank, and a Roman soldier'. The limited contracts some soldiers served under would make it easy for them to keep in touch with their homeland.<sup>344</sup>

The impact of the army on barbarians is also shown by those barbarians who had retired from the army settling in the empire. After twenty years in the army, few would have links with their homes. But this statement has to be qualified by admitting the impossibility of determining how many soldiers of barbarian origin returned home after completing their service. We do not know of any from this period, and it is hard to imagine what evidence one might find for this.<sup>345</sup>

The sons of these *migrés* were legally bound to join the army, where they were usually referred to by both contemporaries and modern historians as Germans or barbarians, 'the Vandal Stilicho' being a favourite example. However, the Vandal influences on his upbringing were minimal. His Vandal

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<sup>343</sup> orders, Reichenkron, G., 'Zur ~~griechen~~ <sup>griechen</sup> Kommandosprache bei byzantinischen Schriftstellen', BZ LIV (1961), 18-27; Mauricius, Strat. III.2-5, 14, 15, XII.8.14, 16, 24; We do not know when the change took place and there probably remained a number of bilingual soldiers, especially among the officers, throughout the fifth century

<sup>344</sup> Alamann, AM XXXI.10.3; Frank, ILS 2814; contracts, AM XX.4.4

<sup>345</sup> loss of links, AM XV.5.16; the diplomas of the early empire were no longer used (but see CT VII.20.1 (318), cf VII.20.4 (325), 12 (400), 21.4 (408), VIII.6.1 (368); Veg. II.3), but even these were mostly found within, not outside, the empire, Roxan, M., 'The Distribution of Roman Military Diplomas', Epigraphische Studien XII (Cologne, 1981), 265-286; Retirement benefits were in the form of tax privileges, land grants etc., only of use within the empire and probably a disincentive for returning home; return to barbaricum, Procopius, BG VIII.xix.7; LRE 621-622; against this, Liebeschuetz, J.H.W.G., Barbarians and Bishops (Oxford, 1990), 39n75

father had been an officer in a Roman cavalry unit and his mother was a Roman. Stilicho himself was brought up at court and camp, neither by any means a barbarian environment, employed his own Roman panegyrist, and married the niece of the emperor Theodosius I. He seems to have been so Roman that any description of him as semi-barbarian or barbarian is absurd. Other such barbarians, e.g. Arbogast or Richomer, corresponded with Roman aristocrats like Libanius and Symmachus. Stilicho's career seems very similar to that of Sir Robert Warburton, KCIE, CSI, son of a British officer and a Pathan woman. The only effect of his mixed nationality seems to have been his fluent Persian and Pushtu.<sup>346</sup>

Though the mental attitudes of barbarians serving as soldiers had been changed, individuals are often picked out as barbarians by our sources. We know they are barbarians, but often only because we are told so or guess because of their names, not because of their behaviour. This suggests that they were recognizable to contemporaries as barbarians, probably through their accents and physical features. Thus blond hair usually showed northern origins and beards often, but not invariably, belonged to barbarians. These features may have allowed Bishop Ambrose of Milan to distinguish the Gothic soldiers from other soldiers and Romans in his church in the 380s.<sup>347</sup>

Though some men could be picked out as barbarians, it was rare that the fact of being a barbarian mattered to the Romans. There appears to have been little discrimination in the matter of promotion, with equal numbers of barbarians appearing at all levels (above p<sup>19</sup>). Though Stilicho was

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<sup>346</sup> Warburton, R., Eighteen Years in the Khyber (London, 1900), the frontplate is particularly impressive

<sup>347</sup> Ambrose, Ep. 20

accused (posthumously) of being a barbarian trying to betray the empire such accusations never surfaced during his lifetime. When he fell, it was a result of court intrigue that destroyed the careers of a number of prominent Roman officials, not of an anti-barbarian movement. Furthermore, such accusations, for example as portrayed by Synesius in his De Regno, were often part of a rhetorical and literary tradition. They must also be seen in their context, usually of political struggle. However, the angry conversation between Anthemius and the 'pellitus Geta' Ricimer suggests such comments could still be insults in times of tension.<sup>348</sup>

Against this point of view must be set the purges of barbarians which occurred in the late-fourth and early-fifth centuries. Before it can be asserted that there was a programme hostile to barbarians or even a widespread dislike of them, the individual situations must be considered. In each case, there was a military or political reason for the purge. In 378 a newly-recruited contingent of Gothic volunteers was massacred at Constantinople, for fear that they might revolt on hearing of the Gothic victory at Adrianople. The attack on Gainas' troops in Constantinople in 400 resulted from their participation in his rebellion. The Goths were attacked, together with Roman soldiers, because they supported Gainas, not because they were Goths. So barbarian groups seem not to have suffered particularly because they were barbarians, but because of their involvement in dubious activity and in similar situations Romans also suffered, as in Gainas' revolt. Thus during the confusion of the coup in 408, Stilicho (with a number of foederati leaders) planned an attack on other regular

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<sup>348</sup> context, Heather, P.J., 'The Anti-Scythian Tirade of Synesius' De Regno', Phoenix XLII (1988), 152-172; Anthemius, Ennodius, V.Epiph. p348; see also the recent comments of Liebeschuetz, J.H.W.G., Barbarians and Bishops (Oxford, 1990), 105-106

troops, to punish them for their involvement in anti-imperial activity.<sup>349</sup>

### Physical Impact

Barbarization is also alleged to have had a detrimental impact on the army's conduct, equipment, clothing, etc. One frequently cited example is the war cry, the barritus. According to Ammianus Marcellinus

in the heat of battle, this shout rises from a low murmur and grows little by little, like waves rolling against the cliffs.

This shout was of barbarian origin and is often attested as evidence of the Germanisation or barbarization of the army. But the difference this made to the army's performance or how it reflected a change in composition are rarely stated and are unknowable. A similar example from the Second World War shows how little it might mean and also what it might be thought to mean by contemporaries.

There has always been some controversy as to how the battle cry of the First Parachute Brigade came to be adopted. This was a shout of 'Waho Mahommed'. As far as I am aware it was merely copied from the local Arabs during this phase of the [Tunisian] campaign. These people, who lived near and sometimes within the brigade sector, were continually calling out from one hilltop to another. Like all hill people they knew how to make their voices carry and, as every Arab's name in that part of the world seemed to begin with Mahommed, all their shouted conversations began with:

'Waho Mahommed'

'Waho'

'Waho Mahommed bil Munchar' and so on to the text of the message. It was too much to expect that the soldiers would refrain from joining in. Some became experts at imitating the more guttural sounds and, before long, the air became jammed with real and bogus Arabic. Long after the Arabs had moved and wherever the brigade went, a concerted cry of 'Waho Mahommed' brought extra spurts of energy, in action or play. Some authorities not in the know feared that the whole formation

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<sup>349</sup> massacres, AM XXXI.16.8 (fear of revolt); Zos. IV.30.4-5 (badly disciplined recruits), 40 (foederati threatening rebellion), V.19.3-5 (Gainas), V.35.5-6 (part of Olympius' coup against Stilicho); Elbern, S., 'Die Gotenmassaker in Kleinasien', Hermes CXV (1987), 99-106; Romans, Zos. V.33-34.1

had secretly embraced Islam, but in fact it was just something to shout when shouting seemed to be a good thing to do. Anyway it became a custom in the rather indefinite way that customs do and one had to hope that nobody's feelings were hurt.<sup>350</sup>

Most of the physical impact of barbarization seems to have been of this sort, a change which would have little effect on the battlefield performance of the army. These changes must be seen in the context of changes taking place in society.

'Barbarian' fashions of long hair and trousers became generally popular in the late-fourth century, leading Honorius to legislate 'within the city of Rome no person shall wear either trousers or boots' and 'nobody shall be allowed to wear very long hair; no one, not even a slave, shall be allowed to wear garments made of skins'. This fashion for 'barbarian' clothing also affected the army and trousers had already become standard wear for the army by the third century. Some troops were probably encouraged to look 'barbarian', e.g. the members of the imperial bodyguard shown on the Column of Theodosius, the Missorium of Theodosius and the Ravenna Mosaics of San Apollinare Nuovo, all with long hair and torcs.<sup>351</sup>

This does appear to be a change when compared to the army of the first century AD. But some differences in clothing and equipment since the principate should be expected. Indeed, the Romans are famous for taking on the ideas and equipment of other peoples, particularly in military matters. The Spanish Gladius is one of their more famous adoptions, but they also made use of eastern cavalry equipment and tactics and Greek engineering techniques. It is only because the barbarians survived the empire in the

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<sup>350</sup> Frost, J., A Drop Too Many (London, 1980), 110-111; barritus, Hoffmann 135-137; AM XVI.12.43, XXVI.7.17, XXXI.7.11; Veg. III.18; cf Suda E.2310; Tacitus, Germania III.1; Latin warcry, Veg. III.5; Mauricius, Strat. II.18.1; AM XIX.2.11

<sup>351</sup> prohibitions, CT XIV.10.3 (399), 4 (416)

west that their influence is felt to be important, otherwise they would probably be seen to have had as ephemeral an influence as the Isaurians of the late-fifth century in the eastern empire. Looked at from the point of view of military effectiveness on the battlefield, these changes would have little impact. From a cultural point of view, confusion arises only if it is assumed that using the cultural markers of another society necessarily means following the values of that society.<sup>352</sup>

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<sup>352</sup> Roman military debts, Coulston, J.C., 'Roman, Parthian and Sassanid Tactical Developments', The Defence of the Roman and Byzantine East, BAR S297, eds. P.W. Freeman and D.L. Kennedy, (Oxford, 1986), 59-75 at 68-70; Wheeler, E.L., 'The Occasion of Arrian's Tactica', GRBS XIX (1978), 351-365 at 357, 361-362

## MANPOWER SHORTAGE

It has been suggested by some authors, e.g. Boak and Crump, that the late Roman army suffered from a shortage of manpower and often had difficulty in recruiting men. There is no direct ancient evidence for this, but a number of arguments have been adduced to support the idea.<sup>353</sup>

The first argument is the fact of recruitment of barbarians. It can be argued that they would not have been recruited if there were sufficient Roman recruits available. However, use of extra-imperial manpower was not new and barbarians had always served in the Roman army. In this context, barbarians seem to have been divided into those serving in the regular army as professional soldiers and those hired as allies. As argued below (p322), at least until the mid-fifth century, allied barbarians were mostly used in civil wars.

Emperors did allow barbarians into the empire to levy recruits from them and it is possible that this practice was more common in the fourth century than earlier. Constantius II hoped to allow the Limigantes in 359, so that 'he would gain more people, and would be able to compel a very strong force of recruits', and a similar hope motivated Valens in 376 to allow some Goths into the empire. But in both these cases, the reasoning recorded by Ammianus was not that there was a shortage of soldiers, but that more recruits allowed the commutation of more recruits for money (above p176). Emperors wanted taxpayers and recruits. There appears to have

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<sup>353</sup> manpower shortage, Crump, G.A., Ammianus Marcellinus as a Military Historian, Historia Einzelschriften XXVII (Wiesbaden, 1975), 50-51; Boak, A.E.R., Manpower Shortage and the Fall of the Roman Empire (London, 1955), whose thesis receives severe criticism in a review by Finley, M.I., JRS XLVIII (1958), 157-164

been little change in the proportions of barbarians in the regular army according to the figures produced above (p195).<sup>354</sup>

The second argument is that the Codex Theodosianus shows a severe shortage of men and demonstrates the empire constantly trying to squeeze recruits out of reluctant landowners. The laws do show difficulties in exacting recruits, but do not allow us to estimate the scale of the problem. However, the frequent commutation of recruits for money suggests that there was not normally a desperate need for men. Although landlords may have preferred not to lose tenants, it seems unlikely that the government would have allowed landowners and imperial estates to commute their obligations, from as early as 370, if there had been a real shortage of troops. Nor does it seem likely that landowners could have continually resisted government demands, especially those of Valentinian and Valens. Lastly and most importantly, commutation was occasional, not regular and required special legislation, so was more likely to be recorded in the Codex Theodosianus.<sup>355</sup>

Other evidence for a manpower shortage is adduced by the frequent practice of recruiting more troops before a campaign or in an emergency (below p331). This may show that the army was often understrength, but this in itself is hardly surprising. Although as an argument this is inconclusive, there is never a suggestion that sufficient men could not be raised.

Furthermore, the standards of the army were high and remained so throughout the period. Many categories of men were excluded from serving,

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<sup>354</sup> Constantius, AM XIX.11.7, Valens AM XXXI.4.4

<sup>355</sup> commutation, CT VII.13.2 (370)(but see 13.12 (397), result of pressure), 13.13 (397), 14 (397)

for example coloni, curiales, slaves and inhabitants of workhouses, all groups whom one would have expected to be called up if there was a shortage of men. Similarly, in 418 Honorius issued an edict expelling Jews from the army if they had joined illegally, a law repealed in the east in 438. Non-catholics were also banned under Honorius. Though laws prohibiting slaves, non-Catholics, freedmen and Jews to serve imply that they did so, the fact that such laws could be issued suggest no desperate need for troops.<sup>356</sup>

If there was a real shortage of men these laws would probably have been relaxed. Thus a law of 406 issued during Radagaisus' invasion of Italy allowed slaves to serve, but this seems to have been a one-off measure, requiring special legislation; no other relaxations are known.<sup>357</sup>

There were also restrictions on recruits drawn from other social groups. Imperial estates were even exempted from providing recruits in 370 and automatically paid money instead, a law countermanded in 397. This suggests no shortage of men. And a law of 407 exempted tribunes and praepositi from the need to provide recruits from their estates while a law of 423 exempted decurions and silentiaries. Some palatini and agentes in rebus were also exempt. If there had been a severe manpower shortage, one would expect this law to have been repealed earlier.<sup>358</sup>

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<sup>356</sup> high standards, CT VII.1.5 (364), 13.3 (367)(minimum height 1.63 m, cf Veg. I.5), 22.5 (333); physical standards, Veg. I.5-6; prohibition of coloni, CJ XII.33.3 (Arcadius and Honorius); guild members, NVal V.1.2 (440); Sirm. 6 (425) curiales, CJ XII.33.4 (Leo); slaves, CT VII.13.8 (380), 11 (382); Jews, CT XVI.8.24 (418); NTh III.2.5-6; freedmen, CT IV.10.3 (426); non-catholics, CT XVI.5.42 (408); Zos. V.46.3-4

<sup>357</sup> slaves in emergencies, CT VII.13.16 (406); Symm. Ep. VI.58, 62, 64 (397); cf HA Marcus Aurelius XXI.6

<sup>358</sup> decurial classes, CT VII.2.1 (383), 2 (385), 13.1 (353), 7 (375), XII.1.1-192 (313-436); imperial estates, CT VII.13.2 (370); decurions, CT VI.23.2 (423); palatini, CT VI.30.20 (413); agentes in rebus, CT VI.27.13 (403); general, CT XI.18.1 (412)

All three arguments for a shortage of manpower in the Late Roman army seem rather doubtful. There may have been some difficulties in providing men for the army but these do not seem to have been insuperable.

## CONCLUSION

The means of recruiting and the types of men recruited into the late Roman army are complex issues. This chapter has attempted to show that the majority of soldiers were of intra-imperial origin throughout the period. However, a substantial minority, remaining consistently between a quarter and a third of all troops, were of extra-imperial origins. These men seem to have differed from other troops only in physical features and names. There is no evidence for their being unusually disloyal to the army or being less efficient as soldiers.

## FIXED DEFENCES

Permanent army bases and many urban areas in the late empire were defended by similar types of fortification. In addition, some fortified refuge sites existed. Though each site, especially military sites, was important in its own right, it also had a place in a defensive network, dependent on its size and location. The object of this section is to discuss the principles determining how individual sites were defended, not particular sites or how regional defensive systems operated. There is thus no separate discussion of, say, the Saxon Shore forts or defences in Scythia.<sup>359</sup>

It often is difficult to give precise dates, though when a site was built and, as importantly, when it ceased to be used tell us something of the strategic situation in which it was being used. Problems in dating have been discussed by other writers and though important, have little bearing on the discussion here since there seems to be little change in fort use or construction, only in features. In this section all military sites, regardless of size, are referred to as 'forts'.<sup>360</sup>

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<sup>359</sup> discussion of regional systems must be integrated with a study of the army and local conditions. Plotting the distribution of forts is a start, but it is not enough

<sup>360</sup> where sites are mentioned, references are contained in Johnson, S., Late Roman Fortifications (London, 1983) [hereafter Johnson]; Lander, J., Roman Stone Fortifications, BAR S206, (Oxford, 1984) [hereafter Lander] but see also Welsby, D., The Roman Military Defence of the British provinces in its Later Phases, BAR 101 (Oxford, 1982); Maxfield, V.A., ed., The Saxon Shore (Exeter, 1989); Kandler, M. and Vetters, H., Der römische Limes in Österreich (Vienna, 1986); Scorpan, C., Limes Scythicae, BAR S88 (Oxford, 1980) covering the Danube from Sirmium to the Black Sea

## MILITARY FORTIFICATIONS

One of the striking things about the empire was the large number of fortifications on the frontier, giving an impression that the empire was an armed camp. An anonymous writer of the fourth century proposed that

an unbroken chain of forts will best assure the protection of these frontiers, on the plan that they should be built at intervals of one mile, with a solid wall and very strong towers

and on many sectors of the frontier such a density was achieved.

Building or rebuilding forts was one of the tasks of the army. But forts were not just built at specific sites, or from time to time; fort building was a duty. A law of Valentinian I issued to the Dux Daciae Ripensis ordered that he construct towers (turres) annually along the frontier.<sup>361</sup>

In the narrative of Ammianus, whenever Valentinian I, and to a certain extent, Julian, were not campaigning, they built or repaired forts. New forts continued to be built in the west until at least the reign of Valentinian I, suggesting that the army continued to find them useful.<sup>362</sup> In the eastern empire, forts continued to be built along the middle and lower Danube throughout the fifth century.<sup>363</sup>

We do not know why forts ceased to be constructed in the west. It is possible that there was no need for new forts, though forts did continue

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<sup>361</sup> Anon. dRB XX; Valentinianic law, CT XV.1.13 (364)(though the identification of the addressee, Tautomedes, with the protector Teutomeres, from Mommsen, ed. CT, followed by PLRE I is doubtful)

<sup>362</sup> western building, Julian, AM XVI.11.11, XVII.1.11-12, 9.1, XVIII.2.5-7; Lib. Or. XVIII.52; Valentinian, AM XXVIII.2.1-5, 3.2, XXIX.6.2, XXX.3.1, 7.6; Symm. Or. II.20; CIL XIII.11537, 11538; ILS 762, 774-776; Gratian, Ausonius, Act. Grat. II; Arbogast, Sulpicius fr.3,4; Honorius, Claudian, de Cons. Stil. I.200-202; Constantine III, Zos. VI.3.3?; undated inscriptions, CIL III.3653, 5670a, 10596, XIII.5190

<sup>363</sup> eastern building, Valens, Them. Or. X.135D; CIL III.6159, 7494; Theodosius, Lib. Or. XXX.14; SA Carm. II.199-201; Procopius, Buildings V; Cameron, A., Procopius (London, 1985), esp. 84-112

to be built in the east. The building of new structures suggests that, at least before the fourth century, there was not such a dense network of fortifications. It is possible that such constructions were filling gaps, not creating networks, a hypothesis supported by the small size of the newer forts (below p229) and the fact that fifth-century eastern construction concentrated on rebuilding rather than new work. The gradual loss of Roman control of the Rhine is also important, though this does not explain the (apparent) lack of construction during the late-fourth and early-fifth centuries.

Late Roman forts can be divided into two constructional groups. The first is totally new constructions, the second forts of an earlier date which continued to be used. At a first glance, the new forts seem to have had a great amount of variation, but these differences are more visual than functional. Newly constructed forts were designed with regard to defensibility, so the same principles always applied though the design could be flexibly interpreted to take local conditions into account. Thus shape, size and the number of towers and gates differed, but defensive advantages and the problems presented to an attacker did not.

On many occasions forts were built to take advantage of the local geography. The use of high ground was favoured, since this enhanced visibility and increased the height advantage provided by the walls, as well as making drainage easier. In some cases forts were built alongside rivers, a practice which restricted easy access to the fort and eased supply. Forts on the Rhine and Danube or the coasts could receive supplies by water (below p341).<sup>364</sup>

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<sup>364</sup> siting, Malchus Bfr.20.161-164; AM XXVIII.2.2-4; Veg. IV.1

## FORT FUNCTIONS

The repeated, orderly, construction of forts suggests that the Romans had definite ideas for their use. According to an anonymous sixth-century Byzantine writer,

Forts [φρουρία] are used for several purposes: first, to observe the approach of the enemy; second, to receive deserters from the enemy; third, to hold back any fugitives from our own side. The fourth is to facilitate assembly for raids against outlying enemy territories.<sup>365</sup>

These functions meant that forts tended to be built on movement avenues - river estuaries (below p285), fords and mountain passes (below p303). Attempts were also made to control or hinder road movement by creating a deeper defensive zone in certain areas. The defences were concentrated on roads as off-road movement was slow, especially if the weather was bad. A good example of fort placement is Julian's construction of a fort at Strasbourg, blocking the best pass through the Vosges and thus channelling Alamannic movements.<sup>366</sup>

This restriction of movement could also be achieved by linear barriers. Hadrian's Wall is the best known of these, but other similar barriers, though on a smaller scale, existed elsewhere in Europe. Their construction was similar to that of forts, with gateways, projecting towers and ditches.

These walls can be divided into three groups. The first is those blocking off peninsulas, i.e. Hadrian's Wall, the Long Wall at the Chersonese and the Long Walls built at Constantinople from some point under Anastasius. A second group blocked various passes, for example the walls

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<sup>365</sup> Anon. PS 9; Jul. Or. I.7C

<sup>366</sup> Anon. PS 7.13-17; cf Them. Or. X.137B; Strasbourg, AM XVI.11.11

used to control the passes through the Julian Alps. Lastly, access to some river valleys leading from the Danube was also blocked by walls.<sup>367</sup>

Despite the occasional presence of fortifications beyond the border, there was no overall concept of a 'defence-in-depth', and almost all fortified military sites lay close to the border. Defences within the empire tended to be found only at choke points, not everywhere.

Forts varied in size according to their function, though they were still composed of the same features, walls, towers, etc. Forts can be divided into four categories, garrison forts, detachment forts, watchtowers and fortified landing places. These categories are modern definitions and are somewhat arbitrary. However, this is an attempt to interpret the defensive system, whereas previous writers such as Johnson or Lander have been more concerned with the dating and architecture of sites. Other writers have attempted such typological divisions. Thus Von Petrikovits' divided sites into forts and road forts on the basis of their location, with a subcategory of fortlets defined on the basis of having a garrison of fewer than thirty men.<sup>368</sup>

Garrison forts were large sites, usually upgraded earlier forts, which could hold a substantial garrison, generally a whole regiment, sometimes more. These sites tended to contain the headquarters and main body of units, though sub-units were often outposted to detachment forts or watchtowers. Most limitanei regiments in the Notitia Dignitatum have

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<sup>367</sup> literature collected by Crow, J.G., 'The function of Hadrian's Wall and the comparative evidence of Late Roman Long Walls', Roman Frontier Studies 1979, BAR S71, eds. W.S. Hanson and L.J.F. Keppie, (Oxford, 1980), 724-729

<sup>368</sup> Von Petrikovits, H., 'Fortifications in the northwestern Roman Empire from the third to the fifth centuries A.D.', JRS LXI(1971), 178-218

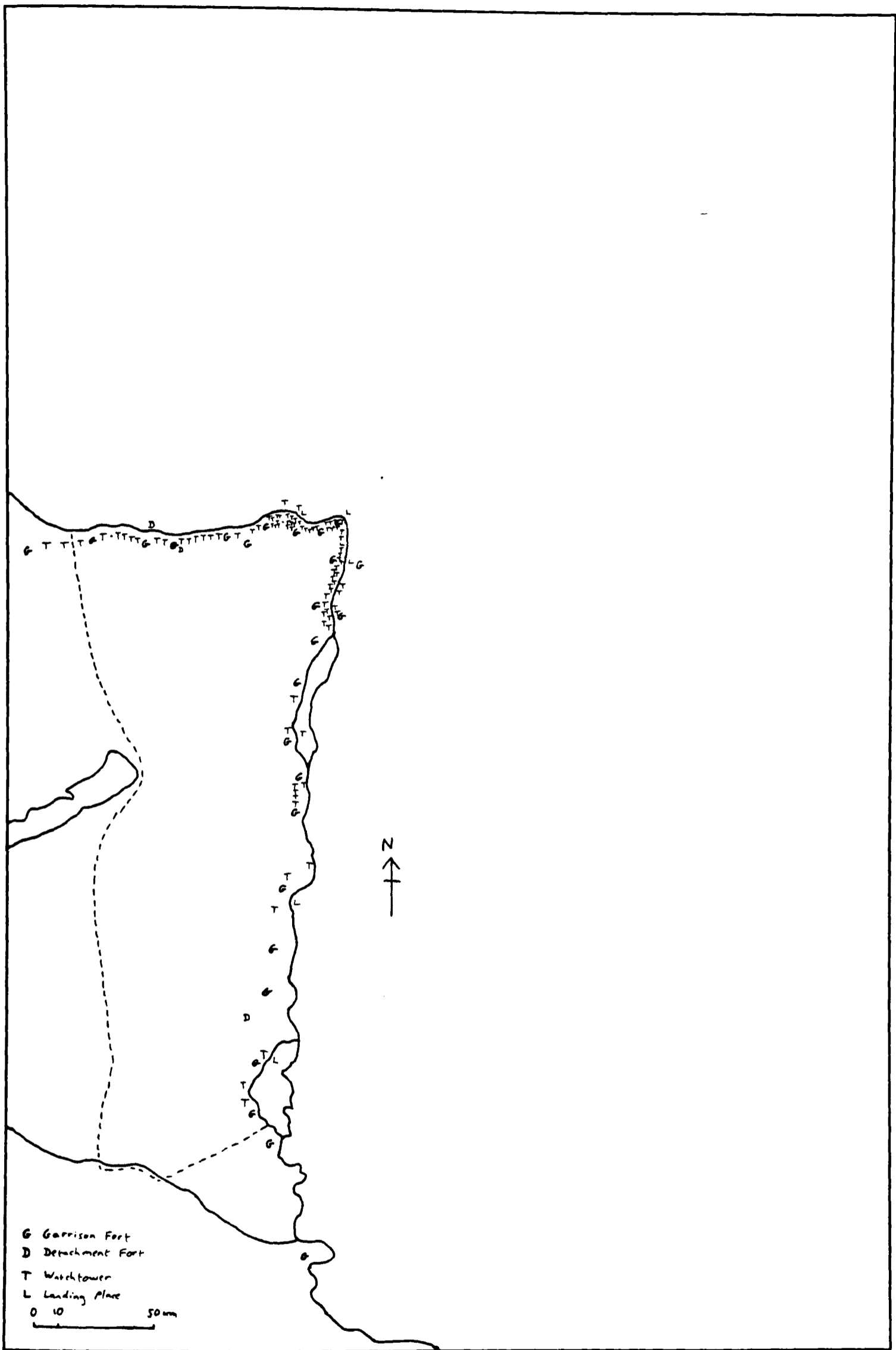


Figure 11: Roman Forts in Valeria

their headquarters at forts of this type. Examples from Valeria are Intercisa (headquarters of the Equites Dalmatae, Constantiniani and Sagittarii), Brigetio (Legio I Adiutrix) and Cirpi (Equites Dalmatae, Auxilia Fortensia and a part of Legio II Adiutrix).<sup>369</sup>

Detachment forts were usually newer constructions rather than refurbished older forts. They were generally small in size, less than 1 ha. These were usually sited on the border, but are also found in some deeper positions, usually roads. This category includes those forts defined by Von Petrikovits as 'road forts'. These forts are rarely recorded in the Notitia. They are termed 'detachment forts' since they were not big enough for whole units and contained only small detachments. Thus in Valeria the fort of Azaum, 7 km east of Brigetio, is only 31.8 x 32.5 m in size.

Watchtowers (burgi or turres) were very small sites. They are defined by their size (and are equivalent to Von Petrikovits' fortlets). These sites were single towers, sometimes with a wall, surrounded by a ditch. They generally had an area of less than 0.5 ha and many were only 10 x 10 m in size. Their height is unknown, though a Roman tower (not precisely datable) at Dover had at least four stories, reaching 13 m (and possibly as high as 24 m). The large number of watchtowers, often in inaccessible positions, suggests a primary function of observation, not defence. This is supported by their small size, large enough for self-defence, but insufficient for a large garrison. The siting of many of these structures on high ground overlooking the border and often in visual range of each other further reinforces this idea. These towers were probably garrisoned

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<sup>369</sup> ND Occ.XXXIII, Intercisa 25, 26, 38; Brigetio, 51; Cirpi, 33, 49, 56

by detachments sent out from nearby forts. These are not recorded in the Notitia and are generally known only from archaeology.<sup>370</sup>

These types of fortifications are illustrated in Figure 11, showing the province of Valeria on the middle Danube.<sup>371</sup>

The first line of defence for any fort was usually the surrounding ditch, in many cases a considerable obstacle. They averaged 3 m in depth, 10 m in width, but could be 2-4 m deep and 5-15 m wide, though the sides were not always sharp. Thus the ditch at Qualburg was 2 m deep and 16 m wide, with shallow sides. The sheer size of this obstacle would make it difficult to bring rams, ladders or other siege machinery to the walls without a great deal of preparatory work. Similarly, problems in exiting the ditch would make it difficult for attackers to co-ordinate an attack on the fort. While climbing from steep-sided ditches it would not be possible to use a shield, making the attackers more vulnerable to missile fire. Ditches usually lay 8-15 m from the foot of the wall. There seems to have been no connection between wide ditches and the use of artillery in fort defences.<sup>372</sup>

The problems presented by the ditch could be intensified in a number of ways. If the ditch were flooded it would form an effective moat, though there is no literary evidence for this practice. However, the Latin word

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<sup>370</sup> towers, siting, Anon. PS 7.13-19; Anon. dRB XX; AM XXX.7.6; Malchus Bfr.20.161-164; size, MacMullen, R., Soldier and Civilian in the Later Roman Empire (Cambridge, Mass., 1963), 38-39; catalogue, Rhine and upper-middle Danube, Johnson 270-279; lower Danube and Britain, reports in various LIMES volumes

<sup>371</sup> Valeria, ND Occ. XXXIII; Johnson 181-188; Soproni, S., Der spätrömische Limes zwischen Esztergom und Szetendre (Budapest, 1978) and Die Letzten Jahrzehnte des Pannonischen Limes (Munich, 1985)

<sup>372</sup> more could be said by archaeologists on the role of ditches; Lander 261-262

for ditch, fossa, could have been used to mean 'moat'. Obstacles could be placed in the berm, for example the pit-traps at Piercebridge and Rough Castle. Such obvious obstacles are uncommon and other devices could have been used which would leave little archaeological trace, such as lines of stakes. Caltraps (tribuli) could be used in front of or in ditches, though attestations of their use are rare. It is possible that brambles or nettles were encouraged to grow on the berm, or in the ditch, a practice which would be unlikely to leave archaeological traces.<sup>373</sup>

Some forts, often the older ones, had multiple ditches (usually a pair, but on occasion three) that performed the same function as the single ditch. They were usually narrower, but retained the depth of the larger ditches. Double ditches of fourth-century date were found at Richborough and Breisach for example.

Although ditches were a common feature, they were not universal. If the fort was built on a hilltop there might not be enough space to dig a ditch. If a fort was built on a spur, ditches could be used to cut it off from the rest of the plateau, as at Breisach or Isny.

Within any circuit of ditches lay the fort, whose main protection was its wall. The wall was composed of a rubble core faced with stone, or occasionally, just stone. Brick seems not to have been used for fortifications except in bonding courses. Wall thickness varied, but averaged 3 m, and few examples are thinner than 1.5 m. The height of walls is difficult to judge because of the few surviving examples. The few known European cases (Pevensey and Zeiselmuer, both 9 m) suggest that they were

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<sup>373</sup> obstacles, Lander 262, Johnson, A., Roman Forts (London, 1983), 53-55; caltraps, Anon. dRB X; Anon. PS 6, 29; Veg. III.8, 24; Procopius, BG VII.xxiv.16-18; Thompson, E.A., A Roman Reformer and Inventor (Oxford, 1952), 67-68; stakes, cf Frontinus, Stratagems I.5.5; Agathias, Hist. III.21.2

similar in height to city walls, i.e. 8-10 m at rampart walk level. This was high enough to stop attackers from climbing them unaided, necessitating the use of scaling ladders.

A crenellated parapet ran along the top of the wall, screening the walkway and allowing more effective return fire. These crenellations are illustrated in the Notitia Dignitatum, and survive on some eastern forts.<sup>374</sup>

Most forts had three types of towers, corner towers, gate towers and between these, interval towers. Smaller forts often had no need for interval towers, and watchtowers could consist of a tower alone, sometimes surrounded by a wall circuit. There were a number of variations in the form of these towers (round, half-round or square), but none of these affected their function, so they will not be discussed here. Square towers were rare, probably because they were more vulnerable to ram attacks.

Towers projected outside the wall circuit by 3-9 m; sometimes the base of the tower projected inside. Fort towers, on the analogy of those surviving in cities, would have been 15-20 m high, though none survive to this height in Europe. The towers at Pevensey extended above the walls, which stood at least 8 m high, though their total height is unknown. Tower bases were usually solid, as at Burgh Castle, probably to prevent subsidence. Towers were usually 30 m apart on the wall circuit, though distances varied, e.g. at Bad Kreuznach and Alzey the interval was 40 m, at Jnkerath 20 m.<sup>375</sup>

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<sup>374</sup> crenellation, ND Occ. XXIV, insignia of Comes Italiae

<sup>375</sup> towers, Lander 198-262, has an extensive discussion of types of towers and their use; projection, Lander 217; square tower vulnerability, Veg. IV.6

By projecting from the wall, towers allowed enfilading fire on both sides of the tower while providing cover from missiles. Vegetius suggests that troops with distance weapons should be stationed on the walls and both bolt-shooters and handheld weapons could be used from towers. The small intervals between the towers maximised the effect of such fire. The towers were linked by a rampart walkway. Access to this walkway could be through staircases contained in the towers if they did not have solid bases, otherwise by external stairs leading directly to the walls. The limited access made it easier for the defenders to seal off sections of the wall if they were captured. Towers had windows at rampart walk-level, and judging by those examples from city towers which survive above this height, another floor above this. Roofs could be conical or flat, the latter providing another fighting platform.<sup>376</sup>

Entrance to a fort was through the gate or gates. The number of entrances depended on the location and function of the fort. Most sites had two gates, though small sites such as watchtowers and detachment forts usually had only one. The gate itself was usually flanked by a tower on each side, resulting in the entrance being recessed. This allowed the defenders to interdict the immediate approach to the gate. Occasionally, as at Pevensey, the gate was very deeply recessed. The gates themselves were made of wood, covered with iron plates to protect them against burning. Some forts may have had portcullises similar to urban sites, though the lack of intact fort gateways makes this difficult to prove (below, p236).<sup>377</sup>

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<sup>376</sup> tower use, Lander 302-306; enfilading fire, Veg. IV.2

<sup>377</sup> recession, Lander 226

Within the fort were buildings for accommodation, administration and storage. These were often, but not always, built directly against the fort wall. This was a characteristic of small sites and reduced the length of the perimeter to be defended (by removing the space between the buildings and the walls), as well as reducing the volume of building material needed.

Our knowledge of interior buildings is limited, but they seem not to have been as specialised as some buildings of the early empire. They were mostly built from timber and remains have rarely been found. Granaries built on the pattern of the early empire are rare, though similar buildings (mostly without external buttresses) do exist, e.g. at Tokod and Veldidena. This suggests that this design had gone out of use, and that different types of building were used to store grain had come into service. It was normal practice to store provisions in forts, up to a year's supply in some cases. Similarly, purpose-built valetudinaria or principia are unknown.<sup>378</sup>

Posterns were used for sorties and as covert entrances. They were usually placed at the foot of towers, as at Tokod, or built into the tower itself, as at Jnkerath. An alternative means of emergency entry or exit for individuals was by rope, though this would be uncomfortable.<sup>379</sup>

Most forts probably had some artillery, though it seems unlikely that many had more than a few weapons. Artillery was not necessary for the

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<sup>378</sup> interior buildings, Lander 259-261; stored supplies, AM XVI.11.11, XVII.9.2; Anon. PS 9; Veg. IV.7-8

<sup>379</sup> posterns, Von Petrikovits, H., 'Fortifications of the northwestern Roman Empire from the third to the fifth centuries AD', JRS LXI (1971), 178-218 at 201; Mauricius, Strat. X.3.7; Procopius, BP I.xv.33, BG VI.xi.11-12; rope, Procopius, BG VI.xii.13; cf Eutropius, Breviarium IX.23; AM XXIV.2.21, XXVIII.6.14

defence of a fort, but was useful if it was there. A garrison, on the other hand, was indispensable.

It has been suggested that artillery influenced fort design, though this seems unlikely. None of the features described, i.e. wide ditches or projecting towers, are necessary for using artillery for defence and the Romans had had artillery available long before they started building forts in this pattern. Lastly, it should be stressed that artillery alone could not defend a site and increased the effectiveness of the garrison rather than replacing it.<sup>380</sup>

It has also been suggested that some towers with solid bases had holes in their centres, as at Burgh Castle, were for (rotating) platforms for stonethrowers, but this seems extremely unlikely. Stonethrowers were cumbersome weapons with a long minimum range and slow rate of fire and were thus of limited use in defence against enemies without siege equipment. It is probable that only ballistae were preferred for fort defence unless the opposition had siege equipment.<sup>381</sup>

Where there were earlier Roman forts in important positions they could be upgraded (if this had not already been done in the third or early-fourth century) to raise their defence capacity to the standard of later constructions. This was more common than replacing them with later types.

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<sup>380</sup> artillery and fort design, Salway, P., Roman Britain (Oxford, 1981), 390-391; Johnson, S., The Roman Forts of the Saxon Shore (London, 1976), 117-120

<sup>381</sup> artillery, Lander 258-259; Burgh Castle, Salway, P., Roman Britain (Oxford, 1981), 281; the rate of fire was low and E.W. Marsden's books, Greek and Roman Artillery: Historical Development (Oxford, 1969) and Technical Treatise (Oxford, 1971) make no mention of rate of fire in the indices, and only one mention in the text itself (HD 94); finds are rare, Baatz, D., 'Recent finds of Ancient Artillery', Britannia IX (1978), 1-17; use on forts, AM XVII.1.12; Anon. dRB XVIII.1,8; Them. Or. X.136A; use in sieges, below p367

Such rebuilding had been carried out since Diocletian's reign and continued until the start of the fifth century in the west, throughout the fifth century in the east.

Upgrading could occur in several ways. If a site did not have projecting towers these would be added. These could be specially designed, as in the case of the fan-shaped towers peculiar to the Danube, added from Constantine's reign onwards to forts such as Zwentendorf and Intercisa. These were the most effective way of defending the walls of a rounded-cornered fort and were frequent additions to Danubian defences. Elsewhere, fort walls were rebuilt rather than modified. Walls could be thickened to bring them up to a thickness of 3 m, as at Zeiselmauer, Contra Aquincum and Intercisa. This suggests that thinner walls were thought unsatisfactory, perhaps because they would be unable to stand up to battering rams or undermining. On some occasions the multiple ditches would be dug out to form a single larger obstacle, as at Eining where the old ditch was dug out, despite the reduced circuit within the old walls. In forts with multiple entrances, some of the gates were closed off and turned into bastions, as at Zwentendorf or Campona. These changes would make a fort equal in defensive terms to those that were newly constructed. They are found throughout Europe, though as with fort construction itself, with local variations.<sup>382</sup>

Where these older forts remained different from the newer constructions was in their size. Most new forts were very small. According to Lander (261, cf 283) 'a very large minority, and perhaps a majority, of new constructions in the late Roman period were less than 1.0 ha in size' and Valentinian I is not known to have built a fort larger than Tokod,

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<sup>382</sup> refurbishment, fan-shaped towers, Lander 246-252; bastions, Lander 252

approximately one hectare in size. The older forts were larger and could hold more men. Since they continued to be manned at the same time as smaller sites were being constructed, the empire may have been putting more men onto the border, or at least, stationing men more widely along the border than previously. Most new sites are found between older large forts or towns, filling gaps on the frontier.<sup>383</sup>

Upgrading was not always felt to be necessary. Britain seems to have had few older forts upgraded. The forts along Hadrian's Wall were never extensively modified, and when a new fort was built at Piercebridge in the third century, it had rounded corners and no projecting towers, making it no different from early-second century forts except in its characteristically late ditch, 8.7 m wide.

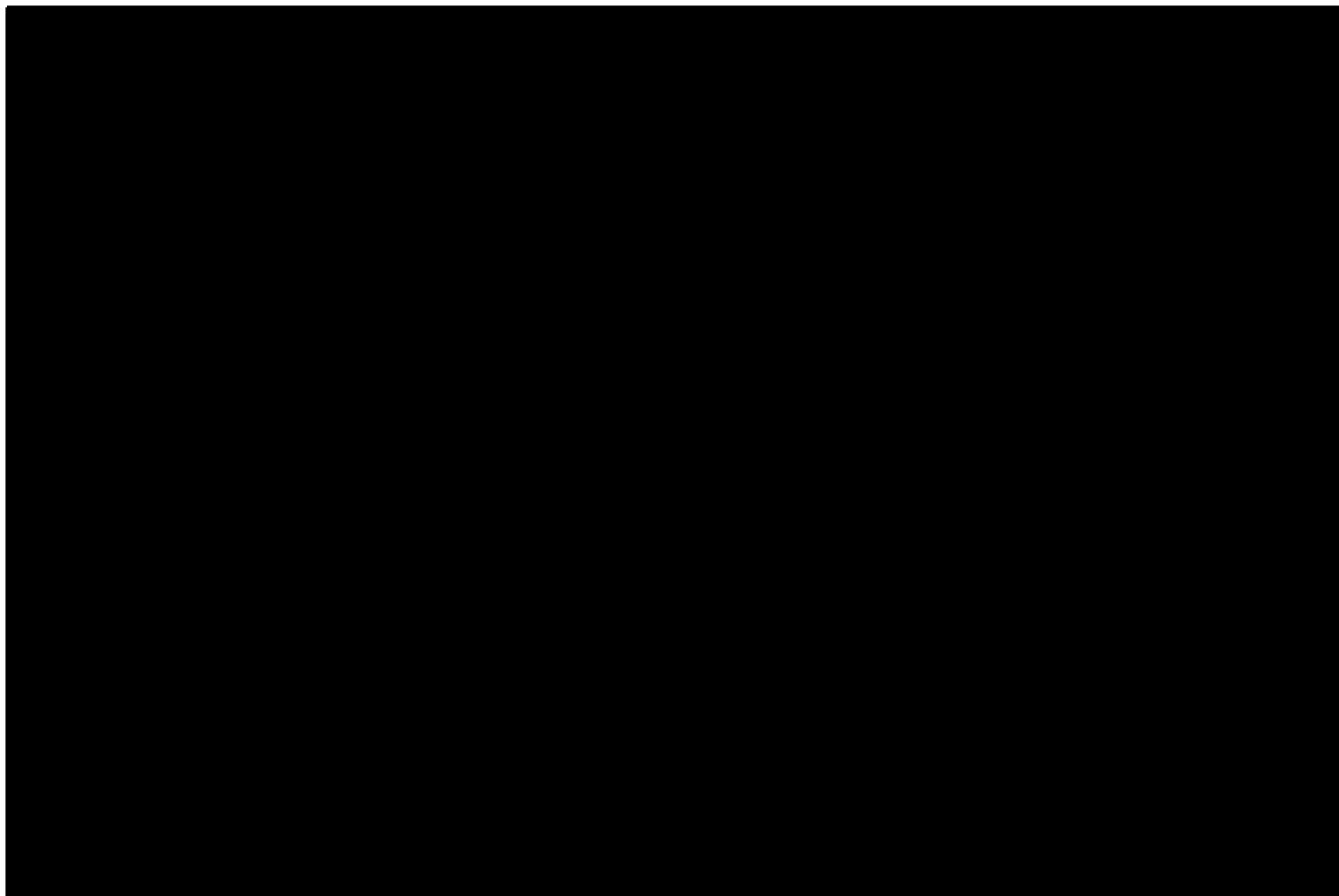


Figure 12: Roman Fort Design, from Maxfield, Saxon Shore, 161

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<sup>383</sup> regiment sizes seem not to have changed, below p135, cf p282

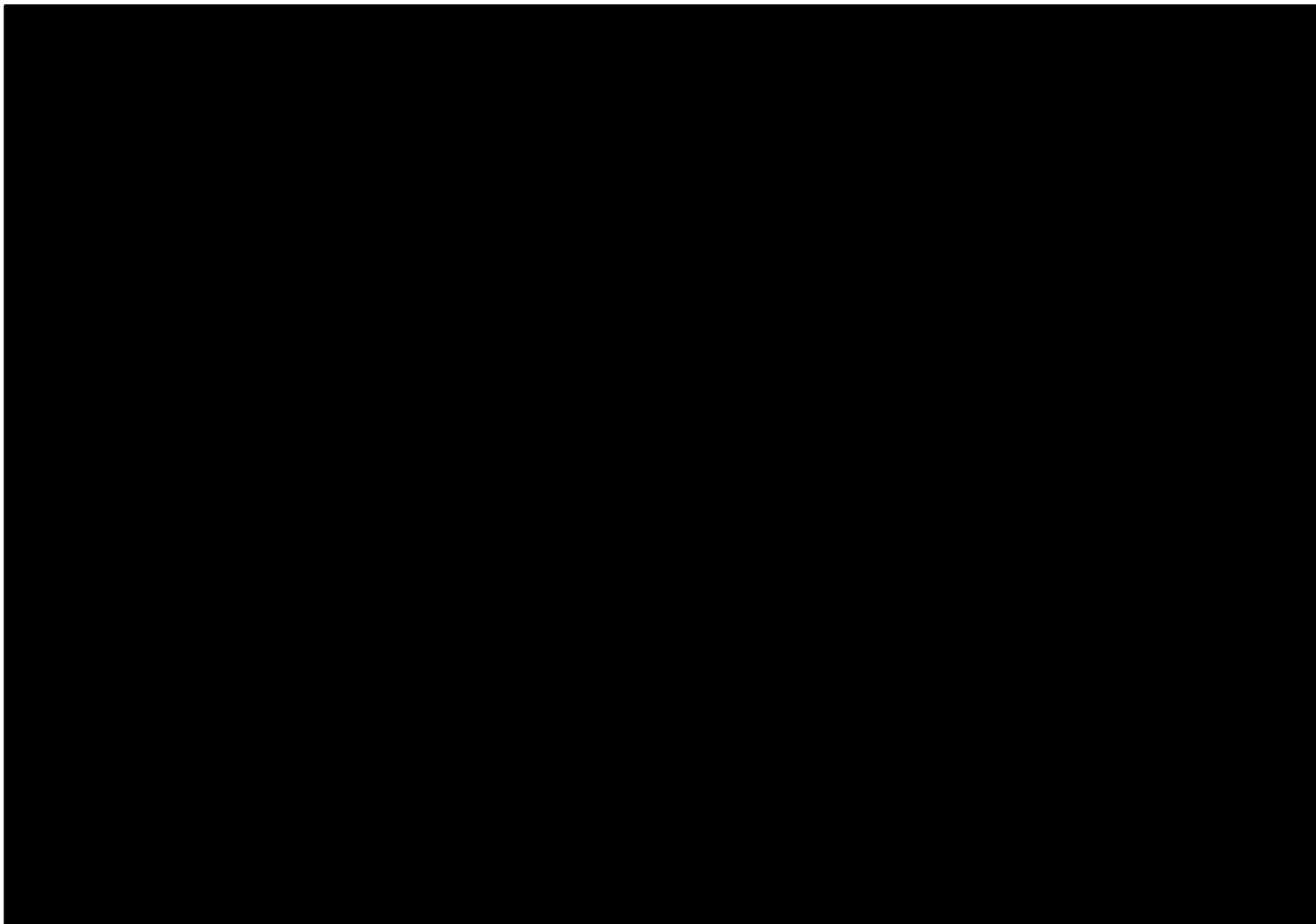


Figure 13: Upgraded Fort, from Saproani, letzte Jahrzehnte, 57

Although durable, stone forts did require regular maintenance. It was another duty of frontier duces to ensure that these repairs were carried out, according to the already-mentioned law of Valentinian I from 365. If this did not happen, the silting of ditches, subsidence of walls and towers and rotting of gates would weaken the defensive capacities of the forts.<sup>384</sup>

Roman fortifications were not only found within the empire, but also across the frontier. These included a further group, 'fortified landing places' in addition to the types discussed above.

A number of so-called fortified landing places are found along the Rhine and upper Danube on the barbarian bank. These sites all have similar

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<sup>384</sup> repairs, CT XV.1.13 (364); NTh XXIV.1.1 (443); AM XVI.11.11, XVII.9.1, XX.10.3, XXII.7.7, XXVIII.3.7; SA Carm. II.199-201

characteristics, consisting of a gateway parallel to the river, built on a short wall with corner towers linked to the river by two short walls, 20-45 m long. In at least one case, Whylen, a wall also ran along the river bank. These forts were all small, up to 0.3 ha in size. In most cases these sites lay opposite forts on the Roman bank. The function of these forts was to probably allow a safe Roman landing on the other side of the river, without fear of interdiction while loading or unloading troops and supplies, the moment when river crossings are most vulnerable. There is little dating evidence for these forts, but what there is assigns most sites to Valentinian I's reign, and a few to that of Constantine I. The sparseness of the dating evidence available together with the small size would suggest only a small (and vulnerable) garrison, though it does not seem likely that they would not be garrisoned at all.<sup>385</sup>

As well as fortified landing places, numerous other Roman fortified sites existed across the frontier. Most of these were detachment forts, lying on or close to the river, such as the fort at Deutz, opposite Cologne. Others lay further inland, e.g. the nameless fort built by Julian in 358. Some sites which now appear to lie across the frontier, such as Breisach and Sponeck on the Rhine, were originally built on the Roman bank, but have been affected by the changing course of the river.<sup>386</sup>

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<sup>385</sup> landing places, Lander 248-249; Johnson 155

<sup>386</sup> watchtowers, Soproni, S., 'Eine Sarmatische Militärstation im sarmatischen Gebiet', LIMES VIII, ed. E. Birley et al., (Cardiff, 1974), 197-203; AM XVII.1.11

## URBAN FORTIFICATIONS

By the second half of the fourth century many major cities in the empire, whether in the frontier provinces or not, were walled. However, many sites remained unfortified until the fifth century, for example Split, whose circuit was completed after 424, while others were never walled at all. In those areas close to the frontiers, most towns were walled during the fourth and fifth centuries. But in more remote areas, e.g. south Italy, walls were rare even in the sixth century, though a few towns, such as Naples, did have defences.<sup>387</sup>

Unlike earlier walls which were important for reasons of prestige, later walls were functional, intended to protect the city in emergencies. To this end most circuits were smaller than the earlier walls, protecting only a limited area of the city. In Gaul, for example, the largest known late circuit is Metz, covering an area of 60 ha, but the average seems to be around 10 ha. The reduction in size from earlier walls is illustrated by Autun, whose Augustan walls enclosing 200 ha were supplemented in the third century by an inner circuit covering 10 ha. The larger circuit continued to stand but its condition is uncertain and it may have had little defensive value.

Garrison towns and towns containing fabricae seem not to have had larger wall circuits, though the prefecture capitals (Trier and Sirmium) did have larger circuits, a result of their larger size. The alternative western capital, Ravenna, had its wall circuit augmented under Valentinian

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<sup>387</sup> Italy, Procopius, BG V.viii.2; lack of walls at Narbo, SA Carm. XXIII.48-68; Naples, CIL X.1485; Christie, N. and Rushworth, A., 'Urban Fortifications and Defensive Strategy in fifth- and sixth-century Italy': the case of Terracina', JRA I (1988), 73-87 at 83-87

III, though it had served as an imperial headquarters for at least twenty years previously.<sup>388</sup>

The area enclosed by the walls did not contain all the buildings of the city. Large numbers were left outside the walls, occasionally suffering from barbarian attacks. This outside area was known as the suburbanus. Inside often lay government buildings, granaries, barracks, courts, factories, as well as private houses. But this placement was not universal and on many occasions such buildings lay outside the walls, for example the imperial palace at Poetovio. Provided most of these structures were kept safe the imperial administration would suffer little damage from any attacks. In most cases towns were walled as an emergency measure and the army was expected, by the civil population at least, to stop most threats before the town was reached.<sup>389</sup>

Emperors were concerned for the security of cities and took steps to make money available for building and maintaining city defences. It is possible that several groups of town walls in Gaul which display markedly similar characteristics, both in size and style, were built by the same team of workmen, perhaps following imperial orders.<sup>390</sup>

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<sup>388</sup> Christie, N. and Gibson, S., 'The City Walls of Ravenna', PBSR LVI (1988), 156-197

<sup>389</sup> distinction between wall and town, Eugippius, V.Sev. IV.1, XXII.4; outside areas suffering, Malchus Bfr.2; AM XVI.11.4; Zos. IV.6.4, 20.1; suburbanus, AM XVIII.6.14, XXXI.15.9; Lib. Or. XXIV.15; internal granaries, AM XVIII.2.3-4; fabricae, James, S., 'The Fabricae', Military Equipment and the identity of Roman Soldiers, BAR S394, ed. J.C. Coulston, (Oxford, 1988), 257-331 at 274; Poetovio, AM XIV.11.20

<sup>390</sup> imperial encouragement, CT XV.1.32-33 (395); AE 1968.113.7; gangs, Johnson 113-115; remit of money by Valentinian I for maintenance, CT IV.13.5 (358), XV.1.18 (374), 34 (396); AM XXII.7.7, XXIX.6.11; cf Pan.Lat. V(8).11

Urban fortifications followed the same principles that guided the construction of forts and the description here can thus be more brief than in the preceding section. Urban defences can be divided into four groups, ditches, walls, towers and gates.<sup>391</sup>

A ditch, either single or multiple, surrounded many cities. In Britain some towns had their narrow double ditches close to the wall replaced by a single wide ditch, further away from the wall. At Trier there was a ditch 15 m wide, 4-5 m deep, a considerable obstacle in itself and at Constantinople the ditch was 20 m wide with vertical sides.<sup>392</sup>

The walls formed the core of the defences, and it was important that they be kept in repair lest sections collapse. Most city walls were 2 m thick, and many were thicker, though few were more than 3 m thick. One exception was Constantinople, whose inner Theodosian walls were almost 5 m thick. At least one wall circuit, at Ravenna, was built of brick, and it was also used to face others. The height of city walls is uncertain, since only a few survive to their original height. A height of around 8-10 m appears average, judging from surviving examples such as Prigueux with walls 10 m high, or Barcelona, 9.19 m at rampart walk level. A few walls were lower, e.g. Trier, 6.13 m at rampart walk level, but even this height

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<sup>391</sup> modern studies of urban fortifications outside Britain are rare. Recently for Italy, Christie, N. and Gibson, S., 'The City Walls of Ravenna', PBSR LVI (1988), 156-197 and Christie, N. and Rushworth, A., 'Urban Fortifications and Defensive Strategy in fifth and sixth century Italy: the case of Terracina', JRA I (1988), 73-88; Tsangadas, B.C.P., The Fortifications and Defence of Constantinople (New York, 1980); Gaul, Loseby, S., unpublished D.Phil., (Oxford, forthcoming); Butler, R., 'Late Roman Town Walls in Gaul', Arch. J LXVI (1959), 25-50

<sup>392</sup> ditches, Anon. PS 12.37-46 (25 m+ wide); Priscus fr.5; Veg. IV.5; moat, Phasis, Agathias Hist. III.21.2

was too high to climb unaided and would give the defenders a considerable height advantage. These walls were crenellated.<sup>393</sup>

Around the wall circuit were towers, almost always projecting from the wall, about 15-20 metres high, at intervals averaging 30 m, designed for combat and observation. Towers were linked to each other by a rampart walk and were entered either from ground level by an internal or external staircase or from a staircase leading directly onto the rampart walk. Roofs could be flat, providing another fighting platform, or conical.<sup>394</sup>

Gates were always the most vulnerable point in the city walls, since they could be broken or burnt down. Gateways of large cities in the first and second centuries often had double entrances. By the third century, when defences had become more important than easy access, and in smaller cities throughout, gates were constructed with only a single entrance. In other areas double gates were blocked up, as at Rome in 402. The gateway was usually flanked by two projecting towers covering the approaches to the gate as well as enfilading the adjacent wall sections. The gate itself lay at the rear of this passage, to allow the defenders to interdict the immediate approaches. The gates themselves were of hard wood and were iron-bound. Some gates at Rome had portcullises and they are also known from ~~N~~mes, Die, Aosta, Trier and Diocletian's palace at Split. They may have been more common than this since surviving unaltered gateways are rare.<sup>395</sup>

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<sup>393</sup> height, Procopius, BP II.13.17; Anon. PS 12.1-5 (a minimum of 3 m thick, 12.5 m high); crenellations (pinnae), Anon. PS 12; AM XVI.4.2; ND insignia of most officials; Christie, N. and Gibson, S., 'The city Walls of Ravenna', PBSR LVI (1988), 156-197 at 163-167, 184-186

<sup>394</sup> Johnson 38-43; flat-roofed towers are shown on pl. XXXVIII, Ilias Ambrosiana (Berne and Olten, 1953)

<sup>395</sup> blocked double gates, Todd, M., The Walls of Rome (London, 1978), 62-64; construction, AM XXIV.2.14; iron-clad, Zos. II.50.1; AM XXX.5.17; Procopius, BG VII.xxiv.34; Claudian, de Bello Gothico 215; portcullises,

The slowness of exit through gates meant that posterns were necessary if sorties were to be possible. These were usually situated at the foot of towers as at Carcassone, Silchester and Aquileia.<sup>396</sup>

On a few sites defensive forewalls (προτειχίσματα) are known. The most famous example is that of Constantinople, but an example probably dating to the fifth century is known from Marseilles. In the fourth century Aquileia appears to have had a forewall made of turf. There is also an undated but possibly late Roman example at Thessaloniki. Like portcullises, forewalls may be more common than previously thought.<sup>397</sup>

Artillery was used to defend towns, though it may be important that artillery seems mostly to have been used when there were troops present (although these are the sieges mostly likely to be recorded by historians). Both bolt-shooters and stonethrowers were used. At least one city, Amida on the eastern frontier, had its own artillery park. As with military sites, artillery seems not to have affected the design of urban fortifications.<sup>398</sup>

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Veg. IV.4; Todd, M., The Walls of Rome (London, 1978), 62-63; Richmond, I.A., The City Walls of Imperial Rome (Oxford, 1930), 110, 114, 136-137, 166-167, 177-178, 188, 204, 257; Aosta, each gate; Trier, Porta Nigra; Nmes, Porta Augusta; AM XXX.5.17; Aeneas Tacticus XXXIX

<sup>396</sup> posterns, AM XVIII.6.11, XXI.12.13; Carcassone, Johnson pl.9

<sup>397</sup> forewalls, Constantinople, Tsangadas, B.C.P., The Fortifications and Defence of Constantinople (New York, 1980); Marseilles, Gallia XLIV (1986), 418; Aquileia, AM XXI.12.13; Adrianople ?, AM XXXI.15.14; Thessaloniki, Vickers, M., 'The late Roman Walls of Thessalonica', LIMES VIII, ed. E. Birley et al., (Cardiff, 1974), 249-255 at 251; Mauricius, Strat. X.3.13 and Anon. PS 12.31-36 envisage some fortifications having forewalls

<sup>398</sup> artillery on towns, Veg. IV.8-9,22,29; stonethrowers, AM XXXI.15.6,12; ballistae, AM XIX.1.7, XX.7.2, XXI.12.10, XXIV.5.6; Amida, AM XVIII.9.1; use, below p367

Many cities seem to have possessed permanent garrisons. Garrisons on the frontier (and occasionally within the empire) are recorded in the Notitia Dignitatum. The presence of permanent garrisons is also mentioned in numerous other cities (below p283).

Periodic maintenance had to be carried out if the defences were to remain effective. Common problems were collapses or breaches in walls or towers, usually caused by subsidence or poor construction, occasionally by earthquakes. Rotting affected gates and ditches were susceptible to silting, downgrading their effectiveness as an obstacle. Repair could take place quickly if necessary. At Sirmium in 374 the Praetorian Prefect Probus

cleared out the ditches which were choked with rubbish and being naturally inclined to building, since the walls though long-continued peace had in great part been neglected and had fallen, he raised them even to the completion of pinnacles of lofty towers.<sup>399</sup>

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<sup>399</sup> maintenance, AM XVI.4.2, XVIII.2.5, XXII.7.7, XXVIII.3.7, XXIX.6.9-13; Dexippus fr.28 and discussion in Millar, F.G.B., 'P. Herennius Dexippus and the Third-Century Invasions', JRS LIX (1969), 12-29; earthquakes, Todd, M., The Walls of Rome (London, 1978), 66; CT XV.1.5 (338), 34 (396), 49 (412), 51 (413); NVal V.1.3 (440); Marc. Com. sa 447; cf AE 1952.173; Sirmium, AM XXIX.6, cf XXXI.15.6



## REFUGES

A third type of fortified site was the refuge, used for emergencies, to harbour civilians and livestock, They were small in size and sometimes only banked and ditched rather than walled. These sites were usually found away from roads on hilltops and were often simply reused hillforts dating from pre-Roman times. Their dating is often uncertain as their use in emergencies meant that there is little chance of datable material surviving.

Such sites are most common in frontier areas, though they are still present deeper within the empire. However, lack of evidence on many sites means they can only be described as potential refuges and could well have served other functions, if they were in fact Roman at all. They seem to have had no official role recorded and their military associations were probably minimal.<sup>400</sup>

Similar to hilltop refuges were 'fortified villas'. These domestic sites built with defence in mind appear during the fourth and fifth centuries. They are recorded in literature and epigraphy, as well as being known through the presence of towers on the site plan. It is possible that many other villas were built in a military style since anything that did not leave a trace on the archaeological record would go unrecorded, e.g. arrowslits, crenellations and bricked-up windows. Such sites are not common archaeologically and it is likely that the literary mentions have given them an artificially high profile.

We do not know against whom these sites were fortified. Their small size, generally prominent locations, lack of defensive features such as

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<sup>400</sup> MacMullen, R., Soldier and Civilian in the later Roman Empire (Cambridge, Mass., 1963), 149; Johnson 226-242, 280-290

gateways, towers or ditches and, most importantly, a small, amateur and ill-armed garrison, would severely limit their defensibility. It seems likely that they were intended more to deter thieves or bandits than for defence against a military assault.<sup>401</sup>

#### EFFECTIVENESS OF FORTIFICATIONS

Some of our sources record large numbers of cities being sacked in barbarian attacks and this might be thought to show that some fortifications were ineffective.

Firstly, however, as suggested above, we know little about the dating of many city walls and it must be proved, not assumed, that a particular city was walled when it fell. Defence of an unwalled city could only be accomplished by an army.

Secondly, it is important to distinguish between the city itself (urbs, oppidum) and its surrounding area (civitas, suburbanus) The area within the walls was small and beyond the walls lay most many buildings and fields, still part of the city. These were vulnerable to attack, but it was much more rarely that the walled enclave itself fell. However, the sack of the extra-mural suburbanus could be recorded as the sack of the city, for example the treatment of Gothic attacks on Clermont by contemporaries. This was damaging to morale, but of no direct military consequence, providing the walled circuit remained intact.<sup>402</sup>

The problem is discussed by Luttwak.

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<sup>401</sup> fortified villas, Johnson 242-243; Percival, J., The Roman Villa (London, 1976), 131, 173 and 'The Fifth-Century Villa: New Life or Death Postponed?', GAUL; SA Ep. IV.15, V.41, Carm. XXII; CIL XII.1524; Wightman, E., Roman Trier and the Treviri (London, 1970), 168-9; cf AM XXI.13.14

<sup>402</sup> Clermont, SA Ep. III.2-4, V.12; Stevens, C.E., Sidonius Apollinaris and his Age (Oxford, 1933), 130-160

Roman bases were rebuilt as fortified strongholds not because the barbarians had learned how to breach simple walls - which they must always have been capable of doing - but because the enemy had not acquired significant siege capabilities.<sup>403</sup>

Nevertheless, some explanation must be made of the apparently large numbers of towns which were sacked. Where there was any sort of military defence of a fortified structure it was rare for it to be captured quickly by barbarian attack. Aquileia for example took three months to fall to the Huns in 452 and fell only because it was not relieved. On the other hand, when we do know the reasons, cases of towns falling due to treachery or abandonment are common. This does not suggest that towns fell easily to the invaders, rather that they could do if they were not properly manned or supported. The Romans were aware of this; in 374 this knowledge motivated the defence of Sirmium by the praetorian prefect Probus, instead of a withdrawal of troops. This incident also shows the need to maintain the defences of a city and to keep a garrison there.

The ease with which towns could be defended is shown by Eugippius' Vita Severini, a source stressing the importance of morale. If the defenders knew that they would be relieved, or if they were well led, they could hold out. But if there was no one to encourage the citizens, cities rarely opposed the enemy. Dexippus' experiences at Athens in the third century show the problems faced in motivating the citizens to fight. This does not mean that fixed defences were useless, merely that walls alone would not keep out invaders.<sup>404</sup>

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<sup>403</sup> Luttwak, E.N., The Grand Strategy of the Roman Empire (London, 1976), 165

<sup>404</sup> Probus, AM XXIX.6.9-13; Eugippius, V.Sev. XXV, XXVII; SA Ep. III.9; cf Synesius, Ep. 104; siege warfare, above p126, below p363

### PART III

#### ROMAN MILITARY PRACTICES

The third part of thesis discusses Roman military practices with regard to enemies originating from both outside the empire, barbarians, and from within, usurpers and rebels. These practices are discussed at the levels of policy and strategy before turning to a discussion of operational aspects of the army and, finally, to the army on the battlefield.

## ROMAN FOREIGN POLICY: AD 350-500

The Roman empire had an army to keep out or destroy its enemies by whatever means necessary. There was no need, or even thought, of compromise. Ammianus Marcellinus' account of a treacherous attack on a raiding band of Saxons in 370 concludes

and though some fair judge of these things will condemn this act as treacherous and hateful, yet on having considered the affair, he will not think it improper that a destructive band of brigands was destroyed once the opportunity was given.

This brutality was not confined to the battlefield. Earlier in the fourth century, Constantine the Great threw two Frankish kings to the beasts in the amphitheatre. Usurpers were as brutally treated, executed in public and their heads put on display. Thus in 422 Honorius celebrated his tricennalia by executing a usurper and his general in the arena at Ravenna. Such brutality continued, and in 497 the heads of the Isaurian rebels, including the emperor Zeno's brother, Longinus, were displayed at Constantinople. Though it is easy to be shocked at such brutality, contemporaries probably took little notice. Nor would most members of other frontier cultures.<sup>405</sup>

Given such a perspective, the Roman system of defence was bound to be savage, though probably viewed by the participants in more prosaic

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<sup>405</sup> AM XXVIII.5.7; cf Bartholomew, P., 'Fourth-Century Saxons', Britannia XV (1984), 169-185 at 171-2 for possible ironic tone of AM passage; Franks, Pan.Lat. VII(6).12.3, X(4).16.5-6; Honorius, Ann.Rav. sa 422 (and Manuscript illustrations); Zeno, Marc. Com. sa 497; Evagrius, HE III.35; cf J.Ant. fr.214.5; Alfidi, A., 'The moral Barrier on the Rhine and Danube', LIMES: The of Roman Frontier Studies, ed. E. Birley, (Durham, 1952), 1-16; barbarians seen as animals, Frzouls, E., 'Les deux politiques de Rome face aux barbares d'après Ammien Marcellin', Crise et redressement dans les provinces Europeenes de l'empire, ed. E. Frzouls (Strasbourg, 1983), 175-191

terms as 'efficient', 'comprehensive' or 'thorough.' Its object was clear, and Roman officers proceeded to attain their objectives ruthlessly.

This section considers the choices open to the Roman state in achieving these objectives. But first it is necessary to consider who actually made these choices and whether there was any consistent policy.<sup>406</sup>

The emperor (Augustus) was head of the Roman state and therefore head of the army. This applied regardless of the number of Augusti, but Caesares were their subordinates. During the fourth century an Augustus made the decisions necessary to safeguard the state. He continued to do so during the fifth century, though his position as decision-maker was often supplemented or replaced by the actual head of the army, the dominant magister militum. The principle of centralisation, however, remained intact. Throughout this section 'emperor' is used to refer to the chief decision-maker, though it often encompasses a dominant magister militum. For the purposes of this section no distinction is necessary.

Emperors did not make their decisions alone. However, this does not mean that all decisions were discussed, only that they could be. Most decisions were made (or discussed) in the imperial council (consistorium), a small body that dealt with military and foreign affairs, as well as civil business. The composition was not fixed, but those making up the council worked together on official business, producing the personal contact necessary for efficient teamwork and decision making. Members included magistri militum, praetorian prefects, comites and tribuni scholarum and civilian officials, though the latter probably played a lesser part in some

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<sup>406</sup> good introduction, Millar, F., 'Emperors, Frontiers and Foreign Relations, 31 BC-AD 378', Britannia XIII (1982), 1-23, esp. 3n12; see also discussion in Isaac, B., The Limits of Empire (Oxford, 1990), 372-418

aspects of the discussions. The members were always in close proximity to the emperor so meetings could be called quickly in response to a crisis. Thus when news of Silvanus' usurpation arrived, Constantius II called a meeting of the consistory at midnight.

During the fifth century the consistory became less important for decision-making, at least in the east, and instead important political and military decisions were made by the emperor and an informal grouping of high-ranking military and civil officers.

However, this also occurred in the fourth century, especially when on campaign. Overall, 'those in the emperor's presence' would probably be a better reflection of reality than 'council'.<sup>407</sup>

The emperor was rarely at the troubled area in person when crises had to be resolved, so his decisions were constrained by the information available to him. Though emperors could be well-informed, decisions often had to be taken on a lamentably small amount of information. Thus Valentinian I heard of an Alamannic attack and the usurpation of Procopius on the same day in 365. He knew the Alamanni were attacking,

but as to dealing with the attempt of Procopius before it came to fruition, he was distracted by doubting anxiety and disturbed by this most powerful reason, that he did not know whether Valens was alive or whether his death had led Procopius to attempt the throne. [10] For Aequitius [comes per Illyrici] had received a report of the tribune Antonius, who was commanding troops in Dacia Mediterranea, and indicated nothing except a vague account which he himself had heard: and Aequitius himself had not yet heard anything trustworthy, and reported the events to the emperor in simple words.

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<sup>407</sup> council, Austin, N.J.E., Ammianus on Warfare (Brussels, 1979), 113; LRE 329-341, 346-347; timing, AM XV.5.18; discussing usurpation, AM XV.5.5-6,12-14,18-22, XXI.7.1; whether to send an expedition to Africa, Zos. VI.7.5-6; appoint new emperor, AM XV.8.2-3, XXV.5.1-4; treatment of barbarians, AM XVII.12.15; Eunapius fr.42; Priscus fr.45; below p336

This sort of dilemma was common. Once one conflict started, another often followed elsewhere and a decision would have to be made as to which was to take priority. It seems to have been accepted that only one war should be undertaken at once. In 360 Julian had to decide whether to go to Britain himself or to send a subordinate, but he did not know if the situation required fighting or negotiation. Other similar situations were Valens' decision to cancel campaigning against the Goths for a campaign on the eastern frontier in 370 and Theodosius II's abandoning the 442 expedition against the Vandals because of a Hun attack.<sup>408</sup>

Such dilemmas could be exacerbated, if not caused by, the supply of inadequate information. The major reason for this was the speed of communication. No means of communicating information (as opposed to a single, pre-determined message) existed that was faster than a man on a horse. The imperial post (cursus publicus) was used as a means of delivering messages to the emperor. Normal speed was around 80 kpd though in an emergency speeds of up to 320 kpd were achieved.<sup>409</sup>

Naval communication was sometimes used to deliver information, though its use in Europe seems to have been uncommon. It appears only to have been used from Britain or Africa to Europe. Rivers do not appear to have been widely used for transmitting information.<sup>410</sup>

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<sup>408</sup> dilemmas, AM XXVI.5.9-10, cf XX.9.3, XXI.7.1; available information, Eunapius fr.66; cf MacMullen, R., Corruption and the Decline of Rome (London, 1988), 146-148; Matthews, J.F., The Roman Empire of Ammianus (London, 1989), 40-41; Dio LIII.19.5; 360, AM XX.1.1-2; cancellation of one crisis for another, Eunapius fr.42.78-79

<sup>409</sup> communication, Ramsay, A.M., 'The Speed of the Roman Imperial Post', JRS XV (1925), 60-74; Procopius, HA XXX.1-5; Malchus fr.20.121-122, 22; heliographs were theoretically possible but there is no evidence for their military use; signal fires, Anon. PS 8

<sup>410</sup> naval communication, Reddē M., Mare Nostrum (Rome, 1986), 447-451; Britain, AM XX.9.9; SA Ep. I.5.3; Africa, Zos. V.11.3

From this it is clear that urgent information would often be weeks old by the time it reached the emperor, routine information older still. Even the news of Procopius' usurpation, declared in Constantinople on 28th September 365, did not reach Valentinian in north Gaul until late October or the very beginning of November. In this time the situation could have changed since the dispatch of the message. By the time the emperor had responded the situation had probably changed again. Thus by the start of November Procopius had control of all Thrace and was only kept out of Illyricum by the independent action of Aequitius. By early December, the soonest time at which Valentinian's orders could have reached the area, Procopius also controlled Bithynia.<sup>411</sup>

A secondary problem was reaching the emperor. All information had to go to the emperor wherever he was, not to a fixed point, and finding the emperor's actual position could further delay the message's arrival.<sup>412</sup>

There were ways of reducing the problems. The speed of communication could not be altered, but problems with messages were minimised by sending the courier, as well as the despatch, the entire length of the journey, ensuring that he was available for further questioning if necessary. Where possible, responsible officers were sent to confirm information and evaluate a situation before taking action, for example the despatch of Severus and then Jovinus to Britain in 367, though this would again slow further action.<sup>413</sup>

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<sup>411</sup> change in situation, AM XV.8.18-19; Procopius, AM XXVI.5.8-11, 6-8; Seeck, O., Regesten der Kaiser und Pöste (Stuttgart, 1919)

<sup>412</sup> Millar, F.G.B., 'Government and Diplomacy in the Roman Empire during the First Three Centuries', IHR X (1988), 345-377 at 351

<sup>413</sup> couriers, Procopius, HA XXX.5; cf Suetonius, Augustus 49; Lib. Or. XVIII.52; evaluations, AM XV.5.18-22, XXVII.8.1-2, XXX.3.2 (notarius)

A second means of easing the problems was giving local commanders considerable autonomy to deal with problems. The regional field army would only be called in if the local dux or comes could not deal with a problem himself, and the praesental field army would only be needed if the regional commander could

not control the situation (Figure 15) This is difficult to prove since attacks successfully repelled by limitanei were rarely recorded, i.e. evidence may only survive where the system

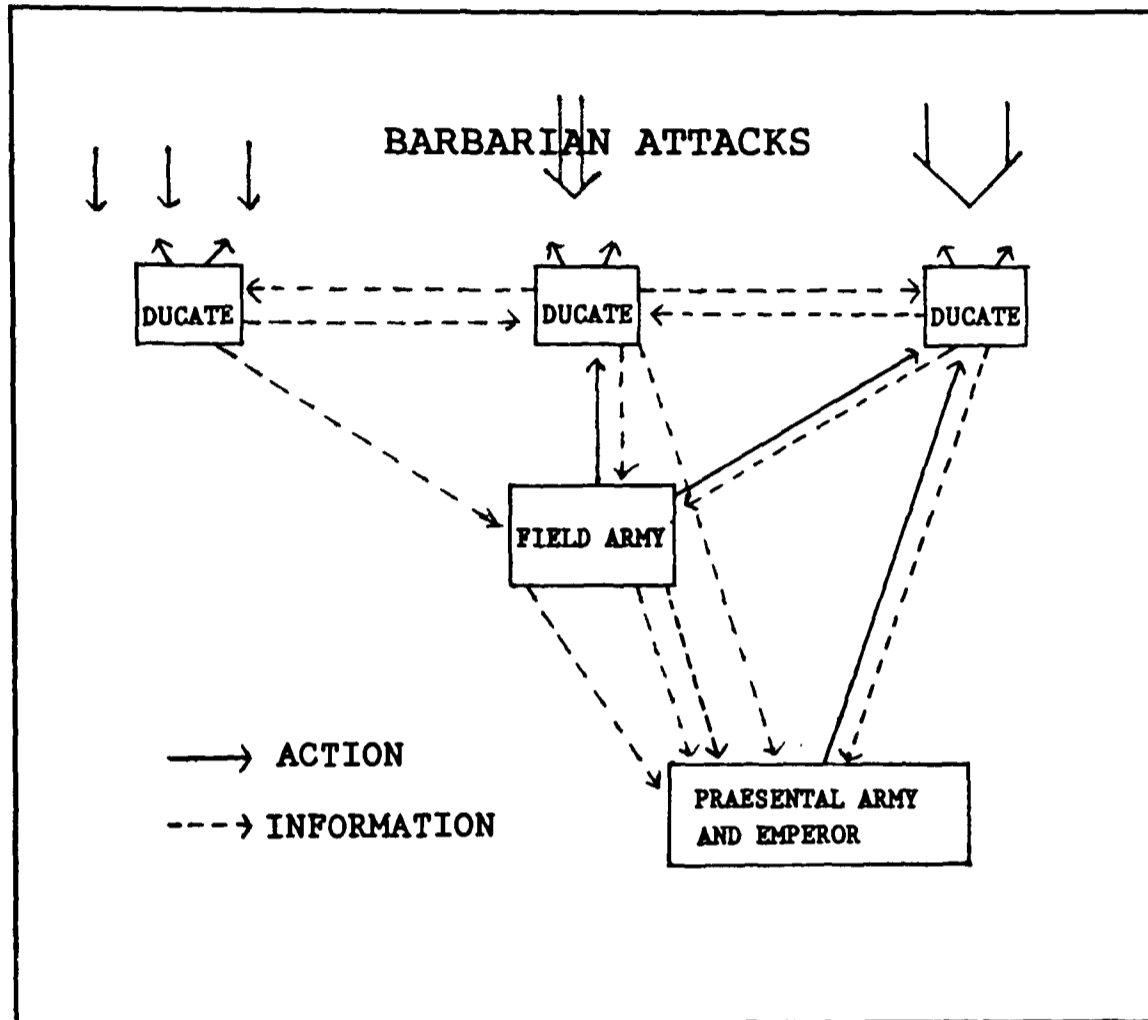


Figure 15: Information and Action, a model

broke down. Part

of the process can be seen in 366 when Charietto, comes per utramque Germaniam was defeated by raiding Alamanni (who had presumably already defeated the limitanei), a larger force under Jovinus, magister equitum was sent against them from the praesental and regional armies.<sup>414</sup>

\* In this confused situation of centralised information and decentralised local defensive action with a central intervention force, it is worth asking if there was any central policy. Any such concept is

<sup>414</sup> autonomy, AM XXVI.7.11-12; layered system, AM XXVI.5.9, XXVII.1-2, XXVIII.5.1-2; Lib. Or. XVIII.71

anachronistic to some extent. There was an overall necessity, to ensure the survival of the state, which entailed keeping barbarians out and suppressing usurpers. Because of these requirements, much of the state's action against its enemies was predetermined, at least in form if not in timing. To this end the emperor had to decide only when or whether to act (or, in the case of Valentinian's dilemma, whether or how to respond to both).

This assumes that government was reactive, i.e. reacting to events rather than initiating them. Most operations were thus defensive in nature. The size of the empire, the speed of communication and the centralisation of much decision-making made this almost inevitable. This meant that two emperors were a necessity, as Valentinian I was told by the army. Even Constantius II had to appoint a colleague, despite his distrust of the available candidates, because of the pressures of ruling.<sup>415</sup>

But government was not totally reactive. When the emperor received information in time, he could take preemptive action, i.e. deal with the crisis when he wished, not when it was necessary. But this could only occur when the communication time-lag was reduced, usually when the emperor was present in the crisis area. Thus Constantius II's pre-emptive diplomacy to stop an attack by the Sarmatian Limigantes in 359 was possible only because he was in the area at the time. Had Constantius been in Gaul, he would have been unable to react until he received news of their plans, by which time the attack would probably have already taken place. But even when emperors had advance information they did not always react. While preparing to campaign in Persia in 363, Julian suspected that there would be trouble

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<sup>415</sup> need for multiple emperors, AM XV.8.1-2; Jul. Or. I.44D-45A; Lib. Or. XVIII.16,31; as perceived by troops, AM XXVI.2.3-4

from the Goths on the lower Danube, but was unable or unwilling to act since he was committed to war with the Persians.<sup>416</sup>

Roman offensive actions were not always a response to information. The Alamannic wars of Valentinian I, involving cross-border strikes in 368, 370, 372 and 374, show the Romans initiating action, in this case in an attempt to destroy the Alamannic threat. After the departure of Valentinian in 374 the initiative returned to the Alamanni. Such strikes could also be carried out by magistri militum, though they tended only to initiate these actions in the fifth century when emperors had ceased campaigning.<sup>417</sup>

#### Conclusion

There seems to have been no 'Grand Strategy' to defend the Roman Empire, merely a reaction to crises as they occurred. On occasion the Romans might take the initiative against the barbarians. In the fourth century the borders of the empire were fixed and there were no plans for contraction or expansion. The threat presented by the enemies of the empire was constant so the empire did not need to change its policies in response to events.

During the fifth century the pattern of the threat changed. There was more flexibility in foreign policy relations, with the growth of independent barbarian kingdoms. Roman policy, however, remained reactive and few attempts were made to regain lost territory.

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<sup>416</sup> emperor on the spot, 359, AM XVII.8.3-4, XIX.11; Danube, Eunapius fr.27.1; AM XX.8.1, XXII.7.8, XXIII.2.7; Jul. fr.9; Lib. Or. XII.78

<sup>417</sup> Valentinian's objectives, AM XXVI.5.13, XXVII.10.5; Luttwak, E.N., The Grand Strategy of the Roman Empire (London, 1976); Millar, F.G.B., 'Emperors, Frontiers and Foreign Relations, 31 BC-AD 378', Britannia XIII (1982), 1-23; initiation, below p<sup>334</sup>

## BARBARIAN ENEMIES

From the mid-first century AD until the late-fourth century and the Gothic crossing of the Danube, the rivers Rhine and Danube and Hadrian's Wall were the northern limits of direct Roman administration in Europe. These were the areas where most of the army was stationed and borders which the army was expected to defend. But this continuity in size from the empire of the principate can be misleading. According to Mann,

this gives the impression that there was a "standard size" Roman empire, as if it was predetermined that it should achieve that size and shape.<sup>418</sup>

From the late-fourth century onwards, not all territory within this "standard size" empire was Roman-administered and much was permanently lost. But contemporaries, especially government officers rather than civilian writers, noticed these losses only at the time. Within a few years they forgot or accepted them. Thus the Visigothic state in Gaul was a fact of life to late-fifth century Romans and there seems to have been little pressure to eliminate it, though it was recognised as once being ruled by the Romans. Visigothia gradually came to be administered by a non-imperial Roman ruler, though the Romans would never have conceded their own right to intervene there. When this intervention occurred, it was only after Gothic hostility, never on Roman initiative.

The Visigothic settlement was negotiated by the Romans. However, not all territory was surrendered without a struggle and attempts were made to regain those areas which were captured rather than ceded. Thus relations with the Suevi in Spain and the Vandals in Africa swung between peace and Roman attempts at reconquest. Most losses of imperial territory occurred

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<sup>418</sup> Mann, J.C., 'Power, Force and the Frontiers of the Empire', JRS LXIX (1979), 175-183 at 176

in the west. From the point of view of the eastern emperor there was no great change in the boundaries of his part of the empire. Some parts of the Balkans drifted in and out of direct (or indirect) Roman control (or at least influence), but the bulk of the peninsula remained under east Roman control throughout the fifth century. But the east did suffer from the loss of Africa and east Roman troops participated in attempts to recapture it in 431, 441-442, 468 and 533. But regardless of the size of the empire, the Romans would fight to defend what they currently held.<sup>419</sup>

For most of the fourth and fifth centuries the Romans had treaty relations with all barbarian kingdoms on their borders. According to their terms the barbarians would not attack the Romans. These treaties continued to be made with the Visigoths, Burgundians and Vandals once their kingdoms had been established on imperial soil, suggesting that this territory was now no longer considered to be Roman. On the other hand, treaties were not made with the troublesome Isaurians, since Isauria was part of the empire.

Embassies could be exchanged and negotiations take place between Romans and barbarians before any conflict. Peace treaties were made on these occasions. Treaties could also be made by barbarians after a defeat at the hands of the Romans.

Roman diplomatic relations with barbarians were carried out by several different groups of officials. Embassies were usually headed by an official of high status, frequently a patrician. Some barbarians were even concerned to receive high-ranking representatives. Lower-ranking

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<sup>419</sup> eastern intervention, 431, Procopius, BV III.iii.35-36; Theoph. AM 5931; 441, Prosp. 1344; Theoph. AM 5941; 468, below p318; 533, Procopius, BV III.x

representatives might be used to alter the terms of existing treaties or for secret missions.<sup>420</sup>

As well as being made as a result of diplomatic approaches, treaties also resulted from Roman defeats of barbarians. Negotiations might also take place before battle, if the barbarians thought they might lose, perhaps to put themselves in a better bargaining position than they would be if defeated.<sup>421</sup>

Treaties with defeated barbarians involved delegations to the Roman commander in the field. Barbarian delegates were usually regales or optimates. They made a formal submission to the Romans by various methods,

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<sup>420</sup> tribuni, I: Hariobaudes, Stilicho, AM XIX.11.5 (with interpreters)  
duces, I: Urbicius  
comites rei militaris, I: Arinthaesus, Prosper; II: Censorius, Fronto, Mansuetus, Romanus 2, Romulus 2  
magistri militum, I: Arinthaesus, Victor 4; II: Anatolius 10, Aspar, Avitus 5, Dionysius 13 (= Dionysius 8), Iulianus 13 (if =15), Plinta, Sabinianus 4, Theodulus 2  
civil officials, I: Sallustius 5 (PPO), Spectatus 1 (tribunus et notarius); II: Adamantius 2 (patricius), Alexander 12, Avitus 5 (exPPO), Cassiodorus 2 (tribunus et notarius), Dardanus (PPO), Epigenes (QSP), Euplutius (agens in rebus), Florentius 7, Hesychius 10 (tribunus et notarius), Iovius 3 (PPO), Nomus 1 (patricius), Olybrius 6 (exCOS), Promotus 1 (praeses), Rufinus 13 (PPO, exCOS), Senator 4 (exCOS), Severus 8 (patricius), Tatianus 1 (patricius), Telogius (silentiarius), Trygetius 1 (exCRP)  
bishops, Epiphanius of Pavia, Ennodius, V.Epiph. 79-91/85-94; Bleda, Priscus fr.31  
philosophers, I: Eustathius 1; SA Ep. VII.6.10  
others, II: Artemidorus 3, Carpilio 2, Fretimundus, Iustinianus 3, Olympiodorus 1, Opilio 2, Philoxenus 4, Phocas 2, Phylarchus, Priscus 1, Reginus 3, Tatulus  
Mathisen, R.W., 'Patricians as Diplomats in Late Antiquity', BZ LXXIX (1986), 35-49; Helm, R., 'Untersuchungen über den auswärtigen diplomatischen Verkehr des römische Reiches im Zeitalter der Spätantike', Archiv für Urkundenforschung XII (1931-1932), 375-436  
altering terms, Priscus fr.7, 11.1

<sup>421</sup> negotiations before battle, AM XXXI.12.12-14; Procopius, BV III.vi.13-14

the Sarmatians, for example, by throwing down their arms, then picking them up again.<sup>422</sup>

If the Roman commander was the emperor, he usually sat or stood on a raised dais, setting himself apart from the barbarians and from other Romans. Though other Roman commanders could make peace with barbarians, as did Theodosius the Younger in 374, in this case the Sarmatians appeared to have viewed the peace as only temporary and in the following year confirmed their treaty with Valentinian I in person. The emperor was the highest authority in the Roman world and ultimately had to ratify any treaty. Because of this he usually received envoys in person. By the end of the fourth century it seems that if the emperor was not present the magister militum on the spot could act as his representative. Thus Stilicho accepted the submission of the Franks on the Rhine in 395. But envoys could still be sent to the emperor to make peace, and in 469 the Hun Dengizech preferred to send envoys to Leo rather than negotiate with the regional magister militum.<sup>423</sup>

The Romans could take the opportunity at this stage to display their military strength. Inspection at close quarters would confirm barbarian impressions of Roman power and the glory of the empire.<sup>424</sup>

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<sup>422</sup> rank of envoys, AM XXVIII.2.6, XXXI.12.13 (where Gothic envoys were rejected by the Romans as being of insufficient rank); Priscus fr.11.1.14-18, 2.1-20; CT VII.1.9 (369), XII.12.5 (364); traditional practice, AM XIV.10.16, XVII.1.13, 13.7, XXX.5.1; submission, AM XVII.8.3,5, 12.10, 13.7; cf Eunapius fr.37; Themistius, Or. XVI.301

<sup>423</sup> submission to Theodosius, AM XXIX.6.16; to Valentinian, Zos. IV.17.2; head of Roman world, Millar, F.G.B., 'Emperors, Frontiers and Foreign Relations, 31 BC-AD 378', Britannia XIII (1982), 1-23; divinity?, Eunapius fr.12; Zos. III.4.7; Jordanes, Getica 143; LRE 335-337; by emperor, AM XXII.7.10; Eunapius fr.42; AM XXX.6.2-3, XXXI.4.4; Stilicho, Claudian, de IV Cons. Hon. 439-459; Dengizech, Priscus fr.48.1; Malchus fr.2, 20.222-225

<sup>424</sup> impression of Roman strength, AM XVI.3.2, 10.6, XVII.12.9-10,19, 13.3, XVIII.2.17 (though unconvincing, since Macrianus lived opposite Mainz), XXVII.5.3, XXX.3.5, 6.2, XXXI.10.9; Sulpicius fr.7; Zos. IV.34.5;

These treaties of course were not guarantees of peace, merely a means of regulating relations between Romans and barbarians. The treaties were often broken, but since we usually hear of them only when they were made or broken, this may give a distorted picture of how they were regarded by barbarians. When we are informed that treaties were broken, there was almost always a reason, usually Roman military weakness or Roman provocation. In some cases the treaties could be seen, by the barbarians at least, to have been broken by the Romans before the barbarians took hostile action (above p73).

There seems to have been no standard format of treaty relations and each treaty was probably set up to take account of local conditions rather than following a standard pattern, although previous treaties would guide the new arrangements. But similar frontier conditions meant that the treatment of barbarians as described by Cassius Dio in the third century was similar to that shown by Menander in the sixth century, though they still do not allow us to do more than sketch the provisions used in various treaties. These provisions seem to have differed little in negotiations with defeated and undefeated barbarians.<sup>425</sup>

Some treaties were specified to last for a few months or years, but for most we do not know the duration. The frequent conflict following the death of a barbarian king or Roman emperor suggests that they were practically limited to the lifetime of the king and emperor making the

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Jordanes, Getica 143; Mauricius, Strat. I.2.3; cf Campbell, J.B., The Emperor and the Roman Army (Oxford, 1984), 135-6; dais, Zos. III.4.6; Lib. Or. XVIII.108; imperial tent, Zos. II.48.5

<sup>425</sup> earlier and later treaties, Dio, e.g. LXXII.11-12, 13, 15, 16, 18-21, LXXIII.2, 3; Menander, e.g. fr.5.2,4, 12.5,6

treaty. Once either of these parties had died they usually became void.<sup>426</sup>

Western Roman relations with the Vandals in Africa show this relationship between imperial death and conflict clearly. After Valentinian III had made peace in 442 there were no more attacks by the Vandals until his death in 455. But after this the Vandals began raiding and continued to do so until Majorian launched his expedition against them in 459. Peace brought about by this expedition continued until Majorian's death in 461 when raiding started again, since Severus did not make a treaty. These hostilities continued until 468 when the Vandals again made peace in the aftermath of the Roman attack. However, Anthemius' death brought about further raiding, until 476/477 when Odovacer made peace with Gaiseric or Huneric. This peace was broken only when Odovacer was blockaded in Ravenna in 491. Soon after Gaiseric's death, Huneric sent envoys to Constantinople to renew peace.<sup>427</sup>

This conflict may have reflected a formal ending of treaties, barbarians taking advantage of Roman administrative disruption, trying to improve their position or a new barbarian leader trying to confirm his position. Whatever the cause, trouble on the borders could be expected at the death of any ruler, Roman or barbarian.<sup>428</sup>

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<sup>426</sup> Romans and Sassanids informed each other of accessions, but not barbarians, though possible later exceptions were the Vandals, Priscus fr.52; renewed on accession of new emperor, Pan.Lat. XI(3).7.3; ten months, AM XVII.1.12

<sup>427</sup> Vandal treaties, 435, Prosp. 1321; 442, Prosp. 1347; 460, Priscus fr.36.2; Hyd.209; 468, Theoph. AM 5963; Huneric, Malchus fr.17; Victor Vitensis I.19; conflict, pre-442, Hyd.86,120; 455-459, J.Ant. fr.201.6; Priscus fr.31.1; Hyd.177; 461-468, Priscus fr.38.1-2, 39, 41.1-2, 52; 472-476/477, Theoph. AM 5964; 491-?, Malchus fr.5; Cass. Chron. 1327

<sup>428</sup> expectations of trouble, Lib. Or. XVII.30, XVIII.290; Jordanes, Getica 164

After any formal submission there followed a period of negotiations, culminating in a treaty. The negotiations seem to have always reached a peaceful conclusion. It should be remembered that negotiations following submission were different from the diplomatic agreements (above p253). Though the Romans were imposing peace, the terms could not be too harsh lest they produce further conflict. Standard terms were a cessation of hostilities and a return of Roman prisoners-of-war.<sup>429</sup> In addition to these conditions, the Romans could impose other terms on the vanquished. In some situations, usually only after a submission, provision of grain or other resources, including troops, could be required from the barbarians.<sup>430</sup> Access to Roman territory might be limited. If the Romans distrusted the king of a canton, he could be replaced.<sup>431</sup>

On some occasions, cantons were accepted as clientes by the Romans. Such agreements often involved the provision of troops by the barbarians for Roman use. The canton, or at least its king, became actively allied to the Romans, cooperating with them, as opposed to remaining passive. The term cliens was probably an expression of a closer relationship for a limited time, not a formal status.<sup>432</sup>

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<sup>429</sup> return of Roman prisoners, AM XVII.10.4,7-8, 12.11,16,20, XVIII.2.19; Zos. III.4.4-7; Eunapius fr.19; Lib. Or. XVIII.78, 89; cf Malchus fr.5

<sup>430</sup> supply of grain, AM XVII.1.13, 10.4,9; Jul. Ep. ad Ath. 280C; provision of other supplies, AM XVII.10.9 (carts and timber), XVIII.2.6; Lib. Or. XVIII.78 (timber and iron); recruits, above p185

<sup>431</sup> forbidding access to Roman territory, Zos. IV.11.4; cf Dio LXXII.15,19, LXXIII.2,3; giving king to people, Priscus fr.20,3; Claudian, in Eutropium I.381; Lib. Or. LIX.1332; cf Procopius, BV III.xxv.4-8; Aurelius Victor, Caes. XLII.21

<sup>432</sup> clientes, Braund, D., Rome and the Friendly King (London, 1984), 23+n and 'Client Kings', The Administration of the Roman Empire, ed. D. Braund, (Exeter, 1988), 69-96; AM XXX.3.6

In some cases barbarian kings were given Roman offices as part of a treaty. These all seem to have been honorary and there is no record of these men fulfilling the duties of Roman holders of the offices. But the offices could be exploited and Alaric used his authority (as a pretext?) to issue his men with arms from the fabricae of Illyricum in 398.<sup>433</sup>

After the negotiations had been completed, the barbarians swore to the terms according to their own customs. We do not know if the terms of the treaties were written down, though it seems probable that the Romans, at least, had copies. Vodomarius had a scribe in 360, as did Attila in the late 440s, so agreements might have been recorded in writing on the barbarian side, though scribes are not recorded as attending negotiations. But in a generally illiterate society oral agreements were probably considered binding.

From the fifth century there are three surviving seal rings used by barbarian kings, the Frankish Childeric, the Visigothic Alaric (I or II) and the Ostrogothic Theoderic the Great. These could have been used for ratifying treaties with the Romans.<sup>434</sup>

As a further guarantee of the treaties the Romans could take hostages, usually of royal or noble stock. In some cases a considerable amount of 'Roman' influence could rub off onto these hostages. One Alamannic king, Mederichus, even renamed his son after Serapis, an Egyptian

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<sup>433</sup> barbarian office-holders, I: Hariulfus ?, Mallobaudes; II: Alaric 1, Attila, Gundobaudus 1, Theoderic the Amal 7

<sup>434</sup> swearing of oaths, AM XVII.1.13, 10.7,9, 12.21, XX.1.1, XXX.3.5; Eunapius fr.55; Zos. IV.56.2; Roman records in sixth century, Menander fr.11; barbarian scribes, AM XXI.4.6; Priscus fr.11.2.320-321, 14.3-8; use of letters by barbarians, AM XXI.3.5, XXVII.5.1, XXVIII.5.10, XXXI.12.8-9, 15.5; disagreements over terms, AM XXI.3.5, 4.6, XXX.6.2; Lib. Or. XII.78; seal rings, Schramm, P.E., Herrschaftszeichen und Staatssymbolik vol I, (Stuttgart, 1954), 213-237

mystery god, as a result of his time as an exile. The fate of a hostage if the treaty was broken is unknown, though on one occasion their execution can be inferred. Hostages continued to be part of treaties throughout the period, with the son of Genseric, Huneric, living in Rome in the 440s and barbarian royalty, e.g. Theoderic the Amal, were a common sight in Constantinople until the sixth century.<sup>435</sup>

On occasion the Romans exchanged hostages with the Huns and Goths. This suggests that Roman military dominance of the situation was not absolute and that substantial concessions sometimes had to be made to obtain peace. However, it was rarely high office-holders who were hostages. The examples we know of come from the early-fifth century and were the son of a magister militum and a Gallic noble. No member of the imperial household was ever involved, though Odovacer did give his son Thela as a hostage to Theoderic. It seems unlikely that the presence of hostages would have affected imperial policy.<sup>436</sup>

These treaties were intended to stop attacks on the empire, not to keep barbarians out of the empire. Individuals could come and go freely and many did so. Trade, despite legal restrictions to certain items or areas, occurred on a large scale. Availability of goods had a direct correlation with distance from the frontier. In addition, the range of goods was always

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<sup>435</sup> hostages, AM XVII.10.8, 12.11,13,15,16,21, 18.6,19, XXVII.5.10, XXVIII.2.6-8; Zos. II.42.1, III.7.7; Eunapius fr.12, 13; Jul. Ep. ad Ath. 280BC; Symm. Or. II.28; Paulinus of Pella, Eucharisticus 379-380; SA Carm. V.571-573; Malchus fr. 18.1, 18.3.14-15, 20.137-157; I: Serapio; II: Dagistheus, Huneric, Petrus 13, Soas, Theoderic 7; conversion, AM XVI.12.25; Thompson, E.A., 'Christianity and the Northern Barbarians', Nottingham Medieval Studies I (1957), 3-21 at 2; execution?, AM XXVIII.2.6-8

<sup>436</sup> II: Aetius 7, Carpilio 2, Thela, Theodorus 12

smaller and costs probably higher in the barbaricum than in the empire.<sup>437</sup>

These treaties regulated relations and reduced the likelihood of conflict. Furthermore, the army by its presence alone could often produce peace; force did not have to be used. Though there is no evidence that the Romans had a policy or concept of 'deterrence', the effect was produced while an army was present on the frontier. If the normal presence in a region was reduced, it could cause raids; barbarians were kept at bay only by fear of immediate retribution.<sup>438</sup>

Once peace had been made the Romans usually left the barbarians alone. However, the Romans tried to keep themselves as well-informed as possible of events in the barbaricum. They did this by having spies beyond the borders, listening to rumours and having regular contact with barbarian leaders (below p337).

The situation was similar on the Northwest frontier of British India. The British preference was to avoid use of force if possible.

Signed agreements were negotiated with every tribe up and down the Frontier... A typical agreement would contain a number of clauses, one general clause declaring friendship and goodwill, followed by a statement of the services requested of the tribe such as the security of the border, control of raiders, protection of communications (if any)... and one guaranteeing an annual allowance on good behaviour.<sup>439</sup>

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<sup>437</sup> trade privileges held by barbarians, Petrus Patricius fr.14; Them. Or. X.135CD; cf Dio LXXII.11.3, 15, 19.2; Thompson, E.A., The Visigoths in the Time of Ulfila (Oxford, 1966), 14-; trade restrictions, Digest XXXIX.4.11, XLVIII.4.1-4; CJ IV.41.1, XII.1.4 (45).1; CT VII.16.3 (420); trade in general, Barbarians and Romans in Northwest Europe, BAR S471, ed. J.C Barrett et al., (Oxford, 1989) and review by Freeman, P.W., SAR VII (1990) forthcoming; Cunliffe, B., Greeks, Romans and Barbarians (London, 1988) and review by Collis, J., Antiquity LXII (1988), 805

<sup>438</sup> retaliation, Burns, T.S., 'The Germans and Roman Frontier Policy, ca AD 350-378', Arheološki Vestnik XXX (1981), 390-404; concept of deterrence, Lib. Or. XVIII.81; Luttwak, E.N., Grand Strategy of the Roman Empire (London, 1976), 195-200

<sup>439</sup> Caroe, O., The Pathans (London, 1962), 349

Barbarian military action against the empire consisted of raiding, attempts to gain territory or self-defence (above p70). The same Roman countermeasures were applied to both raids and invasions. If the Romans were able to take direct military action against the raiding groups they would do this. However, a spate of raiding might provoke major Roman retaliation to deter any barbarians encouraged by the success of other raids. This retaliation would take the form of crossing the border and inflicting massive economic damage on those responsible.

Direct military action was the most frequently used defence against barbarian enemies (below p279). This action could be carried out directly by the Roman army or with the help of allies.

Allies could act in support of a Roman field army, as with the Burgundians in 370, the Taifali in 358 or the Visigoths and Franks against the Huns in 451 or Theoderic son of Valamir against Theoderic Triarius in 478.<sup>440</sup>

Allied groups could also act alone, as with the Alan attack on the Vandals in 406 or the Visigothic actions against the Vandals and Alans in 416-418 and the Suevi in 456.<sup>441</sup>

Using allies in place of or supplementary to Roman troops was an effective use of power by the Roman empire, achieving results without expending their own resources. But this could lead to problems if the Roman state was not strong enough to control the barbarians. The extension of Visigothic influence, and then the Visigothic kingdom, into Spain shows the dangers of this policy.

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<sup>440</sup> allies and Roman army, Burgundians, AM XXVIII.5.9-10; Taifali, AM XVII.13.19-20; Visigoths 422, Hyd.77; 446, Hyd.134; 451, Hyd.150; Franks, Add. ad Prosp. Haun. sa 451; Ostrogoths, Malchus fr.18.2,3

<sup>441</sup> use alone, Alans, RPF fr.2; Visigoths 416-418, Philost. XII.4; Hyd.60,63,67,68; 456, Hyd.173-175; Huns vs Sciri, Soz. IX.5

The allied groups were hired for a single campaign and once it was over they would be dismissed. Until the mid-fifth century, large allied contingents were used irregularly in conjunction with Roman forces when fighting barbarians. It was only after this that barbarian forces became a large, permanent, proportion of the western army, and they never seem to have done so in the east. The decision to use allied contingents was not always a free one. When there were (unsettled) barbarian groups within the empire they had to be employed to stop them taking advantage of diversion of Roman military resources.<sup>442</sup>

Diplomacy or force was used where it was possible to negotiate with a single leader or where a single enemy could be destroyed. But groups such as the Scotti, Franks and Saxons had no overall leader with whom to negotiate and were too far away (and insufficiently Romanised) to be easily conquered. Destroying such a threat militarily was almost impossible within reasonable constraints of money and manpower. Different approaches were therefore required against such enemies.

One such was subsidization, used for example in the 440s in the east to control the Huns since an offensive would be unlikely to destroy the threat and it would be even more expensive to attempt to keep the Huns out by force.

These subsidies or gifts seem usually to have been of money. Although it is often suggested that they were a weakness specific to the late Roman empire, they had existed in varying forms since the first century BC. Buying peace could be considerably cheaper in social and financial terms

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<sup>442</sup> organisation and pay, above p143; use in usurpations, below p322

than paying the additional costs of an offensive campaign. It may also have allowed troops from the area to operate elsewhere.<sup>443</sup>

We do not know how regularly these subsidies were paid, though the payments to the Huns in the 440s and the Goths in the 470s from the eastern empire were annual. They may have been handed over at the same time as the regular(?) confirmations of the treaties, though one-off payments at the time of making the treaties might have been common. On occasion, payments might be made for specific reasons, i.e. in 479 when Theoderic Triarius was bribed not to attack Constantinople.<sup>444</sup>

Nor do we know how big these payments were. We have figures for some of the payments in the fifth century, but few for the fourth. The only fourth-century payment known was of 2,000 lb of silver (= 111 lb of gold); the time period it covered is unknown. In the fifth century, at the apparent peak of subsidization in the 440s, the Eastern empire paid 2,100 lbs of gold annually to the Huns from 441 to 449. Other known sums are less, suggesting that fourth-century payments were also smaller.<sup>445</sup>

The subsidies consisted of ingots, coins and possibly plate. Silver ingots in small numbers have been found beyond the boundaries of the empire, for example in Ireland and near Hannover and were probably from subsidies. More common are coin hoards containing large numbers of coins

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<sup>443</sup> Gordon, C.D., 'Subsidies in Roman Imperial Defence', Phoenix III (1949), 60-69; Braund, D., 'Ideology, Subsidies and Trade', Barbarians and Romans in North-West Europe, BAR S471, ed. J.C. Barrett et al. (Oxford, 1989), 14-26; Thompson, E.A., The Early Germans (Oxford, 1965), 93-102; gifts, AM XVII.8.3, 10.8; Eunapius fr.48.2; Zos. IV.56.1; Malchus fr.1; Procopius, BP II.x.23; Hendy, M., The Byzantine Economy (Cambridge, 1985), 257-263

<sup>444</sup> annual payments, AM XXVI.5.7; Theoph. AM 5942; Priscus fr.2, 9.3, 37; Malchus fr.2; Jordanes, Getica 270; sixth century, Menander fr.2; occasional, Malchus fr.22

<sup>445</sup> fourth-century payments, Jul. Ep. ad Ath. 280A; silver-gold ratio 4 solidi per pound silver, (5 post 397), LRE 439

either struck from the same dies or else die-linked. Gold collars are known to have been given to at least one group of Goths.<sup>446</sup>

Payments were probably made to the barbarian king, making his position (to some extent) dependent on the continued supply of Roman money. This could allow the Romans to try to control barbarian hostility.

The effectiveness of subsidisation is hard to assess and depends very much on the criteria used. At one extreme, any payment by the Romans can be viewed as a weakness, at the other, any means used to avoid war should be counted a success. Provided the payments were not extracted from the Romans and the Romans were strong enough to enforce their wishes by force, then subsidies would be successful, avoiding conflict. Only when barbarians could extort money, as Attila did in the 440s, could the policy be considered dangerous. Even here it seems to be more personal weakness of Theodosius and commitments in Africa, Sicily and the East that brought about the high payments. On Marcian's accession the payments were stopped and Attila was unable to force their resumption.<sup>447</sup>

This pragmatic viewpoint does differ from that of many contemporaries, but the context in which they wrote must be considered. Payments to barbarians, whatever the result or reason, made good propaganda.<sup>448</sup>

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<sup>446</sup> hack-silver, Curle, A.O., The Treasure of Traprain (Glasgow, 1923), 31-; Painter, K.S., 'A Late Roman silver ingot from Kent', Antiquaries Journal LII (1972), 84-92 includes a catalogue of silver ingots; collars, Zos. IV.40.8

<sup>447</sup> Attila, Hohlfelder, R.L., 'Marcian's Gamble: A Reassessment of Eastern Imperial Policy towards Attila, AD 450-453', American Journal of Ancient History IX.1 (1984), 54-69

<sup>448</sup> uselessness, Procopius, HA XI.5-9, XIX.13-16

Pressure could also be brought to bear on barbarians by cutting them off from their food supplies. This occurred in 415-416 with Constantius' blockade of the Visigoths in Gaul. Similar economic pressure could be exerted by stopping trading with barbarians, as occurred during Valens' war of 367-369 against the Goths. However, no barbarian society seems to have been dependent on trade with the Romans and in this case Roman military action, not the cessation of trade, seems to have had most effect. Economic pressure seems calculated to force barbarians to negotiate rather than to bring about peace in itself. In any case it would be unlikely to do that since barbarians would probably be driven to fight or surrender rather than die of starvation.<sup>449</sup>

As far as is known, the Roman empire made no attempt to use Christianity as a means of influencing or controlling barbarian groups. Though individual barbarians became Christians (some of them being especially fervent), there appears to have been no conflict or peace motivated by (as opposed to justified by) religion.<sup>450</sup>

On some occasions the Romans were able to exploit divisions within barbarian groups to the extent that barbarians would actually fight each other. A good example of this was in 466/467 when a mixed Gothic-Hun raiding party was induced to split into political groups fighting each other. More spectacular was the triumph of Paulinus of Pella in 414 when

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<sup>449</sup> blockades, Visigoths, Marc. Com. sa 414; Olymp. fr.29.1; ceasing trading, AM XXVII.5.7; Thompson, E.A., Romans and Barbarians (Madison, 1982), 13-15 probably overestimates the importance of trade to the Goths

<sup>450</sup> Thompson, E.A., 'Christianity and the Northern Barbarians', Nottingham Medieval Studies I (1957), 3-21 and Romans and Barbarians (Madison, 1982), 240-245; cf Obolensky, D.M., The Byzantine Commonwealth (London, 1971), 99-140 and *passim*

a Goth and Alan force was besieging Bazas. He managed to persuade the Alans to come over to the Romans so that they were besieging the town one day, garrisoning it the next. Unsurprisingly, the Goths lifted the siege. Such actions depended on the Romans being aware of the political situation within barbarian groups and reflect good intelligence work.<sup>451</sup>

A similar practice was the breaking up of confederations or alliances between barbarians groups. This could be pre-emptive in an attempt to stop a group gaining excessive power. An example of this is Theodosius' treatment of the Akatziri in the 440s. Wishing to detach them from the empire of Attila he sent gifts to their kings, but by overlooking (and thus insulting) one in the order of presentation of the gifts, he caused the offended king to call in Attila. Though a failure, this shows Roman attempts to keep barbarian groups divided. Once confederations had been made, the Romans could try to break them up. After the defeat of the Quadi and Sarmatians in 358 Constantius II destroyed the dependence of the Sarmatian Usafer on Araharius, a powerful Quadic leader, by insisting on making a separate peace with each of them. Action against the Frankish confederation led by Marcomir and Sunno was similar in intent.<sup>452</sup>

A final type of Roman action was removing a hostile king. Troublesome kings could be murdered, as happened to Vithicabius in 368 and Gabinius in 373. On occasion this had repercussions, thus Gabinius' murder caused Quadic attacks on the empire. These assassinations did not always succeed,

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<sup>451</sup> exploiting divisions, Priscus fr.49; Paulinus of Pella, Eucharisticus 372-398; RPF fr.2; Soz. IX.5.1-5; Mauricius, Strat. XI.4.30; Anon. PS 6.16-17

<sup>452</sup> breaking-up confederations, Akatziri, Priscus fr.11.2.241-258; AM XVII.12.12,14-15; Claudian, de Cons. Stil. I.239-245

for example the plot against Attila in 449 and the murder of Vithicabius in 369 was not the first attempt. The important point for the Romans was to remove the kings, so they could be driven out by Roman troops, as happened to Macrianus and a Frankish king in the late-fourth century, or kidnapped, e.g. Vodomarius. Their own people could be encouraged to turn against them, as happened to another Frankish king of the same period. Captured kings were exiled, as with Chonodomarius or executed as happened to Radagaisus, rather than being allowed to return home.<sup>453</sup>

Regardless of the method used, the Roman objective was to remove the canton's leader. Where a replacement was imposed by the Romans he would be dependent on them and thus (hopefully) favourably inclined. Just before the Hun invasion of Gaul in 451, Valentinian III adopted a Frankish prince as his son and gave him gifts, trying to prevent the canton becoming allied to Attila. It was probably for use as replacement kings that Theodosius gave asylum to the Hunnic kings Atakam and Mama.<sup>454</sup>

### Conclusion

The Romans had a number of different means of dealing with barbarian threats. Diplomacy was often used to resolve crises and combined with destabilising operations and subsidization kept barbarian threats to a

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<sup>453</sup> kingship, above, p46; murder, Claudian, de Cons. Stil. I.236-245; I: Gabinius, Vithicabius; II: Attila; driven out, I: Macrianus 1; Claudian, de Cons. Stil. I.236-245; cf GT HF II.12; kidnap, I: Fritigern, Macrianus 1, Vodomarius; cf British attempts to capture Mia Rukn in 1878, Warburton, R., Eighteen Years in the Khyber (London, 1900), 58-60; exile, I: Chnodomarius, Vodomarius; execution, II: Radagaisus

<sup>454</sup> replacement king, I: Fraomarius, Zizais; cf AM XXIX.5.35; confirmation of new kings, Priscus fr.20.3; Claudian, in Eutropium I.381; Lib. Or. LIX.1332; cf Procopius, BV III.xxv.4-8; Dio LXXII.13.3, 14.1; Aurelius Victor, Caes. XLII.21; adoption, Priscus fr.20.3; asylum, Priscus fr.2

minimum. However, not all threats could be deterred, negotiated away or bought off and recourse to force was often necessary.

## USURPERS

During the period studied a number of Romans rebelled against the state and many declared themselves emperors. For the purposes of this thesis the reasons for their rebellions are unimportant. Prevention was a political matter not a military one. But once a rebellion had taken place it was a problem which often had a military solution. A distinction has been made between rebels, who refused to accept imperial authority, and usurpers, who claimed it for themselves.<sup>455</sup>

No Roman emperor could admit the right of anyone to call themselves 'Augustus' since this would render his own position liable to challenge. Consequently all usurpers had to be removed, by force if necessary. Family ties or imperial status were no protection. In 360 when the Caesar Julian, cousin of Constantius II, claimed the position of Augustus. Constantius could not tolerate this. Constantius was prepared to forgive Julian only if he reverted to the rank of Caesar, otherwise war was inevitable. But Constantius' treatment of Gallus suggests that his clemency may not have lasted for too long and Julian, if he had any choice, may have been wise to reject the offer.<sup>456</sup>

Once a usurpation had taken place, embassies seeking recognition were almost invariably sent by the usurping power to the established emperor. Embassies could be exchanged between rival courts more than once and

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<sup>455</sup> surprisingly little has been written on the phenomena of usurpation and rebellion; Elbern, S., Usurpationen im spätromischen Reich (Bonn, 1984) provides a good guide to the sources and literature; Wardman, A.E., 'Usurpations and Internal Conflicts in the Fourth Century AD', Historia XXXIII (1984), 220-237

<sup>456</sup> Constantius' offer, AM XX.9.4; treatment of Gallus, AM XIV.11; cf AM XXI.16.10; Jul. Or. II.77C

sometimes a series of embassies would be exchanged before the two factions resorted to violence.<sup>457</sup>

These negotiations were usually carried out by high-ranking civil officials, (praetorian prefects, ex-consuls, or patricii), but sometimes by bishops, rarely by soldiers (perhaps because they were too concerned with military preparations). The Praetorian prefect Philippus was sent by Constantius II to negotiate with Magnentius in 351 while archbishop Ambrose was sent on an embassy to Magnus Maximus in 384/385. On at least two occasions eunuchs were used as ambassadors.<sup>458</sup>

After talking with Constantius II, Vetrano was exiled to Bithynia without fighting taking place. This peaceful suppression of a usurpation is unusual and some sources suggest that he was put up by Constantius to buy time for himself and stop Magnentius capturing Illyricum. Though this is possible, it is hard to see Constantius taking such a risk since he could not guarantee that Vetrano would cooperate once he was Augustus. Why Vetrano retired is unknown.<sup>459</sup>

Rebels seem not to have had such a high priority for suppression and could survive unmolested for some time if they seemed not to be a threat.

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<sup>457</sup> negotiations, Magnentius, Zos. II.46.3-47; Petrus Patricius fr.16; Julian, AM XX.8.2-18; Maximus, Zos. IV.37; Eugenius, Zos. IV.55; J.Ant. fr.187; Constantine III, Zos. V.43; Olymp. fr.13.1

<sup>458</sup> Ambassadors, Bishops, Olymp. fr. 8.1, 10.1; Athanasius, Apologia ad Constantium 9; I: Ambrose

Civil Officials, I: Domnius 3, Eutherius 1 (PSC), Nunechius (PPO), Orfitus 3 ?, Pentadius 2 (Mag. Off.), Philippus 7 (PPO), Rufinus 25 (PPO), Titianus 6 (PUR); II: Iovius 3 (PPO), Iulianus 8 (primicerius notariorum), Potamius (QSP)

Soldiers, I: Marcellinus 9 (MUM), Ursicinus 2 (MUM); II: Artemidorus 2 (bucellarius), Papimus (tribune ?), Valens 1

'Ambassadors', Zos. II.44.2, III.9.3-4; Eunapius fr.58.2; Olymp. fr.13.1; I: Clementius, Domnius 3, Maximus 12, Rufinus 6, Valens 4

Eunuchs, Zos. IV.37.1-2, V.43

<sup>459</sup> Vetrano, Chronicon Paschale sa 350; Philost. III.22

They tended to be local or regional in threat, unlike usurpations which tended to split the empire into two or three parts. Marcellinus ruled in Dalmatia between 461 and 468 without interference and John ignored Bonifatius in Africa until he supported Valentinian in 425. However, Gildo's transfer of allegiance to the east in 398 brought an immediate response from the west.<sup>460</sup>

Once a rebellion or usurpation occurred there were several means of resolving it. A usurper could be recognised as a legitimate emperor. This recognition rarely came. When it did, for example in the agreements made by Theodosius I with Magnus Maximus or by Honorius with Constantine III, acceptance was repudiated as soon as it was safe to do so, or else the treaty was broken to gain an advantage. Maximus broke his treaty with Theodosius in 387 to launch a surprise attack on Valentinian II and Constantine III tried to attack Italy as soon as he could. There thus seems always to have been some chance (or at least the chance was felt to exist) of a usurper being accepted (at least temporarily). The only usurper accepted in this fashion was Julian who succeeded as emperor only as a result of the death of Constantius II.<sup>461</sup>

Another way of winning a civil war was assassination, a technique rarely used. The only case (?) in the period under discussion is that of Silvanus, usurper in 355. He was murdered within a month of his usurping power by loyalist soldiers suborned by a negotiating team sent by Constantius II. Silvanus' seizure of power was forced upon him and it may be that his support was not as consolidated as it would have been if he had launched a usurpation on his own terms. Rebels seem to have suffered more

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<sup>460</sup> rebels, I: Gainas, Gildo; II: Adaric, Anagastes, Bonifatius 3, Illus 1, Marcellinus 6, Marcianus 17, Tribigildus

<sup>461</sup> recognition, Maximus, Zos. IV.37.3; Constantine III, Zos. V.43; Julian, AM XXII.1-2; cf Attalus, Soz. IX.8

from assassinations and Marcellinus was murdered by Ricimer in Sicily in 468. The guard kept on most emperors was probably stronger and more loyal than that of Silvanus and distrusted ambassadors would be kept at a distance.<sup>462</sup>

The difficulty of assassination is also shown by an attempt on the life of one of Zeno's generals in 481.

During the races, as Illus was going up through the Pulpita to the Dekimon, he was struck on the head with a sword by a scholarius named Sporakius, who had been induced to join the plot and was intending to cut him in two. But Illus' spatharius was nearby and he noticed the sword coming down and took the blow on his right hand. The tip of the sword struck Illus on the head and sliced off his right ear. The scholarius was killed on the spot. But Illus was rescued by his own men, picked up and carried home.

Unless one had men on the inside it was probably hard to get close to an assassination target. In almost every case in Roman history where an emperor was murdered or attacked, the attack was carried out by bodyguards or court officials. No one else had sufficiently close access to the emperor.<sup>463</sup>

The difficulty in assassinating an emperor did not stop it being feared. Julian's troops feared his murder in 360 and Julian's own account of Constantius II addressing Vetriciano's army in 350 stresses Constantius' lack of armour on this occasion, suggesting it would usually be worn.<sup>464</sup>

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<sup>462</sup> Silvanus, AM XV.30-31; Marcellinus, Fast. Vind. Prior. sa 468; Cass. Chron. sa 468; Marc. Com. Chron. sa 468; close attention, Frank, R.I., Scholae Palatinae (Rome, 1969), 99-102, 128; AM XXIV.5.6, XXV.3.6, XXVII.5.9, XXX.3.5, XXXI.13.14-16; Philost. VII.15, XI.1; Theoderet, HE V.19

<sup>463</sup> Illus, Malalas 387; cf Malchus fr.6.2

<sup>464</sup> fear, AM XX.4.20-22; Jul. Ep. ad Ath. 285AB; cf AM XXV.3.3-6; lack of escort unusual, Jul. Or. II.77A

While military preparations were being made to deal with a rebel or usurper, other activity could be undertaken. The economic dependence of the city of Rome on African grain meant that it was vital for the emperor controlling Rome also to control Africa. Where this was not the case, as in 360, 410 (and probably in 413 and 425), the holders of Africa were able to put economic pressure on the Italian faction.<sup>465</sup>

This importance of Africa meant that attempts were sometimes made to seize it during east-west civil wars. Expeditions were launched against Africa from the east in 352/353 and 388. When Africa was held by a rival emperor, expeditions were planned in 360 and launched from Italy to recapture it as in 410 and 426. This situation continued until after the death of Valentinian III, after which the loss of control of Africa by the Romans meant that this was no longer a feature of civil wars, but a strategic problem for the Roman empire as a whole (above p253).<sup>466</sup>

Those rebellions or usurpations that were attacked in their early stages generally collapsed quickly, as in the case of Silvanus, Nepotianus and Marcellus. Prevention was better than cure, with the result that emperors treated severely anyone suspected of aiming for the purple. Though this was cruel and resulted in some unnecessary deaths, it stopped many attempts from coming to fruition and probably deterred others through the difficulty of organising a coup in secret.<sup>467</sup>

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<sup>465</sup> economic pressure, 360, AM XXI.7.2-4; Pan.Lat. XI(3).14; 410, Zos. VI.11; defensive measures vs infiltration, CT VII.16.2 (410)

<sup>466</sup> expeditions from east, 352/353, Jul. Or. I.40C, II.74C; 388, P.Lips I.63; west, 360, AM XXI.7.5; 410, Soz. IX.8; Zos. VI.7.5-6, 9.1-3; 426, C.Gall. 452 96; Prosp. 1294; either there were expeditions in 426 and 427 or one of the sources is misdated

<sup>467</sup> preemption, AM XVI.8.8-9, XXVI.6.3-4; I: Africanus 2, Barbatio, Constantine 4 [= Gallus], Gainas, Procopius 4, Rufinus 18, Silvanus 2, Stilicho, Theodorus 13, Timasius, Valentinus 5, Ursicinus 2; II: Aetius 7, Ardabur 1, Patricius 8

Usurpations could finish in other ways. The civil war between Julian and Constantius II was stopped in its initial stages by the natural death of Constantius. After this the sole surviving claimant, Julian, was considered to have won. No other claimant tried to take advantage of Constantius' favourable military position. Similarly, in most other usurpations once the original claimant was killed his faction collapsed. Despite having troops and holding the rank of Caesar in 353, Decentius committed suicide when he heard of the death of his brother Magnentius. In 388 Maximus' supporters in Gaul, though they had custody of the child Caesar Victor and controlled Gaul, Spain, Africa and Britain, did not use him to lead continued opposition.

A few usurpations did produce a second emperor. In Britain in 406 Gratian replaced Marcus and Constantine replaced Gratian, though we know little about the reasons behind the replacements. Another was Procopius' usurpation of 365/366 when Marcellus declared himself emperor after the defeat of Procopius, but fell soon after. Lastly, the usurpation of Jovinus in 411 followed immediately after the suppression of Constantine III (though the chronology is not secure) and was supported by the same group of Gallic nobles.<sup>468</sup>

Once a usurper was dead the usurpation came to an end. Thus Nepotianus and Anthemius' attempts collapsed after their deaths in battle while Decentius and Magnentius' usurpation was over when they had committed suicide. Other deaths occurred by murder, with Silvanus being killed by loyalists, Nepos apparently for revenge.<sup>469</sup>

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<sup>468</sup> I: Marcellus 5; II: Constantine 21, Gratian 3, Iovinus 2, Marcus

<sup>469</sup> killed in battle, I: Nepotianus 5; II: Anthemius 3, Constans 1, Maximus 22; suicide, I: Decentius 3, Magnentius; murdered, I: Constans 1, Silvanus 2; II: Gratianus 3, Heraclianus 3, Marcus 2, Nepos 3

If an emperor was captured after a military defeat it was necessary to remove him. The treatment of defeated rebels was no different. Most defeated emperors were executed. Even the youth of Magnus Maximus' son, the Caesar Victor, did not save him from execution on his capture in 388. Most rebels were also executed. Some were exiled, e.g. Vetricianus in 350, perhaps as a reward for his peaceful submission. The last western emperor, Romulus Augustulus, was simply exiled with a pension, a similar fate. Attalus on his second deposition in 415 had the fingers of his right hand cut off and was exiled. After the failure of his 479 rebellion, Marcian was exiled to Isauria. During the fifth-century several emperors, e.g. Avitus and Glycerius were consecrated as priests or bishops. The rebels Longinus, brother of the emperor Zeno, and Marcian, a rebel in 479, were also consecrated.<sup>470</sup>

The importance of killing the opposition's leader ensured that campaigns continued until one faction's leader was killed or his forces had been destroyed. The uncertain, but often fatal, prospects for the close supporters of the defeated faction also made for long wars, fought to the bitter end. Constantius II defeated Magnentius in three battles over a period of three years. After his third defeat Magnentius still had troops available and apparently willing to fight and the usurpation was ended only by his suicide and that of his Caesar Decentius.<sup>471</sup>

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<sup>470</sup> treatment of usurpers, execution, I: Eugenius 6, Marcellus 5, Maximus 39, Procopius 4, Victor 14; II: Basiliscus 2, Constantine 21, Ioannes 6, Iovinus 2, Leontius 17, Maximus 7, Sebastianus 2; exile, I: Vetricianus 1; II: Basiliscus 2, Maximus 4 (self-imposed), Nepos 3; exile and mutilation, II: Attalus 2; consecration, II: Avitus 5, Basiliscus 1, Glycerius; spared, I: Anon. 223

treatment of rebels, execution, II: Illus 1, Longinus 3, Longinus 4; exile, II: Marcianus 17; consecrated, II: Longinus 6, Marcianus 17

<sup>471</sup> length of war against Magnentius, Zos. II.53-54; AM XIV.1.1

When a usurper was defeated, his high officers often died in battle, e.g. Romulus, Magnentius magister militum, who fell at Mursa. A number of prominent officers died in usurpation battles and it is possible that these battles were bloodier than those against barbarian enemies. Recorded casualties are certainly high (54,000 at Mursa, 10,000+ at Frigidus) but the figures are unreliable and there are no comparable figures for fighting barbarians available.<sup>472</sup>

Some defeated generals committed suicide, such as Andragathias and Arbogast. Other survivors could be dismissed, pardoned, exiled or occasionally executed.<sup>473</sup>

But persecution of a rebelling or usurping faction was rarely carried out beyond its upper ranks, probably because it was counterproductive. Few soldiers below the rank of tribune are known to have been executed (though we would be unlikely to hear of them) and this suggests that the majority of troops and officers could have been excused as 'only following orders'. Defeated regiments might be transferred to another region, with two regiments, named after Decentius and Magnentius, being transferred to the eastern frontier.<sup>474</sup>

In John's usurpation of 423-425, treatment of the defeated faction was unusual. The usurper himself had been defeated, captured and executed

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<sup>472</sup> fierceness, Jul. Or. I.36BC but Or. II.59CD suggests this was exceptional; cf AM XIX.7

<sup>473</sup> execution, CT IX.40.21 (412); I: Asclepiodotus 1, Florentius 4, Lutto, Maudio, Nigrinus 1; II: Allobichus, Iovinus 3; suicide, I: Andragathius 3, Arbogast, ?Merobaudes 2; dismissal, I: ?Gomoarius, Nannienus; pardoned, CT IX.38.11 (410), XV.14.11 (395), 12 (395); Soz. IX.8; I: Agilo; II: Aetius 7, Sigisvultus; exile, I: Gerontius 1; II: Castinus 2

<sup>474</sup> defeated regiments, AM XVIII.9.3, XXI.11.2, 12.19-20, XXIX.5.20-24; ?Malchus fr.9.4 [=Suda A.3968]; nephew of usurper still serving in army, Procopius, BG VI.v.1; persecution of suspected soldiers, AM XIV.5.1-2; amnesty, Jul. Or. I.38B, II.58B

by the eastern army, but the arrival of Aetius with an allied contingent of Huns put the defeated rebels in a strong bargaining position. Despite losing their leader they still had an army. For Valentinian III's faction it was important to follow up the successes against John by ending the rebellion, otherwise further campaigning would be necessary. Pardoning the military supporters of John would be the only way to do this. Any other action would probably have led to further conflict.<sup>475</sup>

### Conclusion

As with barbarian enemies, a Roman government had a number of means of dealing with internal enemies. It was preferable to seek a non-violent solution and this was always attempted. However, the threat to the security of the legitimate emperor meant that most usurpations were dealt with by force sooner or later.

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<sup>475</sup> John's usurpation is curiously understudied, Elbern, S., Usurpationen im Spätromischen Reich (Bonn, 1984), 121-123 says little

## STRATEGY

The types of enemy faced by the Roman state and possible responses have been discussed in the preceding chapter. This section discusses the strategy by which a campaign might be fought once it was decided to use force to deal with an enemy. It is divided into three major sections, attack against barbarians, defence against barbarians and fighting against rebels and usurpers.

### DEFENCE AGAINST BARBARIANS

To preserve the Roman state it was necessary to keep barbarians outside the empire and to expel them if they did break in. Keeping barbarians outside the empire could be achieved in a number of ways. The ideal solution was a defensive system that could defeat all attacks on (or beyond) the borders of the empire. This was desired by most Romans. The result was the stationing of large armies on the Rhine and Danube frontiers in the early imperial period.

Overall, any Roman defensive system faced four major problems. Firstly, the enemies of the empire could not be permanently eliminated. Secondly, at least two major foreign wars per century could be expected on each 'front' (Rhine, Danube, East). Thirdly, wars were at least partly dependent on factors that would not be affected by the Roman defensive system, e.g. the leadership abilities of the barbarian kings, disruption following Roman civil wars and famine causing food shortages in the

barbaricum. Lastly, there was only a limited amount of money and manpower available.<sup>476</sup>

Allowing for these problems, what were the weaknesses of the system followed in the early empire ? Firstly, it was inflexible, since most of the army was deployed on the border, though not necessarily committed to border defence. If serious trouble did occur in one area, it could often be dealt with only by transferring troops from another area. This weakened the second area and rendered it liable to attack. The practice of transferring legionary detachments (vexillationes) rather than whole units was a response to this, though not a very satisfactory one. Secondly, it made the emperor militarily weak, since he only possessed military power when he was with the army. This could only be acceptable if the emperor was unchallenged, but the emperor was never this secure.<sup>477</sup>

In the third century the same defensive system continued, but some troops were now permanently detached from the borders to become field armies operating with the emperor. These were an addition to the (now weaker) border forces, not a replacement. The creation of these praesental armies gave the emperor a force which moved with him and allowed operations to be undertaken in one area without weakening border defences elsewhere. Initially, there was only one field army, then one for each emperor. By the fourth century regional armies had appeared to supplement the praesental forces. Thus in 350 there were three field armies, one in the east, in Illyricum and in Gaul (below p292). By the time of the drawing up of the

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<sup>476</sup> Luttwak, E.N., The Grand Strategy of the Roman Empire (London, 1976) is a convenient summary of the early empire, but see the review by Mann, J.C., 'Power, Force and the Frontiers of the Empire', JRS LXIX (1979), 175-183

<sup>477</sup> army-emperor relations in the early empire, Campbell, J.B., The Emperor and the Roman Army (Oxford, 1984)

Notitia Dignitatum (c.423 in the west) further small field armies had appeared in Spain, Africa, Britain and western Illyricum, while a second eastern field army was created in Thrace to supplement that of Illyricum (below p294).<sup>478</sup>

During the late-fourth century increasing numbers of troops were deployed behind the border, but the same principles of defence still applied. The civilian author of the de Rebus Bellicis, writing c.370, still wanted to keep all barbarians outside the empire

A proper concern for the frontiers which surround the empire on all sides is also to the advantage of the state: an unbroken chain of forts will best assure the protection of these frontiers...so that the peace of the provinces, protected by a belt of vigilance, may rest unharmed in quiet.

Such views were probably common among civilians. Army officers probably had the same ideals, though they may have been more aware that not every incursion could be stopped on or beyond the border.<sup>479</sup>

#### Border Troops

The division of the army into two parts had first occurred in the third century and the army remained divided during the fourth and fifth centuries. Each part had its own role in defending against barbarians.

One of the major problems in discussing the border troops (referred to throughout as limitanei) is the sparsity of evidence. Though limitanei are often recorded in inscriptions and papyri, they are rarely mentioned by historians. This was, at least partly, because Roman historians did not deal with the non-events which were frequently the major concerns of the

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<sup>478</sup> Mann, J.C., 'Power, Force and the Frontiers of the Empire', JRS LXIX (1979), 175-183 at 182

<sup>479</sup> Anon. dRB XX; dating, Cameron, A., 'The date of the Anonymous', De Rebus Bellicis, BAR S63, eds. M.W. Hassall and R.I. Ireland, (Oxford, 1979), 1-10; officers, AM XV.8.7, XXIII.1.7

limitanei. The fifth-century Life of St. Severinus shows a confused and undefended frontier, but barbarians are present on such a small scale that a small force of limitanei would easily have been able to control the area. When Roman forces do occur in Eugippius' narrative, they have no problems in dealing with their enemies. Similarly, Ammianus admits that he has omitted many battles, 'because their results led to nothing worthwhile and because it is not fitting to spin out a history with insignificant details'. Outside detailed sources such as Ammianus' history or Hydatius' chronicle it is unlikely that many of the minor events would be reported.<sup>480</sup>

The limitanei were deployed, for the most part, along the borders of the empire. In continental Europe the Rhine formed the border from the North Sea as far as Lake Constance; from here the border ran across land to the River Iller at Kempten. The Danube formed the border from Kempten to the Black Sea. The Lake Constance-Kempten border had a line of watchtowers along it and the border was probably marked by a road or track between the watchtowers.

Most limitanei units were stationed on the Roman side of the border, but in some cases units were stationed in the barbaricum, sometimes in forts (above p231).<sup>481</sup> Most, if not all, unit headquarters were sited in forts or towns, often by river crossing points (bridges or fords).<sup>482</sup>

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<sup>480</sup> Eugippius, V.Sev. XX.1; AM XXVII.2.11; cf the reported effectiveness of 40 Unnigardae in Synesius, Ep. 78, cf Ep. 104, 122; SA Ep. III.3.3-4

<sup>481</sup> in barbaricum, ND Occ. XXXII.41, XXXIII.44,48,55?; cf LV XV; AM XVII.1.11, XXVIII.2.5, XXIX.6.2

<sup>482</sup> crossing points, Rhine, Zos. I.30.2; AM XXVIII.2.1; Danube, ILS 8913; CIL III.3385; cf Menander fr.15.1; Theophylact, Hist. VIII.2.3-4; CT XV.1.13 (365)

Some of the unit was stationed with its headquarters, the rest was often spread out along the border in various forts and watchtowers.<sup>483</sup>

Limitanei could also be stationed in towns as garrisons, both on the frontier and within the empire, though with outposts similar to forts.<sup>484</sup>

Units of limitanei were grouped together under duces or comites in military commands of one or more provinces. There were two commands in Britain and twelve along the length of the Rhine and Danube, mostly corresponding to provincial boundaries. However, the separation of military and civil administrative structures meant that commands could cover more than one province, producing officers such as the dux Pannoniae Primae et Norici Ripensis. Most commands were held by a dux, though eight were held by comites at the time of drawing up the Notitia, the Saxon shore, Egypt, Isauria, Africa, Tingitania, Britain, Italy and the Tractus Argentoratensis, the last three having no troops assigned in the Notitia. These commands consisted of a number of infantry and cavalry units, as well as some flotillas. The duces were responsible to the magister militum of their region, at least from the time of the Notitia and probably earlier.<sup>485</sup>

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<sup>483</sup> outposting, Mann, J.C., 'The Historical Development of the Saxon Shore', The Saxon Shore, ed. V.A. Maxfield, (Exeter, 1989), 1-11 at 1; the principle is illustrated by a late-first or early-second century papyrus from Thrace, showing a unit based at Stobi with numerous detachments (posted militarily) elsewhere, both in and outside the province. Fink, R.O., Roman Military Records on Papyrus (Cleveland, 1971) #1, 2, 63; early-fourth century, P.Beatty Panop. 2, Ala II Herc. dromedariorum attested in two forts; numbers of forts militarily occupied in the late-fourth century have no attested garrison, so were presumably held by troops detached from nearby units, above p<sup>110</sup>; legions could be divided between several posts, ND index, sv II Adiutrix, II Herculia, II Italica, II Traiana, III Diocletiana, III Italica, V Iovia, V Macedonica, VI Herculia, VII Claudia, X Gemina, XI Claudia, XIII Gemina, XIV Gemina

<sup>484</sup> town garrisons, ND Occ. XLII.6,16,17,19,26-30,32; NVal IX (440); AM XIV.2.5,8, 11.13,15, XXI.11.2; Lib. Or. XVIII.46, XLVI.13-14, XLVII.5; Malchus fr.18.2.18-21, 20.83-86; Candidus fr.1.3-4

<sup>485</sup> Mann, J.C., 'Duces and comites in the Fourth Century', The Saxon Shore, ed. D.E. Johnston, (London, 1977), 11-15; hierarchy, ND Occ. V.125-143; CT VII.17.1 (412); NTh IV (438), XXIV.1-3 (443); CJ XII.59.8 (Leo);

Though limitanei were often based in forts (below p286), these were not necessary for their duties. Thus lack of archaeological evidence for fort occupation cannot be taken to mean that limitanei were not deployed there, only that stone forts were no longer used.

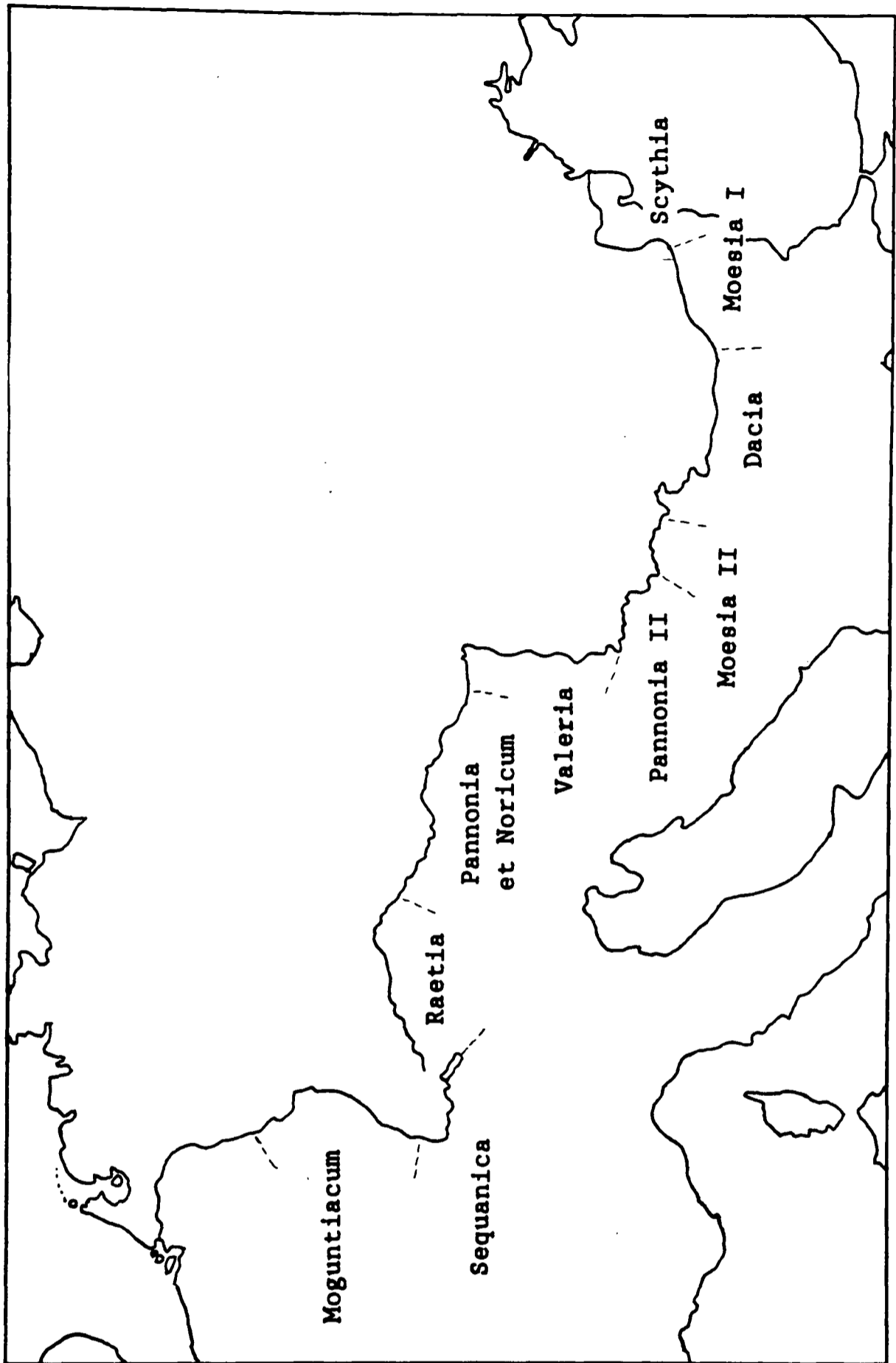


Figure 16: Limitanei Commands according to the Notitia Dignitatum

Units based in towns would

only be likely to leave archaeological traces if they had a fortified headquarters. Positive literary evidence for the lack of limitanei is

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ILS 762, 773-775; Augustine, Ep. 115

necessary to supplement the silence of archaeology regarding fort occupation (above p217).

Britain differed from the continental frontiers in that it had a wall, not a river, as a land border and because the garrison was deployed more deeply than those on the Rhine or Danube borders. There were two reasons for this unusual deployment. Firstly, the coastlines of the North Sea and Irish Sea made the extra depth necessary to guarantee communications with the rest of Britain. Secondly, the border was so short that units required to defend it had to be deployed in depth rather than laterally. This was not planned as defence-in-depth and units would not fight from these stations, but would deploy forward to meet the enemy. These special problems disappeared with the loss of Britain in the early-fifth century. Gaul also had long sea frontiers that were vulnerable to attack. A third area vulnerable to marine attack was the Black Sea coast, though there was no need to concentrate units in depth as in Britain.<sup>486</sup>

Because of the length of these frontiers it was not possible to garrison or even to watch every possible landing point. However, by siting forts on river estuaries an attempt could be made to prevent deep penetration inland by seaborne raiders. Thus in Britain Burgh Castle was sited on the River Waveney and in Gaul the fort at Boulogne lay on the Liane estuary. Like the garrisons of limitanei on the land frontiers, the sites recorded in the Notitia represent only the headquarters of these coastal defence units and units were probably widely dispersed. These units also administered the fleets (above p149 and below p289). Some men probably manned observation posts similar to the chain of stone watchtowers along

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<sup>486</sup> Mann, J.C., 'Power, Force and the Frontiers of the Empire', JRS LXIX (1979), 175-183 at 180; British defences, ND Occ. XL; Dornier, A., 'Was there a Coastal Limes of Western Britain in the Fourth Century?', Roman Frontier Studies, ed. S. Applebaum (Tel Aviv, 1971), 14-20

the Scarborough coast. Most watchtowers were probably made of wood, would have left few traces and are lost to us (above p222).

To deal with these special problems, in Britain and Gaul special coastal commands, the Saxon Shore and tractus Armoricanus respectively, were set up under comites. But as far as is known, the Black Sea coast had no special command, perhaps because there was little danger from this quarter.<sup>487</sup>

From the establishment of the Vandal kingdom in Africa in the 430s those areas with a Mediterranean coastline also faced naval threats. Some of these areas, particularly Italy, received similar defensive measures to Gaul and Britain, though no special command is recorded. However, the magister militum Sigisvultus was responsible for this in 441 and was still in Italy in 448, so may have been carrying out this role.<sup>488</sup>

The border troops had three military functions, policing the border, gathering intelligence and stopping raids. We do not know contemporaries saw their role, though it was perceived as being different from the comitatenses.<sup>489</sup> But a sixth-century description of the function of border fortifications gives us an insight into contemporary views.

[Border] forts are used for several purposes: first, to observe the approach of the enemy; second, to receive deserters from the enemy; third, to hold back any fugitives from our own side. The fourth is to facilitate assembly for raids against outlying enemy territories. These are undertaken not so much for plunder as for finding out what the enemy can do and what plans they are making against us.

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<sup>487</sup> ND Occ. XXVII, XXVIII, XXXVII; Maxfield, V., ed., The Saxon Shore (Exeter, 1989)

<sup>488</sup> Italy, Christie, N. and Rushworth, A., 'Urban Fortification and Defensive Strategy in Fifth and Sixth Century Italy: the Case of Terracina', JRA I (1988), 73-88; command, NVal IX (440)

<sup>489</sup> distinction, P.Abinn 45; Synesius, Ep. 78; CT VII.22.8 (372)

In comparison, Indian Army Scout units on the North-West Frontier of British India were responsible for

garrisoning posts and piqueting roads; repulse and pursuit of raiders; guarding prisoners and treasure; escorting officers; protection of contractors for road-making; reconnaissance; guide work of all sorts; arrest of offenders.<sup>490</sup>

The policing function involved regulating movement of goods and people both in and out of the empire. Export of military equipment and, from 374, of gold from the empire was prohibited. There were also restrictions on allowing barbarians to trade freely within the empire, presumably to control their movements and thus limiting opportunities for infiltration (above p266). This policing function would also extend to apprehending Roman deserters trying to leave the empire and spies attempting to enter it. However, movement into and out of the empire appears generally to have been unrestricted, though markets seem often to have been limited to specific times and places. It was large groupings that were considered dangerous, not individual travellers. This policing was carried out by the limitanei since there was no government organisation equivalent to a modern 'customs and excise' branch. In addition, troops were already employed on the frontier and it made good sense to make use of them rather than create a new body.<sup>491</sup>

A second function was intelligence gathering. Simply by being there the limitanei would have had an awareness of likely approach routes,

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<sup>490</sup> sixth century, Anon. PS 9.3-8; India, Trench, C.C., The Frontier Scouts (London, 1985), 15

<sup>491</sup> patrolling, Anon. dRB XX; Roman deserters, Anon. PS 9; barbarian spies, Anon. PS 9; cf AM XVIII.6.16; free movement, cf AM XXVIII.6.3; limitanei as officials, MacMullen, R., Soldier and Civilian in the Later Roman Empire (Cambridge, Mass., 1963), 57-59; export of gold, CJ IV.41.2 (455/456), 63.2 (374?); weapons, CJ IV.41.2 (455/456) and above p84

military strength of nearby tribes, etc., and by maintaining contact with the barbarians across the border they would have an idea of what was happening. Much of this information was retained at unit level, but some was sent to the local dux or comes. Intelligence could then be sent to the magister militum and emperor if thought necessary. Thus rumours of the approach of the Huns in the 370s came first to frontier officers, then to local duces (below p337).<sup>492</sup>

On marine frontiers gaining information as to enemy intentions was difficult because of the lack of Roman contact with their homelands. It was hard to know when raiders would strike and their mobility and the length of the coastline made it hard to predict where they would land. These problems were mentioned by Sidonius Apollinaris in a letter to a friend serving in the Visigothic navy in the 470s.

[The Saxon] attacks unforeseen and when foreseen he slips away; he dismisses those who bar his way, and he destroys those whom he catches unawares... [Saxons] gladly endure dangers amid billows and jagged rocks, in the hope of achieving a surprise.<sup>493</sup>

The third function of the limitanei was that of stopping raids, though their effectiveness is uncertain. MacMullen has recently remarked that 'they were the rural equivalent of the useless urban troops [=comitatenses]', an extreme point of view. However, evidence for limitanei in combat is minimal and there is insufficient to support the assertion that their fighting quality was low. But when they were incorporated into the field army they fought well (below p298). Besides, it was not their primary function to defeat invaders in open battle. Thus to dismiss them

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<sup>492</sup> Huns, AM XXXI.4.2-4

<sup>493</sup> problems in predicting naval raids, SA Ep. VIII.6.14; NTh IX (440); Claudian, de Cons. Stil. II.253-255; AM XXVIII.2.12; scouting boats, Veg. IV.37

as worthless because they did not stop all barbarian incursions is as valid as dismissing modern customs officials as useless on the grounds that smuggling still occurs.<sup>494</sup>

An idea of what the limitanei could do may be provided by the size of those groups that broke through the borders. In the winter of 357, a group of Franks occupied a deserted fort on the river Meuse. This band was estimated to be between 600 and 1000 strong. In 457, Majorian defeated a band of 900 Alamanni who had crossed the Alps. These examples may suggest that the system prevented, either by deterrence or physical defeat, incursions by smaller numbers of raiders. Though an argument from silence, there are no raids smaller than 400 strong recorded in the fourth or fifth centuries.<sup>495</sup>

If this hypothesis is correct, then barbarians would have to assemble a raiding force of 400 or more, and the time taken to raise it might give the Romans a chance to learn of the raid. Furthermore, the low recorded frequency of such attacks in each region, at least when the system was operational, suggests its efficiency (above p68). But it has to be admitted that such a judgment is very much dependent on our surviving source material and the evidence for the fifth century is very thin.

Defeating seaborne raiders was more difficult. The lack of warning of their approach meant they could often leave an area before limitanei could reach it. A Roman pursuit at sea was less likely to catch raiders than pursuit on land, since the greater area of the sea gave raiders more

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<sup>494</sup> LRE 649-654; small-scale fighting, AM XXII.7.7, XXVII.2.11, XXX.7.6; Lib. Or. XVIII.71 (?); cf Procopius, HA XXIV.12; limitanei quality, LRE 649-54; Eugippius, V.Sev. XX.1; AM XXVII.2.11; MacMullen, R., Corruption and the Decline of Rome (London, 1989), 175-176 insists that the limitanei were ineffective soldier-farmers; cf Van Berchem, D., L'Armeé de Diocletien et la Réforme Constantinienne (Paris, 1952), 100

<sup>495</sup> raid sizes, Meuse, Lib. Or. XVIII.70; AM XVII.2.1; Majorian, SA Carm. V.373-380

places to hide and there were no (or few) locals to question as to their route.

Naval patrolling was carried out, though it was probably of little value in stopping marine raids. Roman naval patrols were carried out on rivers and at sea by small boats, so were presumably short-range affairs. These patrols may have been provided by the units on the coast or river as suggested by the Notitia, rather than by special naval detachments (above p149). Using boats for patrolling would enable large areas of water to be covered quickly and effectively, as well as denying or regulating use of the river by potential enemies. Water transport also enabled the fast movement of troops and supplies over long distances, though usually only downstream.<sup>496</sup>

These three functions, of police work, intelligence and stopping raids, were achieved by being stationed on the border and by patrolling regularly. Merely by being seen along (and across) the border, the limitanei contributed to the security of their frontier, though in a fashion liable to leave few historical traces.

Assessing the value of the limitanei from the limited evidence is difficult, especially as evidence for them diminishes yet further during the fifth century. They continued to exist along the lower Danube at least, as well as in some parts of the west. Eugippius recorded two regiments of limitanei in Raetia and Noricum, at Batavi and Faviani, which were never withdrawn and continued to exist until at least the 450s. In Gaul some limitanei were incorporated into the Gallic comitatenses around the date of the compilation of the western part of the Notitia Dignitatum (c.423),

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<sup>496</sup> scouting boats, Veg. IV.37; patrolling AM XIX.11.8 (unusual ?), XXXI.5.3; transport of troops, Zos. II.46.2, III.10.2-3, IV.10.4; supplies, Zos. IV.10.4; also icebreaking on Meuse, AM XVII.2.3

but we do not know if this transfer was real or administrative or whether the units changed functions and/or stations. In the east, units would have been withdrawn from the Danube after the treaty of 447 with Attila, but were re-established in the 450s. They were also re-established in Africa after its reconquest by Justinian. This suggests that they were seen as valuable by the eastern government (below, p308).<sup>497</sup>

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<sup>497</sup> Faviani, Eugippius, V.Sev. IV.1-4; ND Occ. XXXIV.41; Batavi, Eugippius V.Sev. XX; ND Occ. XXXV.24; re-establishment, Danube, SA Carm. II.199-201; CJ XII.59.8 (Leo); II: Camundus?; Africa, LRE 663; CJ I.27.2 (534)

### Field Army Troops

In 350 the Roman comitatenses were divided into a number of field armies. Firstly, each emperor (Augustus or Caesar) was accompanied by a number of units, both regular regiments and scholae, forming the praesental field army. This always moved with the emperor. Thus the brigade of the Celtae and Petulantes was based in Gaul under Julian, campaigned in Illyricum in 361 and in Persia in 363, before returning to Gaul in 378. When allied contingents were used, they were attached to the praesental army. On campaign, the praesental army often joined the field army of the region where fighting occurred. This accounts for the frequent mentions of scholae in battle accounts.<sup>498</sup>

When fewer emperors campaigned actively during the fifth century, the western praesental army was usually based in Italy, often in the Po valley and came under the command of the magister peditum. The eastern praesental army was based around Constantinople under two magistri militum (below p293). The armies were still used on offensive operations, but the scholae remained with the emperor and thus ceased to fight regularly.

There were also armies assigned to particular regions. In the east there was always a Roman army on the Persian frontier, whether or not there was a war there. In 350 this was commanded by the magister equitum Ursicinus, though the emperor Constantius II was also present. In the west there were two major armies, one in Illyricum (under the magister militum Vetricianus) and one in Gaul (under the emperor Constans). After the death of

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<sup>498</sup> praesental army accompanying emperor, CT VI.36.1 (326); since the emperor and the army were always together the position of at least some of the army can be deduced from the places where laws were issued, Seeck, O., Regesten der Kaiser und Ppste (Stuttgart, 1919); AM XVI.4.1 suggests that some scholae were always present with an emperor; cf P.Abinn 3 mentioning a unit in the comitatus; Celtae and Petulantes, AM XX.4.2, XXI.3.2, XXII.12.6, XXXI.10.4

Constans, Magnentius presumably took the praesental army into Italy, but the army in Gaul remained a separate entity under Decentius and Silvanus later held the post of magister militum there in 354-5. The regional armies of the East, Illyricum and Gaul continued to exist throughout the fourth century. Thus Julian, Valentinian I and Magnus Maximus all left magistri militum to command in Gaul while they campaigned in Illyricum.<sup>499</sup>

Regional field armies seem not to have had a permanent base or fixed headquarters, instead being administered from wherever the army commander was. However, the need to coordinate supply arrangements, whether campaigning or not, with the local Praetorian Prefect (below p332) meant that in Gaul and Illyricum the field armies often wintered in and around the prefecture capitals of Trier and Sirmium. After the transfer of the Gallic capital from Trier to Arles in the early-fifth century the Gallic army was often found in south Gaul, though it still fought in the north. Prior to this it had been based at Rheims, Cologne and Paris. The Thracian army was usually based at Marcianopolis, the Illyrian at Sirmium.<sup>500</sup>

Although the regional and praesental armies were distinct institutions with commanders who had permanent staffs, the constituent

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<sup>499</sup> the date of the creation of regional field armies is disputed. Recently Mann, J.C., 'Duces and Comites in the Fourth Century', The Saxon Shore, CBA 18, ed. D.E. Johnston, (London, 1977), 11-15; Crump, G.A., 'Ammianus and the Late Roman Army', Historia XXII (1973), 91-103; Illyricum, Jul. Or. I.26C; Gaul, AM XV.5.4 (no magister militum is known under Constans in Gaul); army left in Gaul by Julian, AM XXI.11.2; Valentinian, AM XXX.10.1; Maximus, Sulpicius fr.1,2; cf troops (including the Batavi) left in Illyricum by Julian in 363, Zos. III.35.2

<sup>500</sup> Gaul, Arles, AM XIV.10.1; Rheims, AM XVI.2.8, XVII.2.1; Paris, AM XVII.2.4, 8.1, XVIII.1.1, XX.1.1; Cologne, AM XV.5.15; Trier, AM XXX.3.7, 10.1

Italy, Ticinum, Zos V.26.4, 30.4, 31.6, 32; Milan, AM XIV.10.16, XV.4.13; Ravenna, Zos. V.30.1

Illyricum, Sirmium, AM XVII.12.1, XIX.11.1,17, XXI.9.5, 11.2; Zos. III.35.2

Thrace, Marcianopolis, Zos. IV.10.3; AM XXVII.5.5, 6, XXXI.5.5; Constantinople, AM XX.8.1; Malchus fr.15

units were not tied to them and were often transferred (below p297). Nor does it seem likely that there were regulations stating, for example, that there had to be an army in Gaul under a magister equitum. These 'armies' were probably never seen by the Romans as anything more than 'the troops currently in Gaul', which is how they were often described. The posts described in the Notitia Dignitatum are no more specific than magister equitum per Gallias, i.e. the officer commanding the troops in Gaul, not magister equitum exercitus Gallicani, though such distinctions may only be semantic. Titles may not have greatly concerned contemporaries and Silvanus was described as magister militum and magister equitum et peditum in two laws issued in the same place on the same day.<sup>501</sup>

These armies could be adjusted to face new threats. Thus during the fourth century small field armies were created in Africa, Spain, Britain, Western Illyricum, Thrace and Isauria. These armies were commanded by comites rei militaris and seem to have had functions similar to the expeditionary forces led by comites earlier in the century (below p300). Their creation seems to have been a response to particular crises, not merely an attempt to increase flexibility (though this did occur), since all the areas were troubled by barbarian attacks in the late-fourth or early-fifth centuries. The chronology is uncertain, though we know that they were formed before the drawing-up of the Notitia Dignitatum. The Thracian command appears to have existed since the 370s (a reaction to the

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<sup>501</sup> CT VII.1.2 (349), VIII.7.3 (349); though see Jones, A.H.M., 'The Career of Flavius Philippus', Historia IV (1955) 229-233 at 232-233 for dating of these laws; trying to establish the rules behind titles held at various times is difficult, if not impossible; good starting point, Demandt, A., 'Magister Militum', RE Suppl. 12 (1970), 553-788

Goths ?) and the British (response to 367 ?) and African (Firmus' revolt ?) commands were probably formed after the mid-370s.<sup>502</sup>

A further (though also pre-Notitia) development in the west seems to have been the creation of subordinate army commanders for the two major armies of Gaul and Italy, in the form of the comites Argentoratensis and Italiae. At the time of the Notitia they had no directly assigned troops, though the structure of the army lists of the magister peditum and the magister equitum per Gallias suggests that their armies were divided into two groups, one of which could be commanded by these comites. But it is also possible that these officers were frontier duces of enhanced status whose troops had been absorbed into the comitatenses (above p283).<sup>503</sup>

We know little about the size of field armies. The largest force reliably recorded is Julian's expeditionary force against the Persians in 363, drawn from the entire empire at a time when there were no other commitments, and mustering 83,000 men. This seems to represent the eastern field army, both praesental field armies (incorporating troops brought by Julian from Gaul and Constantius II's men), some limitanei and any other troops that Julian felt he could afford to move from their stations. This seems to have been an exceptional effort and other recorded armies were smaller. Thus in 478 Zeno promised to mobilise an army of 30,000 infantry and 8,000 cavalry from Thrace. This is similar to the armies opposing the Alamanni in 357 when Julian had 13,000 men in Gaul and Barbatio led 25-30,000 men in Raetia. But even these forces were large, and armies could

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<sup>502</sup> founded by 413?, CT VI.14.3 (413); Thrace, AM XXXI.4.9; Illyricum by 382?, CT XI.16.15 (382), 18 (390)

<sup>503</sup> Mann, J.C., 'What was the Notitia Dignitatum for?', Aspects of the Notitia Dignitatum, BAR S15, eds. R. Goodburn and P. Bartholomew, (Oxford, 1976), 1-9 at 7; Mann, J.C., 'Power, Force and the Frontiers of the Empire', JRS LXIX (1979), 175-183; CT VI.14.3 (413)

be smaller, perhaps 10-15,000. This is probably the correct order of magnitude for the thirty units Stilicho led against Radagaisus in 406. An expedition sent by Anastasius against the Bulgars in 499 numbered 15,000 and the army sent by Stilicho to Africa under Mascezel numbered only 5,000. The range of sizes recorded appears similar in the fourth and fifth centuries, although there are no late western figures for comparison. However, Ricimer in 470 summoned 6,000 men from Italy who had been assigned for a war against the Vandals, suggesting larger armies could be raised in the late-fifth century west.<sup>504</sup>

The size of these expeditions is often compared with the theoretical size of the whole army calculated from the Notitia. For example, Jones' calculations from the Notitia suggest a total of 113,000 comitatenses in the west, 104,000 in the east. No field army was ever this big. But once these figures are divided into regional armies, only the Gallic army mustered over 30,000 men (using Jones' figures). Armies bigger than this could only be gathered by reinforcing from the praesental field army. These totals are of the same order of magnitude as the above figures.

The same problems with army numbers can be illustrated in the nineteenth century when the Duke of Wellington started the Waterloo campaign in Brussels on 15th June with 94,000 men and fought at Waterloo on the 18th, (after the battle of Quatre Bras), with 68,000. Any divergence between real and establishment strengths or between strength at the

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<sup>504</sup> 363, Zos. III.12.5-13.1; Zeno, Malchus fr.18.2.12-23; Julian 357, AM XVI.11.2, 12.2; Radagaisus, Zos V.26.4; Anastasius, Marc. Com. sa 499; Mascezel, Oros. VII.36.6; cf Marc. Com. sa 514 (60,000 from Thrace) and Victor Tonnensis sa 511 (65,000); Ricimer, J.Ant. fr.207; cf Mauricius, Strat. XII.8.8 envisaging armies over 25,000 strong

beginning of a campaign and at a battle was a constant factor in warfare, not a problem peculiar to the late Roman army.<sup>505</sup>

Field army regiments were not tied to their armies and could be transferred. Thus Constantius II demanded four regiments by name from Julian in 360 and in 409 six regiments were transferred from Dalmatia to Italy. The men themselves could be loath to leave their homelands, as shown by the Gallic troops' response to Constantius II's summons in 360, though they did not need much encouragement to move east in 361. Sometimes the transfers consisted of drafts of men rather than units, though this was probably an unpopular practice. On some occasions, the senior Augustus took advantage of these transfers to appropriate better quality units.<sup>506</sup>

Transfers took place between the forces of eastern and western emperors in the fourth century and even after 395 east-west transfers took place. Thus in 410 six regiments were sent from the east to the west by Theodosius II and in 467 Anthemius led an army to the west. Western units were probably transferred to the eastern army in 431, perhaps only

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<sup>505</sup> field army size, MacMullen, R., 'How big was the Roman Imperial Army?', Klio LXII (1980), 451-460; LRE 682-686; Waterloo, Holmes R., Firing Line (London, 1985), 75-76; there were limits on the size of an army that could be led or supplied effectively, Creveld, M. van, Command in War (London, 1985), 104-105; example of confusion, Liebeschuetz, J.H.W.G., Barbarians and Bishops (Oxford, 1990), 40-42; army sizes according to Jones, LRE 1434, 1449, West, praesental: 28,500, Gaul: 34,000, Illyricum: 13,500, East, praesental I+II: 21,000 each, Thrace: 24,500, Illyricum: 17,500

<sup>506</sup> fourth-century unit transfers, CT I.7.1 (359); AM XX.4.2, XXVI.6.12, XXVII.10.6, XXIX.6.16; fifth century, Malchus fr.18.1; Zos. V.45.1; men, AM XX.4.2, XXXI.11.2; cf Holmes, R., Firing Line (London, 1985), 327-328 for modern reactions to drafts of men rather than units; appropriations, Zos. V.4.2; cf AM XX.4.2, Constantius wanted particular units; possibly some eastern cataphracti, most of whom were stationed originally in the west, but by the date of the Notitia were stationed in the east, ND Or. V.34, VI.36, VIII.29

temporarily, when the eastern general Aspar took control of the African army from Bonifatius.<sup>507</sup>

Lastly, regiments could be transferred from the limitanei into the field armies. The fact that this took place suggests that they were worth having in the comitatenses though there is no evidence for any of the fifth-century transferred units in combat. These transferred regiments ceased to be limitanei and instead became pseudocomitatenses, ranked below comitatenses in precedence. Most of the known transfers occurred in the late-fourth and early-fifth centuries, but we would be unlikely to know of others after this owing to the paucity of source material. There are no recorded difficulties in combining the two types of troops in the same army. The limitanei may not have been as well-trained or proficient as the comitatenses, but they were not markedly inferior to them. An interesting illustration of different capabilities of units is the inability of some Gallic comitatenses, transferred in 359 from Gaul to Amida on the eastern frontier, to cope with siege warfare from the inside. This was presumably a result of their lack of training for this role, rarely required in the west.<sup>508</sup>

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<sup>507</sup> post-395 east-west transfers, 410, Zos. VI.8.2; 467, Hyd.234, 247; Cass. Chron. sa 467; Jordanes, Romana 336; Marc. Com. sa 467; west-east, 431, arrival of Aspar, Procopius, BV III.iii.35; Evagrius, HE II.1; Bonifatius' departure (with troops?) Prosp. 1310 and PLRE; it is just possible that Marcian sent troops to help Valentinian III in 452, Hyd.177, but see Burgess, R.W., 'A New Reading for Hydatius Chronicle 177 and the Defeat of the Huns in Italy', Phoenix XLII (1988), 357-363; Hohlfelder, R.L., 'Marcian's Gamble: A Reassessment of Eastern Imperial Policy towards Attila, AD 450-453', American Journal of Ancient History IX.1 (1984), 54-69

<sup>508</sup> limitanei in field army, Lib. Or. XXIV.38; Zos. IV.30-31; (pseudocomitatenses, LRE 651, 1453-1454, Hoffmann 405-424); Crump, G.A., 'Ammianus and the Late Roman Army', Historia XXII (1973), 91-103; Gauls, AM XIX.5.2, 6; cf Synesius on the Unnigardae, seeing the limitanei as a distinct grade below the comitatenses, Synesius, Ep. 78; LRE 653, 665; Tomlin, R.S.O., 'Meanwhile in North Italy and Cyrenaica', The End of Roman Britain, BAR 71, ed. P.J. Casey, (Oxford, 1979), 253-270; a number of units in the Notitia appear in both field and border commands and were probably transferred from the latter to the former; see Hoffmann under unit names

As well as units, senior officers were transferred between eastern and western sections of the empire. Thus Frigeridus was dux Valeriae in the 370s before serving as comes rei militaris against the Goths in Thrace in 377 and Promotus was comes Africae at some point before 386, by which time he was magister equitum in Thrace. Chariobaudes is attested as dux Mesopotamiae at a date between 383 and 392 and as magister militum per Gallias in 408. While there is nothing to link the two names, it was probably the same man. If they were not the same we would have to assume that there was another officer called Chariobaudes in the higher echelons of the army at the same time, not impossible, but unlikely. A tribune Hariobaudes is recorded for 359, but would probably be too old to be magister militum in 408. Another transferred individual was Sebastianus, who served as comes et dux Aegypti in the 350s. He became attached to the comitatus as comes rei militaris for the Persian campaign of 363, then moved with Valentinian I and fought in Gaul in 368. He was still in the west in 378 when he seems to have lost his post as comes in a court intrigue. He was then requested to return to the east by Valens where he became magister peditum commanding against the Goths, but was killed at the battle of Adrianople in 378.

Transfers between east and west were less common in the fifth century though they still occurred. The units transferred in 410, 431 and 467 would have taken their commanding officers with them. The general Varanes also had a career spanning both east and west. In 395 he was serving in Constantinople. He is next heard of in the west in 408 when he was promoted to magister peditum in the aftermath of Olympius' coup against Stilicho. Soon after this he was replaced and reappeared in Constantinople in 409, again in an official capacity and was appointed as consul, probably in the east, in 410. The only other example known of a fifth-century career

spanning east and west is Onoulf and his case is exceptional. He served as comes rei militaris and then as magister militum in the east before leaving in 479 to serve as magister militum in the west. His departure from the east was probably on personal grounds since his brother was Odoacer, king of Italy from 476.<sup>509</sup>

On some occasions, field armies sent out expeditionary forces, usually to recapture an area but also as reinforcements for attacked areas. These were usually commanded by comites and were the forerunners of the small local armies (above p294). A number of these were sent to Africa, being drawn from areas with currently unused troops, e.g. in 372, 398, 410, 413 and 426/427. Africa always contained a small force of comitatenses but seems not to have justified basing a large field army there. The two expeditions sent to Britain in 360 and 367 were drawn from the Gallic army and sent by an emperor. Such expeditions were always initiated by an emperor (or dominant magister militum). In some cases these expeditions could be commanded by magistri militum, e.g. the forces sent against Procopius from Illyricum and Oriens in 365 or those led by Aspar against the Vandals in 431. This may be a result of the seriousness of the situation, the size of the force or a combination of these (and other) factors.<sup>510</sup>

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<sup>509</sup> I: Cariobaudes [= II: Chariobaudes], Frigeridus, Sebastianus 2; II: Onoulphus, Varanes 1

<sup>510</sup> expeditionary forces, to Africa, from Gaul, AM XXIX.5.4 (373); Illyricum, Zos. IV.16.3; Italy, Claudian, de Bello Gildonico I.415-423 = ND Occ. V.145, 146, 170/211, 179/180/208/217, 183, 171/172; 410, Zos. VI.7.6, 9.2; to Britain, AM XX.1.3 (360), XXVII.8.7 (367); transformation into permanent armies, above p294; Procopius, AM XXVI.8.4, 10.4; Aspar, Procopius, BV III.iii.35-36; Theoph. AM 5931; Evagrius, HE II.1

### Defensive Measures

The comitatenses were the striking forces of the Roman army and conducted most of the fighting against barbarians. Though most of the threats faced were from raiding parties, there were occasions when the Romans faced armies of barbarians, either peoples on the march or armies trying to conquer an area. The military problems in dealing with barbarian armies attacking from beyond the borders of the empire, on the march or settled within the empire, were similar and can be dealt with together. In military terms, these problems differed significantly from those posed by raiders only in scale.

Since not all attacks could be stopped on or beyond the border, measures were necessary to safeguard the population and the resources of an area until the attackers could be dealt with. To this end as many of the population as could sheltered in refuges (above p240), cities, towns (and forts ?) when barbarians were in the area. These refugees often took their portable valuables, food and especially livestock, with them. In an ideal situation, the attackers would be faced with a deserted countryside containing little in the way of easy pickings.<sup>511</sup>

If most of the food supplies were stripped from the countryside, raiders would suffer from food shortages, though this in itself would not force them to withdraw. Sebastianus, commanding troops in Thrace in 378, hoped to delay any Gothic activity until they retreated or starved. But forcing barbarians to withdraw was not a satisfactory means of defence,

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<sup>511</sup> withdrawal of people, Olymp. fr.29.2; Anon. PS 6.6-10; Eunapius fr.42; Zos. I.43.2, 48.1, IV.16.4, V.19.7; AM XVIII.7.3, XXVIII.6.13-14, XXXI.6.6, 8.1; food, AM XXXI.6.6, 8.1; Zos. I.48.1, V.19.7; Veg. IV.7; Eugippius, V.Sev. XXX.2; Malchus fr.20.110,115-120; Procopius, BG V.xiv.17; Mauricius, Strat. X.2.8; livestock, AM XVIII.7.3; Zos. I.48.1, V.19.7; Veg. IV.7; Mauricius, Strat. X.2.8; Procopius, BP II.xiii.18; burning to deny enemy fodder, AM XVIII.7.3-4

rather a hastening of an inevitable process. It also had no or little long-term impact on the ability of the barbarians to attack again.<sup>512</sup>

Barbarians could not be attacked until the regional field army had arrived, something that could take some time. No estimates of the delay can be made, but it was probably weeks or months. The sixth-century Strategikon even suggested that the army should delay its arrival to maximise the effect of the food shortage.<sup>513</sup>

While the population were sheltering in their refuges, the nearest field army should have been marching to relieve them. Without this guarantee of relief walled sites were vulnerable to blockade and, despite the minimal level of barbarian siege technique, would eventually fall. The Ostrogoths under Theoderic the Great took Ravenna after a three-year siege through a combined sea and land blockade. And in the fourth century the city of Cologne was lost to the Franks in 355, again because it was not relieved by a Roman army. If an army arrived while the blockade was in progress the besiegers would usually withdraw to avoid being caught between two enemies, as for example in 351 Magnentius was forced to retreat from Mursa because of Constantius II's advance. Besiegers caught between two forces, perhaps as happened to Radagaisus in 406, could suffer badly (below p307).<sup>514</sup>

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<sup>512</sup> barbarians forced to withdraw, Zos. IV.23.6; cf AM XIV.2.13; starving barbarians, AM XIV.2.13, XVI.5.17, XXXI.11.5; Eugippius, V.Sev. XXX.4; Zos. I.48.1, IV.23.6, V.7.2, 21.2

<sup>513</sup> delaying to fight, Mauricius, Strat. X.2.1-5, XI.3.15-17; Luttwak, E.N., The Grand Strategy of the Roman Empire (London, 1976), 137-144

<sup>514</sup> Ravenna, Anon. Val. 53; Cologne, AM XV.8.19; Mursa, Zos. II.49.3-50.4; others, Malchus fr.2; AM XVI.2.1, 4.2-3; an army could continue a siege at the same time as holding off a relieving army. This was rare and the two most famous examples, Alesia (Caesar, DBG VIII) and Tyre/Acre (Smail, R.C., Crusading Warfare (Cambridge, 1956)) show the massive efforts required; Mauricius, Strat. X.1.1

Once a field army arrived, it was usually faced with a number of dispersed barbarian groups.<sup>515</sup> The Romans had three strategic choices which were to some extent dependent on barbarian actions. They could conduct harassing warfare, ambushing the barbarians and engaging in running fights, they could fight a field battle, though this was only possible if the barbarians united, or they could blockade the enemy. On occasion none of these were necessary as the arrival of the army might induce the barbarians to withdraw.

Where possible, the Romans confined barbarians to certain areas by blocking strategic mountain passes. This limited the area vulnerable to attack and restricted food supplies available to the barbarians. An example of this is the occupation of Succi pass in 378 by Frigeridus, confining the Goths to Thracia.<sup>516</sup>

The preferred strategy for engaging barbarians was harassing warfare. The sixth-century Strategikon recommended that

above all, therefore, in warring against them [Franks, Lombards and western barbarians], one must avoid engaging in pitched battles, especially in the early stages. Instead, make use of well-placed ambushes, sneak attacks and stratagems. Delay things and ruin their operations.

Such a strategy could best be implemented by the Romans dividing into small groups themselves. Although large Roman forces could defeat in detail any enemy groups they met, the larger size of such groups would reduce mobility, thus making it more difficult to catch any particular group of raiders and limiting the number of groups which could be engaged. For the troops themselves the difficulties of engaging the enemy could be frustrating. Despite their tiredness, Julian's men wished to engage the

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<sup>515</sup> dispersed barbarians, AM XVI.2.2,7, 11.3, 12.4, XVII.12.1, XIX.11.1, XXI.3.1, XXVII.1.1, 2.1-2, 8.7,9, XXXI.5.8, 10.21, 11.5; Zos. III.7.4

<sup>516</sup> passes, Succi, AM XXXI.10.21, 12.2; above p219 and below p326

Alamanni at Strasbourg on the grounds that they could now see the enemy in front of them. Assuming Roman operational superiority over the barbarians, dividing into small groups was the most effective use of their resources.<sup>517</sup>

However, dividing one's forces in this fashion required a good deal of initiative from officers below the level of magister militum. The commanders of these small forces had to be able to work on their own, to fight with minimum support services and have an efficient tactical intelligence network (below p349). Such efficient commanders were hard to find, but their spectacular successes confirm the efficiency of this means of fighting.<sup>518</sup>

Their greatest problem was finding the enemy, since they could not be destroyed if they could not be located. When threatened, barbarians often hid in forests, marshes or other difficult terrain where they could evade Roman notice. At times the barbarians seem to have overestimated the value of their concealment and were occasionally caught by surprise, for example the Goths caught by Sebastianus in 378, who were attacked while 'some were drinking, others bathing in the river'.<sup>519</sup>

An example of this type of warfare occurred when Alamannic raiders in 365-366 were engaged by small Roman parties. The frontier comes, Charietto, engaged the attackers with some comitatenses legions but was

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<sup>517</sup> policy, Mauricius, Strat. VIII.2.4,48; AM XVI.2.2, XXVII.8.9, XXXI.7.2; Anon. PS 33

<sup>518</sup> dispersed Roman troops, AM XXVII.8.7, XXXI.11.2-5; Zos. III.7.1-3, IV.23.4-6; Strasbourg, AM XVI.12.13-14; cf SA Ep. III.3.7; unsuccessful commander, AM XXVII.2.1; value of experienced generals, AM XXII.7.7, XXVIII.5.1

<sup>519</sup> difficulty in locating scattered enemy, Zos. III.7.4, IV.48.1-2; AM XVI.12.13-14, XXVII.2.1, XXIX.5.7; Anon. dRB VI.3; barbarians hiding, AM XXVII.2.2-3; Zos. III.7.4, IV.48.1-2; surprised barbarians, Merobaudes, Pan. I, fr.IIB, 18-19; AM XXVII.2.1-3, XXXI.11.4; Zos. III.7.2, IV.23.4, 25.2

defeated and he himself died in battle. The Alamanni dispersed to plunder. The magister peditum Dagalaifus was sent in 366 to deal with them, but had little success in pinning down the dispersed barbarians. He was replaced by the magister equitum Jovinus, who destroyed the attackers in a number of actions. One victory resulted when Jovinus

learnt from a faithful scouting party that a group of plunderers, having laid waste the nearby villas, was resting by a river. Coming closer and hidden in a valley made obscure by the thick growth of trees, he saw some bathing, others colouring their hair red, as was their custom, and others drinking. [3] And taking advantage of a most favourable time he immediately gave the signal by horn and attacked the bandits' camp.

Other running battles followed, many on a small scale, and the Alamanni were defeated before the end of the year without a major battle occurring.<sup>520</sup>

The difficulties of finding and engaging the enemy should not be underestimated. A comparison with Afghanistan in 1921 shows the problems had not been totally eliminated in the twentieth century.

A lashkar [raiding party] of eight hundred to a thousand Suleiman Khel, Wazirs and Kharots spent eleven days in British territory being hunted by three columns of regular troops and militia; they stole hundreds of cattle and camels, looted several villages and got clear away... in a rugged roadless country the three columns with no wireless communication were looking for a needle in a haystack.<sup>521</sup>

The second Roman option was to fight a field battle. This was only possible against concentrated barbarians, though smaller clashes would occur as part of the harassing warfare outlined above. In 378 Gratian met an allied group of Alamanni at Argentaria and defeated them, following up his success with a campaign in Alamannia. Field battles always involved

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<sup>520</sup> AM XXVII.1-2

<sup>521</sup> Trench, C.C., The Frontier Scouts (London, 1985), 79

some element of risk, dramatically illustrated by the Roman defeat at Adrianople. The sixth-century Strategikon recorded 'it is well to hurt the enemy by deceit, by raids or by hunger, and never be enticed into a pitched battle'. But disasters were rare and the Romans won most field battles in this period.<sup>522</sup>

But some Roman defeats in major battles did occur. In 352/353 the Alamanni defeated Decentius and in 357 they defeated Barbatio. At Adrianople Valens was beaten by a Gothic army in 378. The Huns in 442 also managed to defeat the Romans in the Chersonese and in 447 on the Utus. It is unfortunate that we have few details of these battles, though the small number of Roman defeats over such a long period is noteworthy.<sup>523</sup>

There were also a few indecisive battles such as Salices in 377, Pollentia in 402 and the Catalaunian Fields in 451 when the Romans were unable to decisively defeat a barbarian group. The usual Roman response after such a failure was to continue harassing or blockading actions rather than to attempt to fight another field battle.<sup>524</sup>

The third Roman option, blockade, required that the enemy be forced into a position where he could be isolated from supplies. On a small scale this is illustrated by the blockade of a Frankish raiding party in a captured Roman fort in 357-8. Unless it was necessary to achieve a quick decision there was no need for the Romans to attack a blockaded enemy.

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<sup>522</sup> field army victories, Strasbourg, AM XVI.12; 366, AM XXVII.1,2; Constantine III, Zos. VI.3.2; policy of avoiding field battle, Veg. III.26#3; Mauricius, Strat. VIII.2.4, X.2.1; Zos. IV.23.6; AM XXXI.7.2; cf Smail, R.C., Crusading Warfare (Cambridge, 1956), 12-17

<sup>523</sup> 352/353, AM XVI.12.5; 357, AM XVI.11.14; 378, AM XXXI.12-13; 442, Marc. Com. sa 441.3, 442; 447, Marc. Com. sa 447.5; 471, C.Gall. 511.49; possibly also AM XXVII.1 though scale uncertain

<sup>524</sup> indecisive battles, Salices, AM XXXI.7; Pollentia, Claudian, de Bello Gothico 558-647; 451, Prosp. 1364

Without relief the barbarians would be compelled to surrender. The strategy of blockade could also be carried out by penning barbarians in mountainous country where there would be little forage and the difficulties of movement meant that escape was easy to block. This occurred in the Haemus mountains in 377 when the Romans were able to blockade large numbers of hostile Goths successfully for several months. Similarly, in 402 Stilicho was able to blockade Alaric in the Po valley. If barbarians were on the coast, naval blockade could also be used to limit their access to supplies.<sup>525</sup>

Roman operations against Radagaisus in 405-406 illustrate field battles and blockades. Radagaisus, with a large force of Goths, crossed the Alps and entered Italy, plundering as he went. In central Italy he divided his forces into three groups, probably for ease of supply. Some of these troops besieged Florence, almost forcing it to surrender before Stilicho arrived with the praesental field army. Stilicho won a battle outside the town, then drove Radagaisus into the hills and blockaded him. After some time the Goths began to starve. Radagaisus tried to break out, was captured and executed. Leaderless, his men surrendered. It was a great triumph for the Romans and Stilicho justifiably made much of it.<sup>526</sup>

Roman defensive strategies have been illustrated primarily with fourth-century examples. In the fifth century the same system seems to have continued in use, although the evidence is extremely patchy. Malchus

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<sup>525</sup> blockades, Franks, AM XVII.2; Haemus, AM XXXI.7.3, 8.1-9; others, Priscus fr.49; Claudian, de IV Cons. Hon. 478-483; AM XXXI.10.15; Eugippius, V. Sev. XXX.4; Zos. IV.23.6, V.7.2; Claudian, de VI Cons. Hon. 238-48; Hyd.77; J.Ant. fr.190; naval blockade, Orosius VII.43.1; deliberate strategy, Eunapius fr.44.1; Mauricius, Strat. VIII.2.4

<sup>526</sup> Radagaisus, Prosp. 1228; Add. ad Prosp. Haun. sa 405; C.Gall.452.50, 52; Zos. V.26.3-5; Orosius VII.37.4-16; Aug. de Civitate Dei V.23; ILS 798, 799

records that in the Balkans in the 460s Roman citizens took refuge in towns and emerged again once the enemy had been driven off and Priscus' fragments give the same picture. In 466/467 a Roman force was able to blockade a raiding party of Goths and Huns and induce them to turn on each other from lack of food. The operation was only partially successful and some of the raiders fought their way out of the blockade. The principles of this defence were no different from the fourth century. When the evidence is better in the sixth century, nothing seems to have changed. The strategies that were carried out in the fourth century are recommended by Mauricius' Strategikon in the late-sixth century and are shown in use by the narratives of Menander, Agathias, Theophylact and Procopius.<sup>527</sup>

There was nothing fundamentally wrong with the system, provided that the military strength was present. The need was for an effective field army together with a system of fortified bases. Though the border troops were useful, they were not necessary for the system and their gradual decline did not compromise the system's effectiveness. Though they existed in the sixth century, the Strategikon of Mauricius says nothing of them. This may be because the work deals with field forces, i.e. comitatenses.

Once territory was lost and barbarian kingdoms established in Europe, defence lay in the hands of the field army alone. It seems that the limitanei were not reestablished on the new boundaries of Roman authority, i.e. the boundaries of the Roman empire with the Visigoths or the Burgundians. This is an argument from silence, but there are no epigraphic attestations of 'internal' limitanei and almost no mention of any new borders in either the laws or literary sources (above p290). As suggested

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<sup>527</sup> Priscus fr.49

above (p284), the lack of forts is not a conclusive argument that there were no limitanei in a particular area.<sup>528</sup>

The overall effectiveness of the system can be judged by its (apparent) lack of development from 350 to 500 (and beyond). If the system had been defective it would have presumably changed somewhat, but it does not seem to have done so. The system described here continuously placed Roman strengths in intelligence and logistics against barbarian weaknesses in these areas. It also avoided, as far as possible, the risks inherent in direct confrontation, i.e. battle. Its major weakness was that it was a slow system and did not result in the defeat of attacks in a short time. However, such considerations only had military (as opposed to social or political) importance if the defenders were prevented from engaging a second threat by their being involved with a first, a situation that appears rarely to have arisen.

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<sup>528</sup> in Spain a number of limitanei units recorded in the Notitia have the same name as their stations, suggesting that they had been there for some time, ND Occ. XLII.25-32; the arguments of Blazquez, J.M., e.g. 'The Rejection and Assimilation of Roman Culture in Hispania during the Fourth and Fifth Centuries', Classical Folia XXXII (1978), 217-242, that these constituted a limes to defend parts of Spain against the Bagaudae or Suevi can safely be dismissed; SA Ep. IV.17.2 written in 470s to Arbogast comes Trevirorum refers to borders, but seems figurative, i.e. not to a limes

## ATTACK AGAINST BARBARIANS

The Roman army was not confined to defensive activity and, in the fourth century especially, launched campaigns against barbarians beyond the empire. These offensive operations were led by the emperor or a magister militum (below p334). Offensive operations could also occur while following up a defeat of raiders inside the empire.

However, the distinction between attack and defence is a narrow one, and pursuits across the border could easily be defined as part of defensive operations. We do not know how the Romans conceived these situations and it may be that they saw defence as a phase preparatory to counterattack or as a phase in its own right. It would be equally possible to divide Roman operations into planned and unplanned or active and reactive. Here the distinction is made between operations inside and outside the areas currently directly administered by the empire, reflecting differences in the Roman treatment of barbarians in these areas.<sup>529</sup>

### Objectives

The Roman political objective when attacking barbarians was to force them to stop hostilities in the future. This was best achieved by negotiating a treaty. Application of force, whether defeating the barbarians in battle or by destroying their crops or villages, was a means of bringing this about. The threat of victory or destruction could be as effective as the action itself and was sometimes sufficient to force the barbarians to surrender. If defeat or destruction was not sufficient to persuade the king to make peace, he could be removed. The same criteria applied whether the attack was initiated by the Romans or was the follow-up

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<sup>529</sup> the definitions used here are those of Anon. PS 5

to a defeated barbarian raid. Once the enemy had been repulsed they had to be forced into treaty relations (above p253), otherwise they would be more likely to undertake further hostilities. It is important to remember that a negotiated peace was the objective, not simply a defeat of barbarians in battle.

When offensives started, Roman troops entered the barbaricum. If sufficient troops were available, a pincer movement could be launched. This would involve two armies jumping off from separate points and marching through the barbaricum to a common objective. This plan was successfully carried out by Valentinian I in 375 against the Quadi, but a similar operation in 357 was ruined by the Alamanni who defeated the southern arm of the pincer under Barbatio.<sup>530</sup>

It was rare for barbarians to try to resist the Romans by fighting them in a field battle. The only known occasion is Solicinium, when Valentinian defeated a force of Alamanni in 378. At other times the Romans were engaged in running warfare against small groups of barbarians. In either case Roman strategy was similar to fighting barbarians in the Roman empire (above p303-306).<sup>531</sup>

Although the Romans dominated the barbarians militarily by virtue of their supremacy in open battle, the mere presence of a Roman force in tribal territory rarely brought peace. However, there were occasions when the threat of force was enough to secure peace. Thus in 358, the Limigantes

at the first sight of our army, as if struck by a bolt of lightning and expecting the worst, having pleaded for life,

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<sup>530</sup> pincers, AM XVI.11.1-3, XXX.5.13, cf XXVIII.5.8-15; Mauricius, Strat. XI.4.41-45; cf Malchus fr.20.226-248; below p343; Creveld, M. van, Command in War (London, 1985), 24-25

<sup>531</sup> Solicinium, AM XXVII.10; running battles, AM XVI.11.9, XVII.1.4-9, 12.4-5, 13.17-19, XX.10.2, XXVII.5.4,6, XXXI.10.15-17; Sulpicius fr.1,6

promised annual tribute, the pick of their young men and slavery.<sup>532</sup>

In these cross-border offensives it was profitable to use as large a force as possible, as in Valens' campaign against the Tervingi in 367-9. This minimised the risk, however small, of a defeat in a field battle, as well as reducing Roman casualties. It also reinforced barbarian impressions of Roman power (above p65). The Romans made sure that the barbarians knew that the Roman army was an efficient machine. This was an effective use of Roman power, having an effect on both the current campaign and on future actions of the barbarians, though whether assembling large numbers of troops was policy or merely prudence is unknown.<sup>533</sup>

At other times barbarians refused to engage the Romans in battle and took refuge in the highlands or forests (below p314). The Romans would then begin to ravage barbarian territory. Ravaging also occurred after a Roman military victory. It would continue until the barbarians made peace. The Romans systematically burned crops and villages and killed or enslaved any inhabitants they could find. This process was deliberately brutal and demonstrated to the entire people the hopelessness of resistance. Such action inevitably had more impact on farmers than those depending on herds to some extent. At the same time, denial of food could force the enemy to submit.<sup>534</sup>

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<sup>532</sup> submitting to threat of force, AM XIV.10.9, XVII.13.4, XXXI.10.17; lack of food, AM XXVII.5.7; Burns, T.S., 'The Germans and Roman Frontier Policy', Arheološki Vestnik XXXII (1981), 390-404

<sup>533</sup> overkill, AM XVII.12.4, XXVII.5.3; overawing, cf AM XVII.13.5-8 on dangers of provoking trouble; below p315

<sup>534</sup> destroying crops, AM XVII.1.7, 10.6, XVIII.2.19, XXVII.10.7; Lib. Or. XVIII.89; Suda I.437 [= Eunapius fr.27.7]; livestock, AM XVII.1.7, 10.6; houses, Lib. Or. XVIII.69; AM XVII.1.7, 10.7, 13.3, XVIII.2.15, XXVII.10.7, XXX.5.13; Mauricius, Strat. XI.4.41; inhabitants, AM XVI.11.9, XVII.10.6, 13.12, XVIII.2.15, XXX.5.14; Mauricius, Strat. XI.4.45; 'ravaging', Lib. Or. XVIII.76,89; AM XVII.1.4, 12.6, XXIX.4.6, XXX.5.13;

The process was similar to the policy of 'butcher and bolt' employed by the British army in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries. A British officer on the Northwest frontier of British India saw an expedition

to punish the Tori Khel. The troops were burning some villages and Gimson, watching from the hilltops was "very sick to see small villages where I had been hospitably entertained going up in flames... It will be a long time before we are welcome here again".<sup>535</sup>

The brutal Roman methods ensured that serious short-term damage was caused to barbarian agriculture. However, it was virtually impossible to do long-term damage to an agrarian agricultural system in the ancient world. Although crops and seeds could be destroyed, the only means of preventing agriculture in succeeding years was physical occupation of the ground. Furthermore, denial of agricultural cultivation did not mean that other forms of subsistence, e.g. grazing animals and hunting and gathering, could not continue or that food could not be obtained from elsewhere. The result of such devastation was hardship, not genocide. Without long-term occupation, the Romans could not destroy an enemy's economy.

A similar situation was the Spartan burning of Athenian crops in the early years of the Peloponnesian war. Spartan raids occurred in 431, 430, 428, 427 and 425 BC, suggesting that continued attacks were necessary to have a serious effect. According to a recent study by Hanson,

land-locked, isolated small states which were invaded in June when their grain fields could be set on fire were vulnerable and likely to suffer economic strain or even hunger that fall and winter.

Elsewhere, Hanson states that

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cf AM XXVII.5.4,6 where there seem to have been no villages to burn

<sup>535</sup> Trench, C.C., The Frontier Scouts (London, 1985), 155-156

reexamination of the literary, epigraphic and archaeological evidence concerning the state of affairs in Attica during the last quarter of the fifth century BC and the early fourth century BC shows that there was neither permanent damage to crops, nor subsequent agricultural depression.

The systematic nature of Roman devastation can also be overestimated. The frequent mention of buildings in Roman accounts of destruction suggest that devastation was concentrated on the settlements and the areas around them. It probably also concentrated on easily accessible areas. Given the difficult terrain inhabited by some barbarians, some upland farms, e.g. in the Carpathians or the Black Forest, probably never saw a Roman soldier. To the practical problems in finding and reaching crops must be added the difficulty of destruction, since not all crops can be burned all year round (wheat can only be burned in the month before harvesting, before this it is still green), and the danger of dividing one's forces in the face of an undefeated enemy. Other methods of destruction, such as trampling or cutting down crops, required large resources of time and manpower, not always available.<sup>536</sup>

This devastation by itself did not always bring the barbarians to defeat. Sometimes barbarians were determined to resist and avoided contact by moving the whole canton into forests, mountains or marshes. Such determination was unusual and seems to have occurred only when the barbarians were well-led. In such cases barbarians were often forced to submit through an inability to obtain sufficient food, not a destruction of all available food stuffs.<sup>537</sup>

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<sup>536</sup> Athens, Hanson, V.D., Warfare and Agriculture in Classical Greece (Pisa, 1983), 148, 146; grain destruction, ibid. 42-46; houses, Gordon, D.H., 'Fire and Sword', Antiquity XXVII (1953), 144-152

<sup>537</sup> withdrawing to wilderness, AM XVI.11.10, XXVII.5.3-4, XXX.5.13, XXXI.10.12,16; Lib. Or. XVIII.69; Mauricius, Strat. XI.4.38; submission because of starvation, AM XVIII.2.18, XXVII.5.7

For the Romans an effective peace could only be secured by making treaties with the barbarians (above p253), so campaigns were almost always continued until a treaty was made. It seems that, unless there was a formal concession of defeat by their leaders, barbarians did not consider the war over. Thus Gratian's 383 campaign against the Alamanni in Raetia was aborted by Magnus Maximus' usurpation, but was completed in 384 by the magister militum Bauto. If the campaign had not been completed, it seems probable that raiding would have continued.<sup>538</sup>

When cantons on the frontier had been defeated, those deeper within the barbaricum often submitted to the Romans rather than risk being attacked. Thus a number of Quadic cantons came to Constantius II's camp in 358 to avoid fighting the Romans. This was a bonus for the Romans, avoiding the long supply lines and further risks that would be necessary to suppress these peoples.<sup>539</sup>

The whole process of a Roman offensive is well illustrated by Valens' 367-369 campaigns against the Goths. The ostensible cause of the war was the assistance given to the usurper Procopius by the Greuthungi in 365-366. Valens sent his magister militum Victor to find out why they had supported Procopius and then attacked them as punishment. However, a crisis on the lower Danube had been building since Julian's reign and before Procopius' revolt Valens had been making preparations for a Gothic war. From Victor's mission he had probably gained some intelligence as to Gothic leaders,

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<sup>538</sup> 383, Soz. VII.13.1; Aurelius Victor, Epit. 47.6; 384, Ambrose, Ep. 24.8; others, AM XXXI.10.16-17; finishing wars, Herodian I.6.5

<sup>539</sup> submission as response to frontier defeats, AM XVII.12.12,16, XVIII.2.19

intentions and positions, as well as valuable geographical knowledge (below p337).<sup>540</sup>

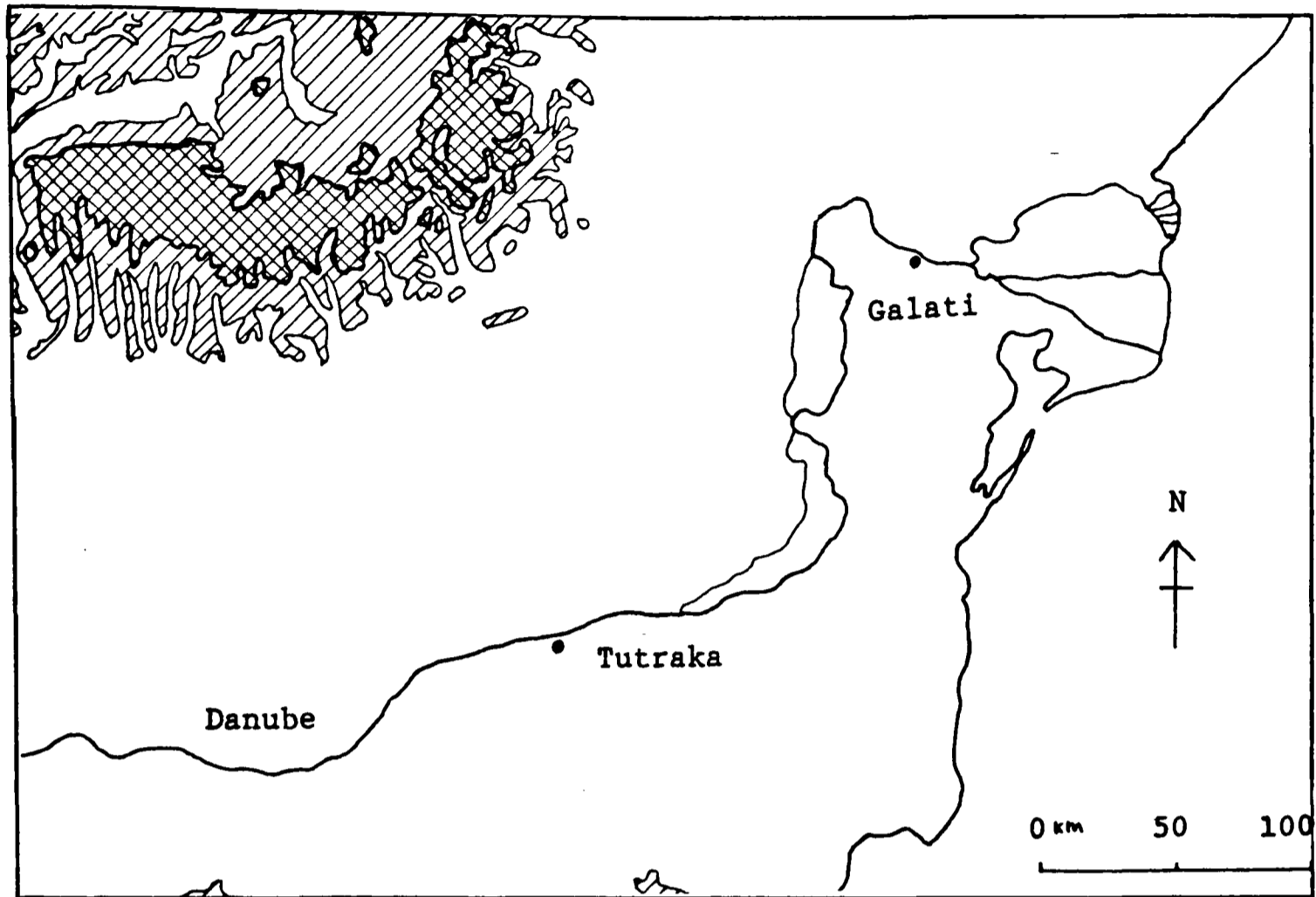


Figure 17: Valens' Gothic Campaigns, AD 367-369 (contours at 500m and 1000m)

After assembling the army, a base camp was created at Tutraka and a pontoon bridge thrown across the Danube. Once the Romans crossed, the Goths began to withdraw into the Serri mountains, trying to avoid contact. The Romans captured some of the Goths before they could reach the hills, but the majority escaped. This was the end of the campaign and Valens recrossed the Danube to winter in Marcianopolis.

The campaign had not been completed so in 368 Valens again tried to cross the Danube, but was prevented by flooding. In 369 he returned to the offensive and this time crossed the Danube at Galati by pontoon bridge.

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<sup>540</sup> crisis, AM XXII.7.7-8, XXVI.6.11, 7.9; Jul. fr.9; Eunapius fr.27.1; preparations, AM XXVI.6.11-12

After some skirmishing, the Goths fled in fear of defeat. Then the Romans again retired to Marcianopolis for the winter.

The Goths, unable to defeat the Romans and short of food, sent envoys to the Romans for peace. Valens met the Gothic king Athanaric in a boat on the Danube. Peace was made, though the terms are unknown, and the Goths gave hostages.

The Roman objective, to force the Greuthungi to submit, had been achieved. Though Athanaric may have increased his own status slightly by meeting Valens on the Danube, such a concession cost the Romans nothing. Valens left for the eastern front in 370 to campaign against the Persians, but there seems to have been no pressing need for this and he could have continued campaigning against the Goths again if he had felt it necessary.

The Romans were only involved in skirmishing since the Goths, though they knew of the Roman attack, thought that they would be unable to defeat them. When Athanaric did try to fight he was forced to flee 'for fear of his life'. The Goths moved to the high ground to evade attack, taking their herds with them. There was presumably little or nothing left for the Romans to plunder or destroy. Though direct Roman action did not bring the Goths to terms, the threat of starvation by being kept away from fields and pastures, combined with the knowledge that the Romans would not go away, forced the Goths to make peace.<sup>541</sup>

Roman offensives continued to take place in the fifth century, though the borders of the empire had changed. Examples are Aetius' campaigns

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<sup>541</sup> AM XXVII.5; Zos. IV.10-11; Eunapius fr. 37; Them. Or. VIII, X; Seeck, O., Regesten der Kaiser und Pöste (Stuttgart, 1919), sa 367-369; Heather, P.J., The Goths and the Balkans, unpublished D.Phil, (Oxford, 1986), 91-93; Wolfram, H., History of the Goths<sup>2</sup> (London, 1988), 67-68

against the Visigoths, the expeditions against the Vandals in 431, 442, 460 and 468 and Odovacer's attack on the Rugi across the Danube in 486. Systematic destruction seems not to have been carried out in campaigns against barbarians inhabiting the empire, even after the establishment of their own kingdoms. However, this mattered less, since kings had to fight or lose their kingdoms. Devastation was only a means to an end, peace, not an end in itself. It was worth the Romans reoccupying these areas, unlike the barbaricum. But when the situation was similar to the fourth century strategy remained the same and systematic destruction was still recommended by the sixth-century Strategikon for dealing with peoples north of the Danube.<sup>542</sup>

As with defensive measures, evidence is weaker in the fifth century, though nothing seems to have changed. Mauricius' advice for dealing with the Slavs and Antes is reminiscent of Ammianus' descriptions of Roman campaigns across the Rhine and Danube.

We can study one Roman offensive from the late-fifth century in some detail. The last large-scale overseas expedition of the fifth century took place in 468 against the Vandals. This expedition involved troops from both east and west.

The first Roman move took place in 467 when Leo sent Phylarchus as an envoy to Gaiseric, threatening war if he did not give up Italy and Sicily. Though the attempt to browbeat Gaiseric failed, Phylarchus brought back news of Gaiseric's military preparations, similar to Victor's report in 367. The Roman expedition sailed from Constantinople in spring 468 and was joined by a large force from the west, sent from both Anthemius and the rebel Marcellinus. All our sources comment on the size of the expedition and the money spent on it and Procopius, drawing on Priscus, suggests an

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<sup>542</sup> Mauricius, Strat. XI.4.41-45

army of 100,000. He may not have been far wrong, although this would be the largest figure recorded for a single Roman force in the fourth and fifth centuries. The eastern contingent was commanded by Basiliscus, the western by Marcellinus. As well as the main expedition, a supplementary force under Marsus and Heracleius took troops from Egypt and began marching overland to Carthage, capturing Tripolis. Meanwhile, the main fleet defeated the Vandals at sea (apparently without difficulty), captured Sardinia and landed at Cap Bon in the province of Africa.

Gaiseric was apparently desperate, since this expedition, unlike those of 442 or 460, had actually landed in Africa. Basiliscus and Gaiseric negotiated for a time, an event which later gave rise to accusations of treachery against Basiliscus. Malchus records him as being slow and easily deceived and he may have been taken in by Gaiseric's offer of a negotiated peace. Gaiseric delayed until the wind blew in the right direction then destroyed some of the Roman fleet with fireships and attacked and scattered the rest. Basiliscus (and most of the expedition presumably) returned home, and Heracleius returned to Egypt.

Further details are unfortunately lacking, but the impression is one of Roman bad luck, compounded, if not created, by Basiliscus' weak leadership. Despite this, the Romans reached their objective and Carthage lay within reach. This stage could never have been reached without good planning, intelligence and logistical organisation.<sup>543</sup>

#### CONCLUSION

It is hard to assess the effectiveness of Roman strategy in this period but several observations can be made. Firstly, strategy seems not

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<sup>543</sup> Priscus fr.52, 53.1; Procopius, BV III.vi.1-2, 5-25; Theoph. AM 5963

to have changed much over the period covered, suggesting it was felt to be adequate for the demands placed on it. Secondly, it was practical and the demands it placed on the army could be achieved. The decision to fight at Adrianople in 378 or to attack Carthage in 468 were not mistakes and the Romans could be considered unlucky to have lost these battles. The system did not demand permanent elimination of barbarians threatening the empire - this was impossible and would have been a waste of resources if attempted, bad strategy. Thirdly, attempts were made to avoid direct confrontation if possible, since it was expensive in lives and risky. Nevertheless, the army was well-prepared to carry out this role and was successful in it. The evidence presented here suggests that Roman strategy was adequate to defend the empire from barbarian threats.

## USURPERS

Roman strategy for fighting civil wars was very different from that for fighting barbarians, in that it was the same for both sides. Political victory was attainable only by removing the enemy leader, usually by victory in battle, though other means were possible (above p270). When a civil war started therefore, campaigns revolved around giving battle under the most favourable circumstances possible.

Three factors made fighting in civil wars different from fighting barbarians. Firstly, as the effectiveness of the Roman army was roughly uniform, the larger army was more likely to win. This accounts for the massive recruitment that took place before campaigning started. Secondly, all the fighting took place within the empire, which gave fleets a role they rarely had when fighting barbarians, at least until the Vandal conquest of Africa. It also meant that sieges were common. Thirdly, since usurpations usually only ended with the death of one of the emperors involved, struggles tended to be long and bloody. Rebellions were not always so bloody. In addition to these major differences, there were a number of smaller differences.

As civil wars occurred between parts of the Roman army, the two sides were equal in combat potential, i.e. no side had a necessary advantage over the other. This differed from the situation when fighting barbarians, when a force of Romans would expect to defeat equal numbers of barbarians. Thus, in the unlikely event that all other factors, including numbers and leadership, were equal, both sides in a civil war battle would have the same chance of victory. Because of this, large armies were important and

all factions in civil wars therefore engaged in recruiting before embarking on campaign. This recruiting took two forms.

Firstly, regiments were brought up to strength as much as possible, with recruits being mostly drawn from within the empire. New units could also be raised, e.g. the regiments named Magnentiaci and Decentiaci raised by Magnentius to fight Constantius II.<sup>544</sup>

Secondly, in almost all usurpations both the legitimate emperor and his rival recruited large contingents of allied barbarians (cf above p262). These were hired 'for the duration' and then dismissed. As experienced warriors they would be more effective than hasty levies of citizens. Magnentius hired Franks and Saxons, Constantius II and Procopius hired forces of Goths. Ambrose recorded Magnus Maximus' boast that 'so many thousands of barbarians fight for me and receive rations (annonae) from me'. In 394 Eugenius' army contained Frankish and Alamannic contingents, while Theodosius again mobilised the Goths he had used against Maximus. Franks and Alamanni were also used by Constantine III and Huns by John in 425. Allied contingents were also used by Avitus in 456 and Olybrius in 472.<sup>545</sup>

Rebels against the empire also hired barbarian groups. In 479 Marcian made an alliance with Theoderic Triarius in his revolt against Zeno.<sup>546</sup>

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<sup>544</sup> recruiting regulars, AM XVIII.9.3 (unless these are renamed units), XXI.6.6; Jul. Or. I.34CD, II.56B; possibly ND Or. VI.62-67, following J.F. Matthews' unpublished suggestion that VI.24-25 are blank as they had not yet been allocated shield patterns; Lib. Or. XVIII.104

<sup>545</sup> recruiting allies, Magnentius, Jul. Or. I.34CD, II.56BD; Silvanus?, Jul. Or. II.98D; Constantius II, Lib. Or. XII.62; AM XX.8.1; Procopius, AM XXVI.10.3; Eunapius fr.37; Magnus Maximus, Ambrose, Ep. 24.4; Theodosius, 388, Pan.Lat. XII(2) 32,33; Zos. IV.39.5; 394, Zos. IV.57-58; Soc. V.25; Soz. VII.24; J.Ant. fr.187; Eugenius, Sulpicius fr.2; Oros. VII.35.11-12; Constantine III, Soz. IX.13-14; Maximus, Olymp. fr.17; John, Philost. XII.14; Jovinus, Olymp. fr.18; Avitus, Auct. Prosp. Haun. sa 456; Olybrius, J.Ant. fr.209.1

<sup>546</sup> rebels using allies, Marcian, J.Ant. fr.211.3

These allied contingents were usually hired to supplement regular troops, but on occasion could replace them. Thus Zeno's invasion of Italy in 489 was carried out exclusively by Theoderic's Ostrogoths. Before this Zeno had planned to use them against Isaurian rebels. This practice also occurred in the west if Agrippinus' gift of Narbo to the Visigothic king Euric to attack the usurper Aegidius was approved by Severus.<sup>547</sup>

With the appearance of independent barbarian groups within the empire after the Gothic settlement of 382 in Thrace, the need to employ these allied groups became twofold. Firstly, their manpower was still needed. Secondly, it was necessary to stop these barbarians taking advantage of Roman activity elsewhere and to stop the enemy hiring the settled barbarians for themselves. Something of the danger is shown when Theodosius I was about to set out against Maximus in 388. 'Word was brought to the emperor that the barbarians mixed up in the Roman units were contemplating treason under promise of great rewards from Maximus.' To minimise these problems, it was necessary to make use of these barbarian groups (above p262).<sup>548</sup>

Several civil wars developed into a confrontation between the eastern and western parts of the empire, with one emperor holding Italy (and sometimes Illyricum) and the land to the west, while another held territory from this region east. The usurpations of Magnentius, Julian, Maximus, Eugenius and John all belong to this category. However, the end of the Theodosian dynasty made further wars of this sort less common since an

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<sup>547</sup> Zeno, J.Ant. fr.214.4; Severus, Euric's attack, Hyd.217; Aegidius as usurper, Fanning, S., 'Emperors and Empires in Fifth-Century Gaul', GAUL

<sup>548</sup> Zos. IV.45.3; cf rumours of Constantius II encouraging the Alamanni against Magnentius, Zos II.53.3; Lib. Or. XVII.33-34 and Julian for Roman fears of barbarian intervention in civil wars, Szidat, J., Historische Kommentar zu Ammianus Marcellinus Buch XX-XXI, Historia Einzelschriften XXXVIII (Wiesbaden, 1981), vol. 2, 88-91

emperor was unlikely to intervene in the other part of the empire if the affected emperor was not a relative. However, eastern intervention in the west did occur after 455, in the form of Anthemius' expedition in 467 and Nepos' in 474. These had peaceful outcomes, even though the latter replaced a ruling emperor, Olybrius.

When this east-west division occurred, the Mediterranean Sea became important as a means of outflanking the enemy. If one faction had control of the sea it could land troops in its enemies' rear areas, capturing weakly defended regions. Thus Constantius II carried out landings in Spain when fighting Magnentius and Italy was assaulted from the sea by Theodosius' troops in 388 and by Ardabur in 425.<sup>549</sup>

Even when the conflict did not develop into an east-west confrontation sea power was of great importance. Since the empire was centred on the Mediterranean, most areas had long coastlines vulnerable to attack. Procopius stormed Cyzicus from the sea in 365 and Heraclian made a crossing from Africa to Italy in 413 after his usurpation. Lastly, both Magnus Maximus and Constantine III crossed by sea from Britain to Gaul after seizing the purple.<sup>550</sup>

Civil wars produced an upsurge in shipbuilding, or at least, utilisation of existing resources. Initially, there were few ships available, so coups like those of Maximus, Constantine III and Heraclian could not be obstructed. But after mobilisation large fleets would be used, for example by Magnus Maximus in the Adriatic in 388 and by Illus off Constantinople in 484 (above p144).

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<sup>549</sup> Constantius II, Zos. II.53.3; Jul. Or. I.40C, II.74C; Magnus Maximus, Zos. IV.45.4, 46.1; Oros. VII.35.3-4; Ambrose, Ep. 40.23; Ardabur, Philost. XII.13-14

<sup>550</sup> Procopius, AM XXVI.8.7-11; Heraclian, Oros. VII.42.12-14; Hyd.56; Magnus and Constantine III, not directly attested, but no other means of crossing; Marcian, J.Ant fr.211.3; Illus, J.Ant. fr.214.2

In the initial stages of a civil war control of information was vital. In 361 Julian was careful to restrict information going to Britain since he did not trust the leader of an expeditionary force currently there and feared he might declare for Constantius II, thus threatening Julian with a war on two fronts. Information could also be restricted to reduce the risk of usurpation, as when Merobaudes was summoned to the comitatus in 375 in the name of the already deceased Valentinian I.<sup>551</sup>

The lack of information could allow deceptions to take place (below p351) or misunderstandings to occur. In 361 Julian's men were let into Sirmium because it was believed that their shouts of 'Augustus' referred to the arrival of Constantius II rather than of his cousin. In 387 Maximus seems to have broken through the Alps by deceiving an ambassador of Valentinian II, though Zosimus' account is unclear. More certain is the capture by treachery of Actus in 350, allowing Magnentius through the Julian Alps.<sup>552</sup>

When two armies came face-to-face, attempts could also be made to suborn troops of the other faction. This occurred outside Paris in 383 when Maximus' army stood opposite that of Gratian for several days, eventually leading to the abandonment of Gratian by most of his troops. Most desertions in usurpations occurred as a result of these negotiations. Other defections were smaller in scale, e.g. that of Silvanus and the schola armaturarum at Mursa in 351.<sup>553</sup>

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<sup>551</sup> limiting information, AM XX.9.9; Merobaudes, AM XXX.10.2; cf Zos. V.27

<sup>552</sup> deception, AM XXI.9.5-7; Zos. IV.42.3-7; Actus, AM XXXI.11.3 (reading of name is unclear but unimportant)

<sup>553</sup> suborning troops, Zos. II.46.3, IV.35.5; Soc. II.32; AM XV.5.33, XXVI.6.12, 7.14-17, 9.4-7; Philost. XII.13-14; Soz. VII.24.4-5; Jul. Or. I.48BC; Orosius VII.35.16

Campaigning within the empire frequently involved cities and made siege warfare important. Hostile or garrisoned cities had to be captured before armies could advance. Thus both before and after field battles sieges were often necessary. The battle of Mursa in 351 was preceded by Magnentius' siege of the city and Constantius' pursuit afterwards was halted by the need to besiege Aquileia. Theodosius faced the same problem with Aquileia in 388 and in 472 Olybrius was forced to besiege Rome to defeat Anthemius. Cities were also important as bases and had prestige value. News that a city had fallen could encourage one faction and unsettle another, making relief of a besieged city more important.<sup>554</sup>

Urban defences also meant that cities could defend themselves if they were opposed to a usurper. This could occur when within 'enemy' territory. Thus Aquileia revolted against Julian in 361 (below p369) and Rome in 351 produced its own usurper, Nepotianus. When faced by invading armies, cities still had the same role. The walls of Mursa were invaluable for Constantius II in slowing down the advance of Magnentius and Salona was an important outpost for John in 424, forcing Aspar's troops to besiege it before they could advance on Italy.<sup>555</sup>

The geography of the empire often determined the location of battles in civil wars. There were three major strategic bottlenecks provided by mountain passes. These were the western (Cottian) Alps (353, 387, 409), the passes through the Julian Alps (352, 388, 394, 425, 493) and Succia, between Serdica and Philippopolis in the Haemus Mountains (361, 366). At times, Acontisma (near modern Kavalla) in Macedonia (365), Thermopylae (447), the

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<sup>554</sup> Mursa, Zos. II.49.3-4, 50; Aquileia, Jul. Or. I.38D-39A; Pan.Lat. XII(2).38-39; Rome, J.Ant. fr.209

<sup>555</sup> Aquileia, AM XXI.11-12; Rome, Zos. II.43.2-4; others, AM XV.6.4

passes through the Haemus from Dacia Ripensis (365) and through the Pyrenees (409) acquired importance.<sup>556</sup>

The war between Constantius II and Magnentius in 350-353 illustrates most of the points discussed above. The usurper Magnentius had recruited troops from within Gaul, as well as hiring Franks and Saxons from beyond the Rhine before marching east. Constantius II collected supplies in Pannonia in late 350 at Naissus. Magnentius in spring 351 crossed the Julian Alps from Italy into Illyricum, capturing by treachery Constantius' general Actus who was defending the passes. Magnentius started moving into Pannonia down the Savus valley. Constantius' army advanced from Sirmium up the Savus, but his advance guard was defeated in an ambush by Magnentius at Atrans and he retreated to Poetovio on the Dravus. Magnentius followed up his success and captured Poetovio, then pursued Constantius south to the Savus and fought his way back across the river. So far the fighting had been inconclusive and only small skirmishes had taken place.

A period of negotiations followed, though without result, and Magnentius then stormed Siscia. He continued to advance down the Savus valley to Sirmium which he attacked but failed to capture. By this point Constantius II's main force had taken up strong positions in field defences at Cibalae, threatening Magnentius' communications down the Savus. Magnentius' failure at Sirmium forced him to retreat to Mursa which he needed to capture to secure his communications along the Dravus or Savus

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<sup>556</sup> passes, W. Alps, Zos. IV.42.6-7, VI.2.5-6; Olymp. fr.15.2; Julian Alps, Zos. IV.46.2, V.29.4; AM XXI.12.21; Succi, AM XXI.10.2-4, 13.16, XXVI.7.12, XXVII.4.5-7, XXXI.10.21; Malchus fr.18.2.14,26 (accepting Valesius' reading of Σουκιν for Σουδιν); Acontisma, AM XXVI.7.12, XXVII.4.8; Thermopylae, Zos. V.5.3-7; Marc. Com. sa 447.4; Dacia, AM XXVI.7.12; Pyrenees, Soz. IX.12; Orosius VII.40.6; cf above p303



Figure 18: Mursa Campaign, AD 351 (contour at 400m)

valley. the city's failure to surrender forced him to besiege it. This finally gave Constantius II an opportunity to attack Magnentius on his terms. Magnentius could either continue besieging Mursa, thereby dividing his forces between two enemies, or he could give up the siege (thereby losing the strategic initiative) and face Constantius with his whole force. He chose to face Constantius on the broad plains of Mursa, terrain advantageous to Constantius because of his large force of cavalry. A further advantage was brought to Constantius by the defection of the schola armaturarum of Magnentius with its commanding officer Silvanus.

The battle was fought and Magnentius defeated, but he was able to retreat to Italy. Constantius was forced to storm the passes across the Julian Alps in 352. In 352 Constantius also began assembling naval forces which were used to land troops in Spain and Africa. Magnentius retreated down the Po valley and took up a position in the Isre valley at Mons Seleucus. He was defeated in battle here and retreated to Gaul where he

committed suicide on learning of the loss of Africa and Spain to Constantius' landings.<sup>557</sup>

#### CONCLUSION

The strategy involved in Roman civil wars seems to have been simpler than that involved in fighting barbarians. Once hostilities started, the objective was to fight a decisive battle as soon as possible, on the most advantageous terms possible.

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<sup>557</sup> the main source, Zosimus, is extremely confusing, and this is only a reconstruction; Zosime, ed. F. Paschoud, vol. I, (Paris, 1971) has a good commentary on the campaign; Baynes, N.H., 'A Note of Interrogation', Byzantion II (1925), 149-151 seems rather negative; Zos. II.45-54; Jul. Or. I,II

## OPERATIONS: THE ROMAN ARMY IN THE FIELD

This section is concerned with the Roman army on campaign, i.e. how it operated in the field. Boundaries between strategic and operational, and between operational and tactical decisions are very flexible and the selection of material that belongs here, as opposed to in the chapter on Strategy, is difficult. Some of the topics discussed, e.g. strategic intelligence, belong equally well there. Since most field operations were conducted by the comitatenses this section refers mostly to them, not to limitanei. However, the two parts of the army appear to have been similar in capability.

Operational aspects of the fourth-century army are well-known thanks to the detailed narrative of Ammianus Marcellinus, but the fifth-century army is much less well documented. In this section therefore, evidence from outside Europe and from the third and sixth centuries is especially widely used to provide analogies and to illustrate what the army could do.

Here it is assumed that the regular elements of the army were little different in both parts of the empire, an assumption from silence, but one that the sparse evidence does not contradict. Since the type of external problems faced by the eastern and western Roman armies in Europe did not change, there were no external reasons for the army to change. Thus any changes that did take place probably reflected the political or economic situation or changes in strategy.

These changes appear to have been limited. By the sixth century, though more emphasis was placed on cavalry, the rest of the army differed little from that of the fourth century. Thus historians from the sixth century, such as Procopius, Menander or Agathias, provide useful

comparative material, as do the military writings of Mauricius, Urbicius and the Anonymous Byzantinus.<sup>558</sup>

#### MUSTERING TROOPS

When not campaigning, i.e. for most of the time and particularly in winter, field army troops were billeted in cities and dispersed over a wide area to ease supply. This meant that before starting a campaign an army had to be assembled.<sup>559</sup> At the same time, recruiting took place to bring units up to as near full strength as possible and equipment and horses were obtained where necessary (supplies, below p333).<sup>560</sup>

These preparations could take some time and planning started ahead of offensive operations. Valens started planning his campaign against the Visigoths in 364 and troops were still arriving in Thrace in 365 with campaigning intended to start in 366. This was over 18 months of preparation before starting the campaign.

Preparations for defensive campaigns could take less time since troops were often present in the attacked area. Fewer troops tended to be

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<sup>558</sup> the most recent account is Tomlin, R.S.O., 'The Army of the Late Empire', The Roman World, ed. J. Wachter, (London, 1987), 107-133; despite its age, Grosse, R., Mische Militärgeschichte (Berlin, 1920) is still particularly useful since it deals with the fifth and sixth centuries

<sup>559</sup> billeting, Symm. Ep. VI.72, IX.48; CT VII.8 (361-435), 9 (340-416), XIII.3.3 (333), XVI.2.8 (343); CJ XII.40; NTh XXV (444); Zos. II.34.2; billets marked on doorposts, CT VII.8.4 (393), cf Keegan, J., The Mask of Command (London, 1987), 140 for the same practice in the Napoleonic wars; lodging rosters, Procopius, BV III.xxi.10  
dispersed, AM XIV.11.15, XVI.4.1, XVII.10.10, XIX.11.2, XX.4.9; Malchus fr.18.3.49-56, 20.132-134; Lib. Or. XII.44  
assembling troops, AM XIV.10.3, XVII.12.4, XVIII.2.4, XIX.11.2, XXIII.2.3, XXVI.9.1, XXVII.8.3, 10.6; Lib. Or. XII.44; Zos. III.4.1, V.50.1; Pan.Lat. XII(2).32.4; Malchus fr.18.1.16-21, 20.135-136; Auct.Haun.Ordo Prior. sa 487

<sup>560</sup> pre-campaign recruiting, AM XVIII.9.3, XX.8.1, XXI.6.6; Julian, Or. I.34CD, II.56B; Zos. III.3.2, IV.12.1; CT VII.13.16-17 (406); Eunapius fr.44.1; cf Theophylact, Hist. III.12.4; Herodian VI.3.1-2; cf Creveld, M. Van., Command in War (London, 1985), 79-80

involved which reduced the time taken to collect supplies. On the other hand, troops sometimes had to be brought into the area from another region, which could take some time (above p302).<sup>561</sup>

#### STRATEGIC SUPPLY

The collection of supplies and their transport to the army was the concern of civilian officials under their regional praetorian prefect. In peacetime supplies were either delivered directly to units or requisitioned by the units themselves. When the army was marching through friendly territory stockpiles were sometimes set up in advance along the line of march. Otherwise material was delivered directly to the army.<sup>562</sup>

The use of stored supplies allowed the army to fight at any time of the year, though most offensive operations took place in summer. The campaigning season usually started only when the spring wheat had been collected and once the roads had had a chance to dry out from the spring rains and grass to grow for fodder. In Gaul and on the Danube this was July, in Italy, May.<sup>563</sup>

But winter did not stop campaigning and barbarian attacks in winter meant that the Romans often had to fight then. Thus Julian fought raiding Franks in winter 458. Roman offensives could also be launched in winter, for example Arbogast's campaign against some Franks in 389 or Majorian's

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<sup>561</sup> Valens, AM XXVI.6.11-12, 7.9; defensive, NVal IX (440)

<sup>562</sup> responsibility of PPO, AM XIV.10.4, XVIII.2.4, XIX.11.2, XX.4.6; Zos. IV.10.4; CT VII.4.1-36 (325-424); civilian contractors, AM XVII.10.4; stockpiles, Zos. IV.10.4; Ambrose, Expositio in Psalmum 118 Sermo 5.2, PL XV.1317; Jul. Ep. ad Ath. 286B; AM XXIII.2.5,8; Veg. III.3

<sup>563</sup> natural constraints, wheat, AM XIV.10.2, XVII.8.1; cf France, Admiralty Naval Intelligence Division, (London, 1942), vol. 1, 203, fig. 19; fodder, AM XXX.3.3; spring, AM XXVII.10.6

crossing of the Alps in 458-459 to attack the Visigoths. Troops could also be transferred from one area to another in winter, by land or sea.<sup>564</sup>

The accumulation of supplies for any offensive expedition required forward planning. In 360 when Constantius II was still in Constantinople he ordered supplies to be set up on the borders of Gaul prior to marching against Julian. Similar preparations were taken when marching against barbarians, as in 409 when Honorius was organising troops against Alaric. 'Wishing for food to be ready for those who were present, he ordered those in Dalmatia to bring in corn, sheep and cattle.' The collection of food supplies and other equipment could take a long time (above p331). Having reached Carnuntum from Gaul, Valentinian I spent three months in 375 preparing for an expedition against the Quadi.<sup>565</sup>

Organisation on such a scale was necessary since armies took a lot of feeding. Even Julian's small army at Strasbourg, 13,000 men, of whom perhaps 3,000 were cavalry, would require a minimum of 30 tons of grain, 13 tons of fodder and 30,000 gallons of water every day. These estimates consider only fighting men and horses. The baggage train that accompanied all ancient armies with its grooms and pack mules would also need food and fodder. The movement of supplies also consumed supplies and the larger the baggage train the more food it required. Though some of this could be collected on the march, the majority of it would have to be delivered to the army.

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<sup>564</sup> winter campaigning, defensive, AM XVII.2,8, XXVII.1.1-2; Claudian, de VI Cons. Hon. 440-469; Fast. Vind. Prior. sa 464; offensive, Sulpicius fr.6; SA Carm. V.510-552; AM XVII.1.3-13; Mauricius, Strat. VII prologue, XI.4.19; transfers, land, Lib. Or. XII.44, XVIII.40; sea, AM XX.1.3; problems with winter movements, AM XXX.3.3, 6.2; Veg. IV.39

<sup>565</sup> collecting supplies before campaigning, Julian, Ep. ad Ath. 286B, Ep. 58/402B; Malchus fr.18.1; Zos. IV.10.4, V.50.1; Marc. Com. sa 499; AM XVI.2.8, XVII.8.2, XIX.11.2, XXI.6.6, XXIII.2.8, 3.6 (as diversion), XXVII.10.6, XXX.5.11; CT VII.4.15 (369); Philost. XI.2; quantity, cf II: Calliopius 5; Olymp. fr.30

The effectiveness of the supply system is shown by the fact that Roman forces are rarely attested as running out of supplies. Shortages were suffered, for example by Julian in Persia, but were unusual. The efficiency of the supply system is also shown by the volume of supplies that could be handled. Constantius II's measures in 360 included stockpiling six million bushels of wheat and the expedition against the Bulgars organised by Anastasius in 499 involved 520 wagons.<sup>566</sup>

#### LEADERSHIP

In the fourth century offensive operations were usually led by the emperor, but could also be initiated by magistri militum and comites rei militaris. We do not know how much initiative local commanders had, but duces seem rarely to have played an active role in field army operations. During the fourth century attacks across the border seem to have been initiated only by emperors, for example Valentinian I's strikes against the Quadi in 374-375. But magistri militum and emperors conducted operations to pursue barbarian raiders back across the border, e.g. Nannienus and Quintinus against Franks in 388, Gratian against Alamanni in 378. Defensive operations were commanded by the senior officer present (above p249).<sup>567</sup>

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<sup>566</sup> required amounts, Engels, D.W., Alexander the Great and the Logistics of the Macedonian Army (London, 1977), 123-130; Creveld, M. van, Supplying War (Cambridge, 1977); shortages, AM XVII.9.3, XXV.2.1-2 (both involving Julian whose strategic acumen is somewhat dubious); SA Carm. II.278; Pan.Lat. XII(2).32.5; Ambrose Ep. 40.22

<sup>567</sup> fourth-century cross-border attacks initiated by emperors, AM XVII.10.1, 12.4, XVIII.2.7,9, XX.10.2, XXI.4.8, XXVII.5.2,5,6, 10.6, XXIX.4.2; magister militum, Sulpicius fr.6; AM XXVIII.5.15; role of duces, Eunapius fr.42.20-44; cf Zos. IV.20.6; other offensives, magistri militum AM XXVI.8.4, 10.4; pursuits, emperors, AM XVII.1.1-2, XXXI.10.11; magistri militum, Sulpicius fr.1; duces, AM XXIX.6.15 ?; Millar, F.G.B., 'Emperors, Frontiers and Foreign Relations, 31 BC-AD 378', Britannia XIII (1982), 1-23; comites sent by emperor, CT VI.14.3 (413)

After the 390s there were fewer offensive operations and emperors took less part in field campaigning. Several emperors, for example Constantine III, Attalus, Marcian, Majorian, Anthemius and Zeno did lead troops in the field, but most offensive operations were led by magistri militum, often with subordinate comites. Thus in the war against the Vandals in 468 Basiliscus was the magister militum in charge, with subordinates the magister militum Damonius and the comites rei militaris Menetius and Ioannes(?). As in the fourth century defensive operations and any consequential actions were led by the senior officer present. In 467 the magistri militum Aspar and Basiliscus and the comites Ostrys and Anagastes fought a mixed group of Goths and Huns. Comites could also lead expeditions in their own right and in 456 Ricimer led a Roman fleet against the Vandals.<sup>568</sup>

Comites domesticorum are often found leading troops and despite their position as commanders of the domestici appear to have acted like other comites. Thus the western comes domesticorum Richomer commanded the Roman army at Ad Salices in 377 and in 420 Castinus was involved in campaigning against Franks in north Gaul. The change in character of the domestici at the end of the fifth century may have restricted their opportunities to fight, but Bonifatius defended Africa as comes domesticorum et Africae in the 420s and in 490 Pierius led Odoacer's army at the battle of the Adda.<sup>569</sup>

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<sup>568</sup> fifth-century offensives led by emperors, Malchus fr.18.3; Olymp. fr.14, 33; Soz. IX.12.4, 13.1-2; magistri, RPF fr.6; Philost. XII.13-14; Theoph. AM 5942; Priscus fr.42; Malchus fr.18.2, 20; comites, Soz. IX.8; Hyd.74, 176; Procopius, BV III.vi.8

<sup>569</sup> comites domesticorum, I: Dagalaifus, Latinus, Richomeres, Serenianus 2, Severus 10, Valerianus 6 ?; II: Bonifatius 3, Castinus 2, Pierius 5

The magister officiorum, despite his responsibility for the fabricae and scholae seems to have been primarily a civil official, though occasionally found leading troops (but never scholae). In 350 Magnentius' magister officiorum, Marcellinus, defeated Nepotianus in Italy and in 479 Illus led troops against the rebel Marcian. Magistri officiorum could also lead troops against barbarians and in 409 Olympius attacked a force of Goths in Italy.<sup>570</sup>

Although the functions of military and civil branches of the government were divided, both were still part of the government. In emergencies, civil officials had the authority to lead troops. In 359 the praetorian prefect Florentius led reinforcements to an army in the field and Petrus, magister epistolarum, relieved the siege of Lyons in 458. Lastly, command against bandits could be the responsibility of civil officials if they were the senior government official in the area.<sup>571</sup>

#### STRATEGIC INTELLIGENCE

Roman expeditions across the border could range deep into enemy territory, as in Gratian's follow-up to the battle of Argentaria. These operations were usually carefully planned and their objectives were

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<sup>570</sup> magister officiorum, I: Marcellinus 8; II: Celer 2, Hilarianus 2, Illus 1, Longinus 3, Olympius 2; Clauss, M., Der Magister Officiorum in der Spätantike (Munich, 1980)

<sup>571</sup> civil officials, Tomlin, R.S.O., 'Notitia Dignitatum omnium, quam civilium tam militarium', Aspects of the Notitia Dignitatum, BAR S15, eds. R. Goodburn and P. Bartholomew, (Oxford, 1976), 189-209 at 195-202; MacMullen, R., Soldier and Civilian in the Later Roman Empire (Cambridge, Mass., 1963), 152-177; AM XXI.16.1-3 suggests civilian command occurred, but was not approved of in some (military?) quarters; I: Anicetus 1 (PPO), Florentius 10 (PPO), Hormisdas 3 (proconsul), Iovianus 1 (notarius), Iovius 2 (PUC), Nebridius 1 (PPO), Probus 5 (PPO), Syagrius 3 (notarius); II: Eutropius 1 (PSC), Hermianus (comes stabuli), Maurocellus ? (vicarius), Petrus 10 (magister epistolarum)

usually obtained. In the fifth century the number of campaigns launched by Aetius in successive years in different regions also suggests good planning and strategic intelligence. Unfortunately we have few details of the process and have to reconstruct it from events.<sup>572</sup>

Certain times were preferred for launching certain types of operations or attacking certain enemies. The best time for attacking heavily-forested areas was winter since

all the retreats of the Francia could be penetrated and burnt out now that the leaves were off the trees and that the bare and sapless forests could offer no concealment for ambushers.

The same practice was recommended in Maurice's Strategikon.<sup>573</sup>

When attacking nomads, i.e. the inhabitants of the steppes around the lower Danube, there were two optimum times. One was February or March when the lack of grazing over the winter had reduced nomadic mobility. The other was July to September when dry grass burned easily and fodder was scarce and easily destroyed.<sup>574</sup>

Strategic intelligence can be divided into two types, active and passive. Active intelligence is defined as that actively sought by the Romans, usually only before or during hostilities, passive as that received continuously without their taking specific action to gather information.<sup>575</sup>

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<sup>572</sup> planning councils, Austin, N.J.E., Ammianus on Warfare (Brussels, 1979), 22-116; AM XVI.2.3-4 (discussing a route), 9 10.21, XXVI.5.8-13, XXX.3.3-4, XXXI.12.5-7,14-15; Sulpicius fr.1; Eunapius fr.42.11-19; Aug. Ep. 220.7; above p<sup>245</sup>

<sup>573</sup> forests, Sulpicius fr.6, cf fr.1 for consequences of attacking with leaves on trees; Mauricius, Strat. XI.4.19

<sup>574</sup> nomads, Mauricius, Strat. VII.1.12, X.4.8

<sup>575</sup> Lee, A.D., Information, Frontiers and Barbarians unpublished, (Cambridge, 1986) is very useful, though I have not seen the Ph.D. deriving from this; Millar, F.G.B., 'Emperors, Frontiers and Foreign Relations, 31

Passive intelligence covered general knowledge of the local barbarians, their strength, location of villages, character of their leaders. This was combined to form an idea of their capabilities. It would also provide the Romans with an understanding of likely targets and attack routes. This was very much a question of local knowledge, much of which would be handed down informally through unit personnel. Most changes in the situation would occur gradually and could be registered passively. However, some of this information may have been written down.<sup>576</sup>

This local knowledge could be enhanced by the dux or comes in charge of a frontier sector (or his subordinates) keeping in touch with local regales and optimates, for example by dining with them. This practice also occurred on the Northwest frontier of British India. An assistant Political Officer recorded

on our first evening in camp, for instance, Reggie brought the Brigade Major to dine with my cutthroats [a group of Pathan Maliks] and myself. There was an excellent spread and a general air of joviality. The army and the tribesmen, urged the Brigade Major, should get to know one another better.<sup>577</sup>

Regular meetings for the confirmation of treaties or donation of subsidies also provided opportunities for gathering intelligence. Maintenance of such

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BC-AD 378', Britannia XIII (1982), 1-23, and 'Government and Diplomacy in the Roman Empire during the first three centuries', IHR X (1988), 345-377; cf Engels, D.W., 'Alexander's Intelligence System', CQ ns XXX (1980), 327-340; Gichon, M., 'Military Intelligence and the Roman Army', Labor Omnibus Unus, Historia Einzelschriften LX, ed. H. Herzig, (Stuttgart, 1989), 154-170 is of little use

<sup>576</sup> local knowledge, P.S.Sabae VIII.1; monitoring mood, AM XXI.3.4-5, XXVIII.3.8, cf XXIX.5.35; cf Dio LXXIII.2.4; knowledge of enemy objectives, Menander fr.33; Zos. I.30.2

<sup>577</sup> Lydall, E., Enough of Action (London, 1949), 177

relations would also make it easier to avoid conflict, giving an opening for grievances to be discussed, instead of forcing immediate action.<sup>578</sup>

Passive strategic intelligence could also be received from deserters from the enemy, though the dangers of planted information had to be looked out for. This information was useful in predicting enemy actions. Once hostilities had started it could be difficult to predict enemy movements or even to locate the enemy (above 304).<sup>579</sup>

Active strategic intelligence could be provided by Roman spies, the arcani who operated in the barbaricum. These are only explicitly attested for Britain, but equivalents existed elsewhere. At least one of Valentinian I's operations used such agents. In 370 he was communicating with the kings of the Burgundians by means of 'certain quiet, loyal men'. Such men could have been involved in the assassination of Vithicabius. These men apparently reported directly to the emperor.

By their very nature, organisations such as this are secretive and leave little evidence. They may have been controlled by the magister officiorum. His control of interpretes omnium gentium would allow adequate training to take place and the various agentes in rebus and curiosi provinciarum could provide manpower for these operations. Protectores and domestici would also have provided a pool of suitable officers, as demonstrated by Ammianus' reconnaissance mission on the eastern frontier in 359. It may be significant that, unlike most soldiers he mentions,

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<sup>578</sup> dining, AM XXI.4.3, XXIX.6.5 [=Zos. IV.16.4], XXXI.5.5; Eunapius fr.59; Lib. Or. XVIII.107; Zos. IV.56.1; Jordanes, Getica 135-136, 289; Rivet, A.L.F. and Smith, C., The Place Names of Roman Britain (London, 1983), 212 positively reject the view that the loca of the Ravenna Cosmography (V.31) are meeting places, as argued by Richmond, I.A., Roman and Native in Northern Britain (London, 1958), 148-9; cf Dio LXXII.15,19, LXXIII.2

<sup>579</sup> intelligence from deserters, AM XXIX.4.2; cf interrogation of deserters, AM XXXI.15.9; Mauricius, Strat. VIII.1.35, IX.3.6-9; Anon. PS  
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Ammianus never mentions these men by name or unit, similar to modern officers, 'something in intelligence'.<sup>580</sup>

Other information was obtained by officers, almost always tribunes or men of higher rank, being sent to areas for information. Sometimes this was on a deliberate military mission, as in the case of Hariobaudes, at other times it was a byproduct of a diplomatic mission such as that of Victor to the Goths in 367.<sup>581</sup>

Once information had been obtained it was either reported directly to the emperor or to the local field army commander who could then forward it to his superiors. From 443 and probably earlier, magistri militum had to report annually to the emperor on the state of their commands and these reports probably updated the general situation. Such reports depended on receiving information from their subordinate duces. We know that reports had been made previously and annual reporting seems likely. Special reports were presumably sent out in the case of crises. Thus in 365, a tribune in Dacia Mediterranea heard rumours of Procopius' usurpation, which he passed

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<sup>580</sup> active strategic intelligence, Austin, N.J.E., Ammianus on Warfare (Brussels, 1979), 22-41; spies, AM XXVI.5.5-6, XXVIII.3.8, XXIX.5.33; Anon. PS 42; Priscus fr.14.1.58-65; Procopius, BP I.xxi.11-12, HA XXX.12-13 arcani, AM XXVIII.3.8; the manuscripts read areani, a unique word in Latin, arcani makes sense instinctively; Stevens, C.E., 'Hadrian and Hadrian's Wall', Latomus XIV (1955), 384-403 at 394-395 and Richmond, I.A., Roman and Native in North Britain (London, 1958), 114-115 both struggle to find plausible meanings for areani; possible arcani, AM XXVII.10.4, XXVIII.5.10, XXIX.5.33; Zos. IV.38.2-4

<sup>581</sup> protectores, AM XVIII.6.21; tribunes, XVIII.2.2; magistri militum, AM XXVII.8.2; legates, tribunes, AM XIX.11.5 (with interpreters), XVIII.2.2; magistri militum, AM XXVII.5.1,9; escorts for ambassadors, P.Abinn. 1; cf Frontinus, Stratagems I.2.4

on to the comes rei militaris Aequitius, who in turn sent the news to Valentinian I (above p246).<sup>582</sup>

#### TACTICAL SUPPLY AND TRANSPORT

Once supplies had reached the army they were usually transported by wagon or pack animal until consumed. In emergencies cavalry could be used to transport supplies, as in 439 when Litorius' cavalry brought corn into Narbonne. Supplies could also be transported by sea or river if the army was in the right place. Thus in 367, the praetorian prefect Auxorius

conveyed the soldiers' provisions on a large fleet of transports through the Black Sea to the mouths of the Danube and thence by means of river boats stored them in towns along the river to facilitate the supply of the army.<sup>583</sup>

Troops usually carried a month or twenty days' rations with them, in addition to other personal equipment (above p174). This enabled the size of baggage train needed to be reduced and thus speeded movement. These supplies also enabled a force to survive without a baggage train for a short time (below p342).<sup>584</sup>

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<sup>582</sup> reports, AM XV.8.1, XVI.10.20, XVII.12.1, XIX.11.1, XXVI.5.10, 6.11, 7.5, XXVII.8.1, XXX.3.1; Lib. Or. XVIII.52; NTh XXIV.5 (443) (annually); Zos. IV.20.6; Eunapius fr.42.10-11; cf Bowman, A.K. and Thomas, J.D., 'Vindolanda 1985: the New Writing Tablets', JRS LXXVI (1986), 120-123 at 122 for a possible (second-century) intelligence report; passing up chain of command, AM XVI.11.7, XXVI.5.10; Lib. Or. XVIII.52; Julian, Ep. 45/432B

<sup>583</sup> wagons, Veg. III.6; Malchus fr.18.1; Marc. Com. sa 499; Mauricius, Strat. XII.8.6; pack animals, AM XVI.11.14, XXIX.4.5; Ausonius, Grat. Act. XVII; Malchus fr.2; Veg. III.6; CT VII.1.9 (367); Procopius, HA XXX.15.1; Mauricius, Strat. I.2.11, XII.8.6; mules/horses and camels are illustrated on the column of Arcadius (above p169); emergencies, Prosp. 1324; naval supply, Zos. IV.10.4; river supply, Zos. III.13.3, IV.10.4; AM XXIII.5.6 ?; CT VII.17.1 (412), XIII.9.2 (372/375); Lib. Or. LIV.47

<sup>584</sup> carried rations, CT VII.4.5 (360); AM XVI.2.8, XVII.8.2, 9.2; Procopius, BV III.xiii.15; composition, CT VII.4.6 (360); Mauricius, Strat. VII.11; quality, Paulinus of Nola, Ep. XXIII.6

If there was a shortage of supplies, the Romans could forage as effectively as the barbarians. Some foraging seems to have taken place anyway, even when marching through friendly territory, though officers probably tried to control this. Once in enemy territory anything was fair game. Some summer and autumn campaigns were planned so that the Romans could forage from enemy harvests, though this was probably seen as a bonus, not something that could be relied on.<sup>585</sup>

As well as food supplies the army transported spare weapons and equipment. Artillery and other bulky gear that could not be moved easily was carried in kit form and assembled if needed. The tools necessary for building equipment were also transported. Thus in 438 Aetius built a siege tower to capture a town from the Visigoths. As well as the pack-animals and wagons, the baggage train also contained the baggage and impedimenta of senior officers. The comitatus would accompany the emperor if he was present, massively increasing the tail of the army and providing a further logistical burden. At times the baggage would be separated from the army to increase mobility and avoid its loss if defeated in battle.<sup>586</sup>

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<sup>585</sup> foraging in friendly territory, Zos. V.7.2-3, 13.3; AM XXI.12.15, XXIX.4.5; in enemy territory, AM XVII.1.11; Zos. III.14.2, 23.1-2, 27.3; harvesting from enemy, AM XVI.11.11-12,14, XVII.9.2-3, XXVII.10.7; Lib. Or. XVIII.52

<sup>586</sup> artillery, Zos. III.13.3; Veg. II.25; Aetius, Merobaudes, Pan. II.165-172; boats, Anon. PS 19.56-65; Veg. II.25; spare equipment, Column of Arcadius, above p169; Marc. Com. sa 499; tools, Veg. II.25; Procopius, BG VI.xii.6; Anon. PS 18.42-46 (=dolabrum, cf Josephus, BJ III.5); Mauricius, Strat. I.2.10, XII.8.6; officers' mules, AM XXV.2.1; Zos. V.34.1; CT VIII.5.3 (326); civil officials, AM XXXI.12.10; LRE 366-368; Millar, F.G.B., The Emperor in the Roman World (London, 1977), 28-40; agentes in rebus, CT VI.27.7 (395), 36.1 (326); baggage handlers, Zos. III.14.1, 24.1, 30.3, IV.11.2-3; Mauricius, Strat. I.2.11; separating from baggage, AM XXXI.11.6, 12.10; Mauricius, Strat. V.3.1, XII.8.22

## ON THE MARCH

Within the empire the army marched by road, following prearranged itineraries from town to town until it reached the vicinity of the enemy. From here it could be guided by friendly locals or by men captured from the enemy, but if these were unavailable, by scouts from the army. Local knowledge was at a premium and men with prior acquaintance of an area were much sought after.<sup>587</sup>

No use seems to have been made of maps as we know them, though Vegetius recommends that, as well as annotations, distances and geographical details (hills, rivers etc.) be added to itineraries. It is difficult to see what advantages contemporary maps would have over itineraries, since movement was usually confined to roads where they were available and it was rare for Roman forces to be split unless in the vicinity of the enemy (above p311). Even when close to the enemy, cross country movement was unusual, but not unknown. In 479

Sabinianus himself took command of the cavalry and sent a considerable body of infantry on a roundabout route through the mountains, telling them where and when to put in their appearance. Then he dined, assembled his army and set out at nightfall. He attacked the Goths at daybreak when they were already on the move... When the infantry appeared over their heads according to plan, the [Goths] were routed.<sup>588</sup>

The army marched in a large column, referred to as an agmen quadratus. It was led by scouts, followed by cavalry and then the main body of infantry. After them (Figure 19.1), or sometimes within the infantry columns (Figure 19.2), came the baggage train, and then a rearguard of

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<sup>587</sup> itineraries, Dura Shield, Cumont, F., 'Figment de bouclier portant une liste d'étapes', Syria VI (1925), 1-15; Ambrose, Expositio in Psalmum 118, Sermo 5.2, PL XV.1371; HA Sev.Alex. XLV.2; campsites picked in advance, Veg. II.7; Anon. PS 26; Mauricius, Strat. II.12; guides, AM XIV.10.7, XVII.10.7, XXVII.10.5, XXIX.4.5

<sup>588</sup> Veg. III.6; cross-country movement, Malchus fr.20.226-248

infantry and cavalry. When in the vicinity of the enemy, cavalry were sent out to the flanks to protect the infantry and to enable the army to deploy into line faster (Figure 19.3). Alternatively, the army could split into a number of columns producing the same effect. This could also be forced by the nature of the terrain (Figure 19.4). The army marched in this formation at Solicinium in 368, when Valentinian I led the centre, the generals Jovinus and Severus the wings. The whole army could cover a large area. Ammianus records that Julian's army in Persia in 363 (65,000 at its peak) extended for four miles on the march.<sup>589</sup>

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<sup>589</sup> march order, Veg. III.6; AM XXIV.1.2, XXV.3.2, XXVII.10.6, XXIX.5.39, XXXI.9.3, 12.4; cf Herodian VIII.1.2-3; Anon. PS 20; Mauricius, Strat. XII.8.19; scouts (procursatores), AM XVI.12.8, XXIV.1.2, 3.1, XXVII.2.2,4, 10.8; Zos. III.19.1; advance guard, Zos. III.14.1 (with 70 stades (14.95 km) between advance guard and main body) 23.3, 24.1; AM XXIX.4.5; baggage, AM XXIV.1.4; flanking cavalry, AM XVI.12.7, XXIV.1.2; flanking infantry, AM XXVII.10.6; rearguard, AM XVI.2.10, XXIV.1.2, XXV.3.2; length, AM XXV.5.6, cf XXIV.1.3, ten Roman miles (= 16 km) at full extent

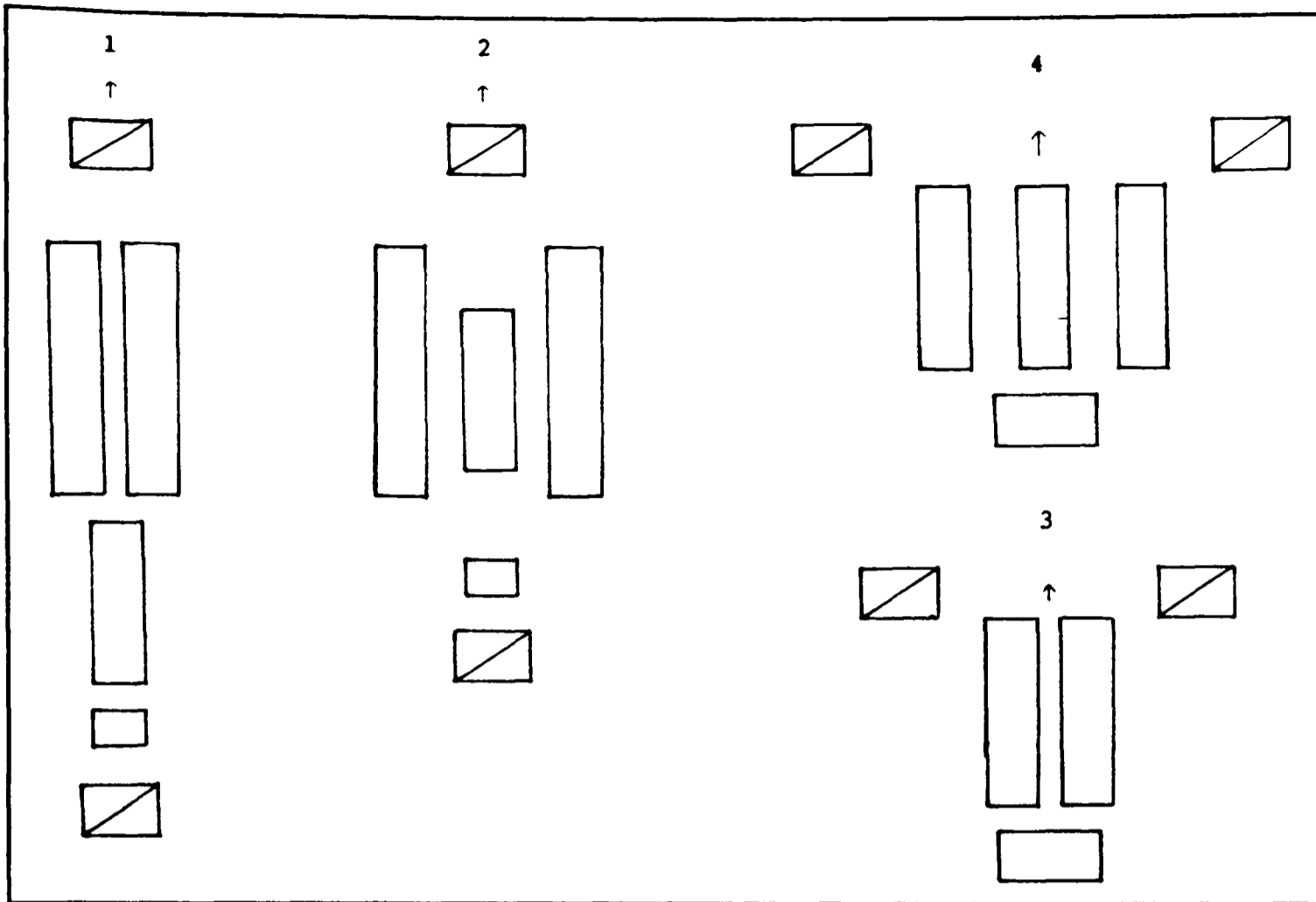


Figure 19: March Order of Roman Army

A day's march obviously varied in length, but seems to have averaged twenty km. In emergencies it could be increased, but only by detaching wagons or pack-animals was there any probability of exceeding thirty km per day (above p342). According to a sermon of Ambrose the army marched for three days and rested on the fourth, but we have no other confirmation of this practice.<sup>590</sup>

<sup>590</sup> rate of march, Procopius, BV IV.xiii.32-33, 50 stades (9.25 km)/day for 7 days; AM XXIV.2.3, 200 stades (37 km) in 2 days, XXIV.3.10, 23 km in one day, marches longer because of river supply ?; cf SA Ep. IV.8.2, 29 km in one day for mounted noble and servants; Sirmium to Strasbourg, 1238 Roman miles via Milan and Aquileia according to the Antonine Itinerary, 40 days' march (= mansiones), AM XVI.12.70 (rhetorical ?); rest days, Ambrose, Expositio in Psalmum 118, Sermo 5.2, PL XV.1317; cf Theophylact, Hist. II.2.6-7 showing Sunday as a rest day; training marches, Veg. I.9, 20 Roman miles in 5 hours (= 30 km), 24 Roman miles at the quick step; 1 stade = 185 m; see also Engels, D.W., Alexander the Great and the Logistics of the Macedonian Army (London, 1977), 153-156

Troops could also be transported by river. This movement tended to be confined to the Rhine and Danube because of the easy availability of boats. Movement downstream could be much faster than land movement, but the constraints of moving upstream, especially on the Upper Rhine, meant that it was not often used for moving troops. Where it was used it could have spectacular results, e.g. Julian's swift move down the Danube in 361 which took Constantius II's magister equitum Lucillianus by surprise.<sup>591</sup>

### RIVER CROSSING

The army frequently had to cross rivers while on the march. Inside the empire fords and bridges were often available, but were not always present on the Rhine and Danube. In winter rivers could be crossed while frozen.<sup>592</sup> If none of these means were available, the Rhine and Danube were usually crossed by pontoon bridge. This would require advance planning to find a suitable site and assemble the bridging materials. There were some established crossing places, and it is likely that frontier officers had a knowledge of these in their area of command. It is also possible that the fortified landing places were developed to allow safe bridgeheads. The Rhine and Danube were both large rivers (200+ m wide) and would require large pontoon bridges to be crossable.

These pontoon bridges were constructed from boats, probably provided by local flotillas on the Rhine and Danube, though at least one river-crossing (in Persia) was achieved by using inflated wine-skins, a local technique. No specialist engineers are known to us which may indicate a high level of basic engineering ability among the troops. Most of our

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<sup>591</sup> river transport, Zos. II.46.2, III.10.2-3 (Raetia-Sirmium in 11 days), IV.10.4; AM XXI.9.2, XXXI.11.6; Lib. Or. XVIII.111

<sup>592</sup> fords, AM XIV.10.7, XVI.11.9; frozen, above p118; Mauricius Strat. XI.4.19; AM XXVII.6.12

knowledge of these crossings comes from the fourth century but there is no reason to suppose that the fifth-century army was incapable of crossing such obstacles and the sixth-century army certainly could.<sup>593</sup>

Another means of crossing rivers was by boats. These crossings could be carried out at night, as shown by two of Julian's operations against the Alamanni in 357 and 359.<sup>594</sup>

Some units were able to swim across rivers if no boats could be found. Swimming a military unit (complete with weapons and armour) across a major water obstacle was difficult and could only be carried out if unopposed.<sup>595</sup>

The dangers inherent in river crossing are shown by the ability of the barbarians to deny a crossing to the Romans. Though they were rarely able to hold other positions against the Romans, they could stop the Romans from forcing river crossings or at least make it difficult.<sup>596</sup>

#### NAVAL TRANSPORT

Movement of troops from Africa to Europe and from Britain to Europe took place by sea. Otherwise troop transfers usually took place on land. Thus the western praesental army marched overland from Gaul to Persia in

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<sup>593</sup> river crossing, Veg. III.2; pontoon bridges, third century, Herodian VI.7.6; fourth century, AM XIV.10.6, XVI.11.8, XVII.1.2, 10.1, 12.4, XVIII.2.7-14, XXVII.5.2,6, XXIX.4.2, XXX.5.13; Lib. Or. XVIII.50; Jul. Or. III.129C; sixth century, Anon. PS 19; Mauricius, Strat. XI.4.17, XII.8.21; inside empire, AM XXVII.1.3; Zos. II.48.4, III.13.2; wine-skins, Zos. III.30.5; AM XXIV.3.11, XXV.6.15, 8.2; cf Anon. dRB XVI; Zos. II.48.4

<sup>594</sup> boats, AM XVII.1.4, 13.17, XVIII.2.12, XXV.8.3; Lib. Or. XVIII.88; Veg. III.7; improvised boats, AM XXIV.3.11, XXV.8.2

<sup>595</sup> swimming, Lib. Or. XVIII.76; Pan.Lat. XII(2).34.1; Zos. III.19.4; AM XVI.11.9, XXIV.2.8 (including pack animals), 6.7, XXV.6.12-14, 8.1-2; soldiers trained to swim, Veg. I.10, II.23, III.4

<sup>596</sup> barbarians blocking crossings, AM XIV.10.6-7, XVIII.2.8-14; problems in forcing crossing, Lib. Or. XVIII.50, 87-89; Mauricius, Strat. XI.4.33, XII.8.21; Anon. PS 19

360 and back in 364. Naval transportation could take place in winter in emergencies, e.g. Lupicinus' crossing to Britain in 360, but usually occurred in safer sailing seasons.<sup>597</sup>

More use was made of naval transport during civil wars and in the fifth century against the Vandals. The Romans made a number of marine landings in hostile territory. The length of coastlines and the small numbers of men meant that most of these were unopposed and thus were primarily logistical operations rather than beach assaults. However, this must not be allowed to minimise the organisation necessary to transport large numbers of men and horses by sea, even though we have no traces of this left. These troop movements continued throughout the period, from Constantius II's landings in Spain and Africa in 352/353 to the 468 eastern and western expedition against the Vandals in Africa.<sup>598</sup>

#### CAMPS

At the conclusion of the day's march a fortified camp was constructed. This consisted of a ditch and palisade inside which tents were pitched. Caltraps could be laid outside the ditch, probably for warning purposes and not as a barrier. A sixth-century tactical writer suggests that bells could be placed around the camp which would serve in the same way. Camps could be constructed quickly and easily (1-2 hours ?), and once built would increase the security of the army and allow the majority of the

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<sup>597</sup> naval transport, AM XX.1.3; Zos. III.10.2-3; Soz. IX.8.6

<sup>598</sup> 352/353, Jul. Or. I.40C; 388, Zos. IV.45.4, 46.1; Ambrose, Ep. 40.23; 413, Orosius VII.42.13; 425, Philost. XII.13-14; 468, above, p318; 508, Marc. Com. sa 508; cf Procopius, BV III.xi.1-20

men a good night's sleep. It is probable that a single camp was dug for the army no matter how big it was since we never hear of multiple camps.<sup>599</sup>

While digging camps, units had to take care to avoid being surprised. As well as providing night security these camps also provided a secure base to fall back on if the army met a reverse. Thus in 355 a Roman force that had been ambushed by the Alamanni retreated to the camp and in a battle the following day were able to defeat them.<sup>600</sup>

### TACTICAL INTELLIGENCE

Tactical intelligence was only required during hostilities. The requirements were simple; how strong were the enemy, what were their intentions (i.e. where were they going and what were they going to do?) and, most importantly, what was their position? With this information a decision to engage in battle could be made. Without it, forces risked being caught by surprise, overwhelmed or made to fight in disadvantageous circumstances.<sup>601</sup>

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<sup>599</sup> camps, Grosse 304-305; Procopius, BV IV.xi.15; Pan.Lat. XII(2).10.3; AM XV.4.9-12, XVI.12.12, XVIII.2.11, XXV.4.11, 6.1,5-7, XXVII.2.5, 5.2, XXXI.8.9, 12.4; Anon. Val. 50; Veg. I.21-25 (ditch 9 feet wide, 7 feet deep, I.24); Anon. PS 26-29, (ditch 5x5 feet, 29.4-7); Mauricius, Strat. V.4.3, XII.8.22 (ditch 5-6 feet wide, 7-8 feet deep); on lack of archaeological evidence, Johnson, S., Late Roman Fortifications (London, 1983), 32; Crump, G.A., Ammianus Marcellinus as a Military Historian, Historia Einzelschriften XXVII (Wiesbaden, 1975), 75-77; Grosse 225-229; tents, AM XVII.13.33, XVIII.2.10, XX.11.6, XXIX.4.5, 5.55; Anon. PS 27; Pan.Lat. XII(2) 10.2; camps built daily, AM XXV.3.1; Procopius, BV IV.xi.15; stakes were normally carried with the army, AM XVIII.2.11; caltrops, Veg. III.8, 24; Anon. PS 29.25-26; Mauricius, Strat. XII.8.22.1,10; bells, Anon. PS 29.26-32

<sup>600</sup> surprised Romans, AM XXV.3.1, XXXI.8.9; cf Veg. III.8; Mauricius, Strat. XII.8.20; night security, AM XXVII.2.5,8; useful vs reverse, AM XV.4.8-12

<sup>601</sup> tactical intelligence, cf above n575; Austin, N.J.E., Ammianus on Warfare (Brussels, 1979), 117-140

Knowledge of enemy strengths and location could be acquired by observation alone, though capturing prisoners and receiving deserters would allow an assessment of intentions and help to fill out the picture. Knowledge of local terrain and conditions in the barbaricum could be provided by capturing enemy soldiers, within the empire by locals or soldiers detached from local limitanei (above p343). Such knowledge was especially important because of the limitations of contemporary maps. The system appears to have been effective enough. There are few accounts of the Romans losing track of the enemy and the ignorance of the location of some Gothic cavalry at Adrianople appears to be an unusual event, not a common one.<sup>602</sup>

This information was not collected by formed bodies of scouts, which seem not to have existed, but by men assigned to scouting duties as necessary. These men had various functions, general intelligence gathering and confirmation (exploratores), strategic reconnaissance and information gathering (speculatores) and tactical reconnaissance (procuratores). These missions were not mutually exclusive and overlapping doubtless occurred. Although some units had the title exploratores, their small number, uneven distribution and original assignment to the border troops suggest that they were not specialist reconnaissance units at this date.<sup>603</sup>

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<sup>602</sup> via deserters, AM XVII.1.8, XXI.7.7, 13.4; prisoners, AM XVI.11.9, 12.19-21, XVII.10.5; losing track of enemy, Suda II.380, E.396

<sup>603</sup> distinctions, Austin, N.J.E., Ammianus on Warfare (Brussels, 1979), 127-129; exploratores, AM XXI.7.7, XXIX.5.40, XXXI.9.2, 12.11, 16.2; speculatores, AM XVIII.8.1, XXI.13.4, XXVII.2.2,4; Veg. III.22; procuratores, AM XVI.12.8, XXIV.1.2?, 3.1, 5.3,5, XXV.8.4, XXVII.10.8, XXXI.12.3; κατασκοποι, Zos. II.48.1, III.3.3, 14.1,3, 15.4, 16.2, 19.1, 20.5, IV.25.2, V.50.1; Agathias, Hist. II.20.2, V.16.4; Anon. PS 20 recommends mounted scouts; Mauricius, Strat. IX.5; there are seven units of exploratores recorded in the Notitia, all pseudocomitatenses or limitanei, ND Occ. VII.10, XXVIII.21, XL.25; Or. XLI.34,35,37, XLII.29, but no speculatores or procuratores; naval scouts, Syrianus VI-VII

At times generals felt it necessary to make personal reconnaissances, thus speeding up the interpretation of information or clarifying uncertain points. This is presumably the reason for Valentinian's risky personal reconnaissance at Solicinium. With this information available, a general could decide how best to engage the enemy. The concern for autopsy may also have been an attempt to avoid receiving inadequate information.<sup>604</sup>

As well as making efforts to collect intelligence, the Romans tried to ensure that their enemies had difficulties in gathering information. They tried wherever possible to capture scouts in order to stop information getting back to the enemy. Measures were sometimes taken to stop the casual transfer of information. Thus Valentinian I killed some slave dealers in 374 while leading a flying column in Alamannia, lest they reveal his presence to the Alamanni.

Other counterintelligence measures included advancing too swiftly to allow the enemy to assimilate information, seemingly a speciality of Julian, though practised by other generals. Forces could advance on a broad front or in extended formation to confuse the enemy as to numbers and objectives. This was practised on both strategic and operational levels.<sup>605</sup>

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<sup>604</sup> Valentinian at Solicinium, AM XXVII.10.10; Zos. IV.48 (Theodosius); AM XXIII.5.7, XXIV.1.13, 4.3-4; Zos. III.20.2-3, (Julian); these incidents can be compared with Churchill and Montgomery's hazardous crossing of the Rhine in 1945, Hamilton, N., Monty (London, 1986), vol. III, 438; autopsy, Austin, N.J.E., Ammianus on Warfare (Brussels, 1979), 130-132; inadequate information, possibly AM XXXI.12.3, but see Austin 77-80

<sup>605</sup> capturing scouts, AM XVI.11.9, 12.19-21, XXIV.1.10; slave dealers, AM XXIX.4.4; speedy advance, AM XVII.8.2-3, 12.4, XVIII.2.1, XX.10.2, XXI.4.8, 9.5-7, XXIII.2.2; Philost. XII.13; J.Ant. fr.187; broad front, AM XXI.8.3, XXIV.1.3; restricting spies, Julian, Ep. 58/402A; Mauricius, Strat. IX.5.20-23; diversion, AM XXIII.3.6; extended battle front, AM XXVII.2.5; Mauricius, Strat. VII.8a

How effective was this intelligence system? At its best it was very good and the Roman commanders often knew of events occurring at some distance from the field army. Thus in 357 while besieging a group of Franks in a fortress on the Meuse the Romans received warning of an approaching Frankish relief force. However, we do not know if the Romans knew of the Frankish advance from limitanei, field army scouts, casual reports from locals or merchants, or even from Frankish deserters. In the late-fifth century, tactical intelligence was good enough to allow a force to march around a Gothic army at night and place them in an untenable position (above p343).<sup>606</sup>

The efficiency of their tactical intelligence is also shown by the rarity with which the Romans, as opposed to the barbarians, were surprised. This should not be stressed too strongly. The Romans could be surprised, and the results could be catastrophic. Thus the unexpected return of the Gothic cavalry led to defeat at Adrianople. Although most Roman defeats were attributable to surprise, this was because it was much harder to defeat them in any other way, though it has to be admitted that details are lacking of many of the Roman defeats in battle (above p306). However, it is difficult to judge whether more might be expected from the system. Perhaps the (apparent) lack of change suggests that contemporaries did not find any major shortcomings in the system.<sup>607</sup>

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<sup>606</sup> Franks, AM XVII.2.4; Goths, Malchus fr.20.232-248

<sup>607</sup> ineffectiveness, Adrianople, AM XXXI.12.3; surprised Romans, AM XV.4.8, XVI.2.10, XXVII.10.1; Sulpicius fr.1; Zos. IV.49.1-2

## BATTLES

Little attention has been paid to ancient tactics (with the exception of the hoplite battle) and Late Roman warfare is no exception. This section is an attempt to describe events on the battlefield. Like any attempt, whatever the period, it forces events into categories into which they will not fit. So if the descriptions occasionally lack clarity, we should remember the remark of the Duke of Wellington

The history of a battle is not unlike the history of a ball. Some individuals may recall all the little events of which the great result is the battle won or lost; but no individual can recall the order in which, or the exact moment at which they occurred, which makes all the difference to their value or importance.<sup>608</sup>

## TACTICS

There are few precise accounts of battles in this period and the only field battles understood to any extent are Strasbourg (357) and Adrianople (378). We thus have little hope of tracing any changes in tactics that occurred. But the situation is not hopeless and a reasonable picture can be drawn from various historians, supplemented by military writers, though the latter need to be used with care. The accounts of Procopius and Agathias suggest that little had changed in the way field battles were fought in the sixth century.<sup>609</sup>

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<sup>608</sup> quoted in Keegan, J., The Mask of Command (London, 1987), 158

<sup>609</sup> Bitter, N., Kampfschilderungen bei Ammianus Marcellinus (Bonn, 1976); Naud, C.P.T., 'Battles and Sieges in Ammianus Marcellinus', Acta Classica I (1958), 92-106 discuss some of the problems; tactics, Grosse 254-257, 313-315; cf Campbell, B., 'Teach Yourself how to be a General', JRS LXXVII (1987), 13-29, with 28-29 discussing early imperial tactics

The standard march formation when near the enemy (above p343) could be simply transferred into a battle line, the only action necessary being to draw the columns up into lines (Figure 20). Cavalry units deployed on the flanks, infantry units in the centre, sometimes in more than one line. Heavy cavalry deployed near the infantry, light cavalry further away. Light armed troops sometimes deployed in front of the main line. The baggage was left in the camp (usually fortified) some way behind the army, preferably with a guard unit. A reserve force of infantry and cavalry was kept behind the main line, to guard against enemy breakthroughs or to exploit success.<sup>610</sup>

Units generally fought in linear formations, though wedges were sometimes used to break through enemy lines. These formations were several ranks deep, Vegetius recommended 6 ranks for infantry. Mauricius recommended 4-16 ranks for infantry, 5-10 ranks for cavalry. These depths obviously varied according to the numbers available, quality of troops and the tactical situation.<sup>611</sup>

In most circumstances troops were drawn up in a straight line. Vegetius suggested a number of variations on a straight line deployment, with refused left or right flanks or a refused centre (similar to the

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<sup>610</sup> marching column into battlefield line, AM XXXI.12.12; Mauricius, Strat. XII.8.19; flanking cavalry, AM XVI.12.21 (only right flank as left flank wooded), XXXI.12.11, 13.2; Anon. PS 35.6-23; Jul. Or. II.57B-C; Veg. II.15, III.16; Lib. Or. XVIII.54; Mauricius, Strat. XII.8.13; Pan.Lat. XII(2) 35.3; multiple lines, AM XXIV.6.9; Mauricius, Strat. II.1; light armed troops, Veg. III.20 (#5); AM XXXI.12.16; baggage guards, Lib. Or. XVIII.59; AM XXXI.12.10; Mauricius, Strat. V.3.1, VII.9a; reserves, Veg. III.17; AM XIV.6.17, XXXI.7.12, 13.9

<sup>611</sup> wedges, AM XVI.12.20, XVII.13.9, XXIV.2.14, XXXI.9.3; Veg. I.26, III.17-19; for an absurd assessment of the tactical value of the wedge, Markle, M., 'The Macedonian Sarissa, Spear and Related Armor', AJA LXXXI (1981), 323-339 at 339; other formations, Veg. III.19; depths, Vegetius, III.14; infantry, Mauricius, Strat. XII.7.5-6, 8.8; cavalry, Mauricius, Strat. II.6

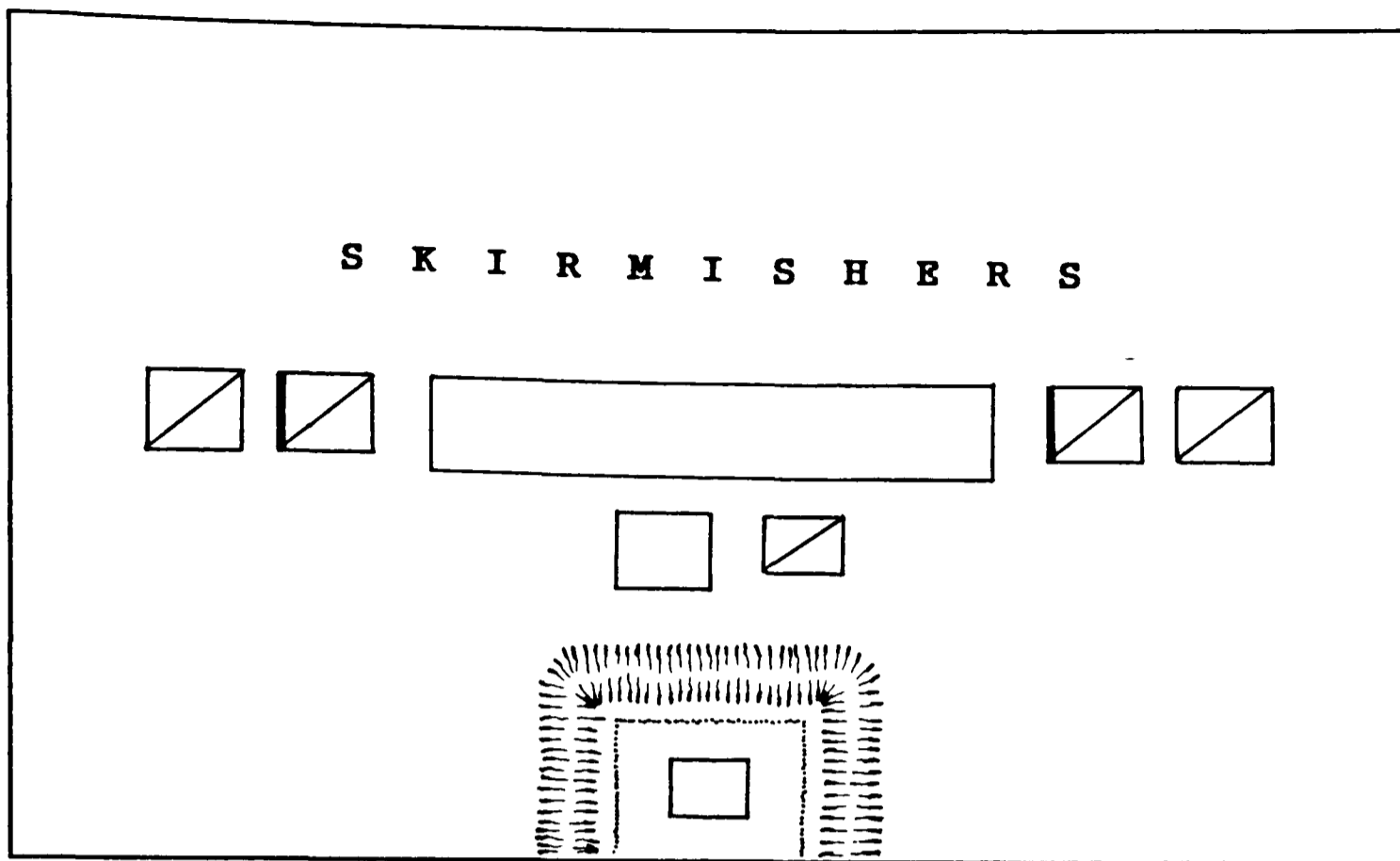


Figure 20: Line of Battle

crescent formation used at Brumath against the Alamanni in 356). A circular formation is recorded as having been used in Africa. Mauricius' Strategikon includes suggestions for fighting enemy who's line was shorter than one's own (=crescent) or longer (outflanking on their left flank) (Figure 21).<sup>612</sup>

Sometimes use was made of field fortifications. These were probably ditches and palisades which could be constructed by troops with materials at hand, i.e. similar to overnight camps (above p348). These were used by Constantius II outside Mursa and by Eugenius at the Frigidus. Overnight camps occasionally served in this role.<sup>613</sup>

<sup>612</sup> deployment variations, Veg. III.20; Anon. PS 31-32, 34; crescent, AM XVI.2.13, XXV.1.16, XXXI.12.11; Mauricius, Strat. III.10,14; Procopius, BG VIII.xxxii.5; circle, AM XXIX.5.41; dismounted cavalry, Procopius, BG VI.i.6, VIII.xxxi.5; outflanking, below p358

<sup>613</sup> fortifications, Zos. II.48.4; Claudian, de III Cons. Hon. 89-92; cf Pan.Lat. XII(2) 34.3; AM XVIII.7.6; camps, AM XV.4.9-12; caltrops, Herodian IV.15.2-3

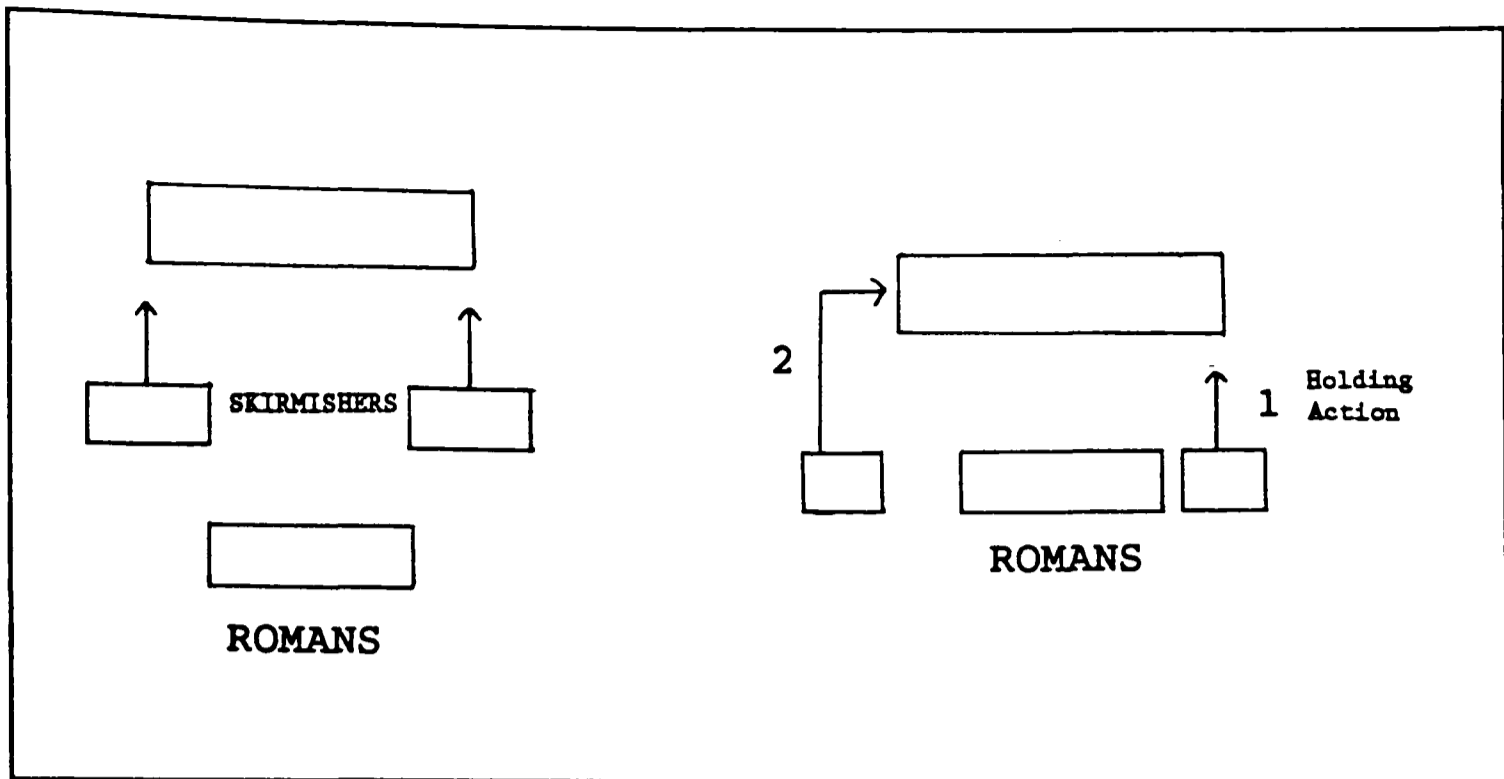


Figure 21: Line of Battle Variations

After deployment, battles usually started with a brief exchange of missiles, followed by a shout (above p208) and a charge. When fighting barbarians it was in the Roman interest to prolong these exchanges since they usually had more missile troops than their enemies. If the enemy did have missile superiority, the Romans might use the testudo in their advance. When the Romans had a great superiority in missile troops, they could stand off and engage the enemy at a distance. This probably happened in a skirmish between some Goths and a foederati regiment of 300 Huns in 409, when the losses were 1,100 Goths and 17 Romans. Though such a disparity in casualties appears dubious, the battles of Rorke's Drift (1879) and 29 Brigade's action at Imjin River in Korea in 1951 also produced large disparities in casualties, (17 British to 500+ Zulus, 1000 British and Belgians to c.10,000 Chinese), the latter with similar weaponry

on both sides. We do not know enough about the 409 battle automatically to discount the casualty figures.<sup>614</sup>

Sometimes this skirmishing could not be controlled and escalated into battle. At other times troops attacked spontaneously. This was not necessarily dangerous, though it could be, and at Adrianople it committed the Romans to attacking before negotiations and Roman deployment had been completed. It was most serious when fighting nomad armies who tried to tempt Roman units out of position then defeat them in detail. The Romans could also use this tactic themselves.<sup>615</sup>

Following missile exchanges, the two main bodies met. In hand-to-hand combat, the Romans had a significant advantage over barbarian opponents because of their training, discipline and armour. After a prolonged fight the barbarians usually routed. On occasions the impetus of the barbarian attack broke through the Roman line, but was usually dealt with by the Roman reserves.<sup>616</sup>

Artillery was of limited use in field battles because of its relative immobility and low rate of fire. However, it could be used if sited to fire over friendly troops, for example from a fort or city wall or high hill, but such positions were rare. It could also be used to cover river

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<sup>614</sup> pre-battle skirmishing, Veg. II.17; AM XVI.12.36, XXVI.7.15, XXVII.1.3, XXXI.7.11-12; missile exchanges, Pan.Lat. XII(2).35.4; cf Jordanes, Getica 213 where the Romans seem to have had missile superiority over the Huns; 409 skirmish, Zos V.45.6 (Zosimus is here following Olympiodorus whose figures are generally considered reliable); third-century missile supremacy, Herodian VI.7.8, VII.2.2; cf fighting Persians who were usually engaged as soon as possible, AM XXIV.2.5, 6.11, XXV.1.17-18; Lib. Or. XVIII.266; cf Frontinus, Stratagems II.ii.5; testudo, AM XXIX.5.48; Mauricius, Strat. XII.8.16

<sup>615</sup> escalation, AM XXVII.10.10, XXVIII.5.5-6, XXXI.12.16; cf XIV.2.17; nomad tactics, Mauricius, Strat. XI.2.27; Romans tempting, Mauricius, Strat. XII.8.16; Agathias, Hist. I.22

<sup>616</sup> hand-to-hand fighting, AM XVI.12.37, 43-54, XXVII.1.4; barbarian breakthroughs, AM XVI.12.49, XXVII.1.4, XXXI.13.7; cf Agathias, Hist. II.9.1; Roman advantages, AM XVI.12.47, XXVII.10.13

crossings, similar to its use by Alexander the Great in 330 BC against the Scythians. But as far as is known, artillery was used in a field battle in this period, but was confined to static positions. Two theoretical writers suggested mounting ballistae on wagons, a practice which occurred in the early empire and which may have survived. This would give the ballistae greater mobility.<sup>617</sup>

Armies generally fought in one body, but could detach a force for a flank attack. One battle plan involved a flanking attack on an enemy already engaged to its front with the Roman main body. This depended on keeping the plan secret from the enemy, for example by screening the main body of the army from enemy scouts. Edobichus was defeated in this manner in 411 while marching to relieve the siege of Arles. Valentinian I's plan at Solicinium was similar to this, when, before the battle, he sent an outflanking force to catch the Alamanni as they retreated.<sup>618</sup>

Ambushes could be set, for example Magnentius' attempt to surprise Constantius II by hiding men in a disused amphitheatre at Mursa or the surprise attack on a Saxon column in 370. They do not appear to have been used often, though Maurice devoted a whole chapter of his Strategikon to them.<sup>619</sup>

Though most fighting took place in daylight, on occasion night marches or attacks were used to gain surprise. Thus in 479 Sabinianus

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<sup>617</sup> artillery, river crossing, Anon. dRB XVI.5; Anon. PS 19.15-18; cf Arrian, Anabasis IV.4; field battles, cf Tacitus, Histories III.23; use in sieges, below p365, 367; static position, AM XVIII.7.6; on wagons, Anon. dRB VII; Urbicius, Epitedeumata 8; Mauricius, Strat. XII.8.18; Veg. II.25, III.24

<sup>618</sup> flank marches, AM XVII.1.4-5; Zos. III.16.2-17.2 (as diversion); Edobichus, Soz. IX.14; Solicinium, AM XXVII.10.9-15; cf Malchus fr.20.226-248; Mauricius, Strat. XI.4.35; Frigidus, Orosius VII.35.16

<sup>619</sup> ambushes, Zos. II.50.2-4; AM XXVIII.5.5-6; Orosius VII.35.16; Anon. PS 40; Mauricius, Strat. IV

marched through the night to attack a force of Goths at dawn, capturing 2000 wagons, 5000 prisoners and a large amount of booty.<sup>620</sup>

The accounts of battles in civil wars seem to be similar to battles with barbarians. The main difference seems to have been the prolonged nature of the fighting with some civil war battles continuing to nightfall, e.g. the Frigidus. This was a rare occurrence when fighting barbarians, though it did occur during the Adrianople campaign.<sup>621</sup>

The battle of Strasbourg in 357 between Julian's army of 13,000 and an Alamannic force of 30-35,000 is one of the few battles in this period for which we have an adequate description and is thus worth describing in detail.

Before the battle both sides knew little about the opposition. The Alamanni had no idea of the size of Julian's army until a deserter told them, though they were well aware of its location. Julian himself was uncertain of the size of the enemy force until he captured a barbarian scout before the start of the battle.

The Alamannic right wing rested on a canal, where they concealed troops in the reeds and in ditches. On their left they placed some of their better troops, with much of their cavalry. The centre was composed of multiple lines of infantry with a group of optimates and their followers behind, probably intended as a second wave rather than as a reserve.

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<sup>620</sup> night attacks, AM XXI.4.8, XXIV.6.4-6, XXXI.11.4; Jul. Or. I.39C; J.Ant. fr.187; Marc. Com sa 493?; Anon. PS 39; Zos. III.7.2,5; Mauricius, Strat. IX.2, XI.2.21, 31.14; night march and dawn attack, Malchus fr.20.235-240; Zos. IV.58.4

<sup>621</sup> civil war battles to nightfall, Mursa, Zos. II.51.2-3; 388, Pan.Lat. XII(2) 36.2; Frigidus, Zos. IV.58.4; barbarians, AM XXVII.2.8, XXIX.5.48?, XXXI.7.15, 10.13, 13.7

The Romans deployed their infantry in multiple lines, with cavalry on both flanks, their elite troops on the right. Their left flank was refused to avoid being ambushed from the Alamanni by the canal, a cautious move even though there was no confirmation of Alamanni troops in the reeds. When the Romans spotted the ambushers, they were able to engage them

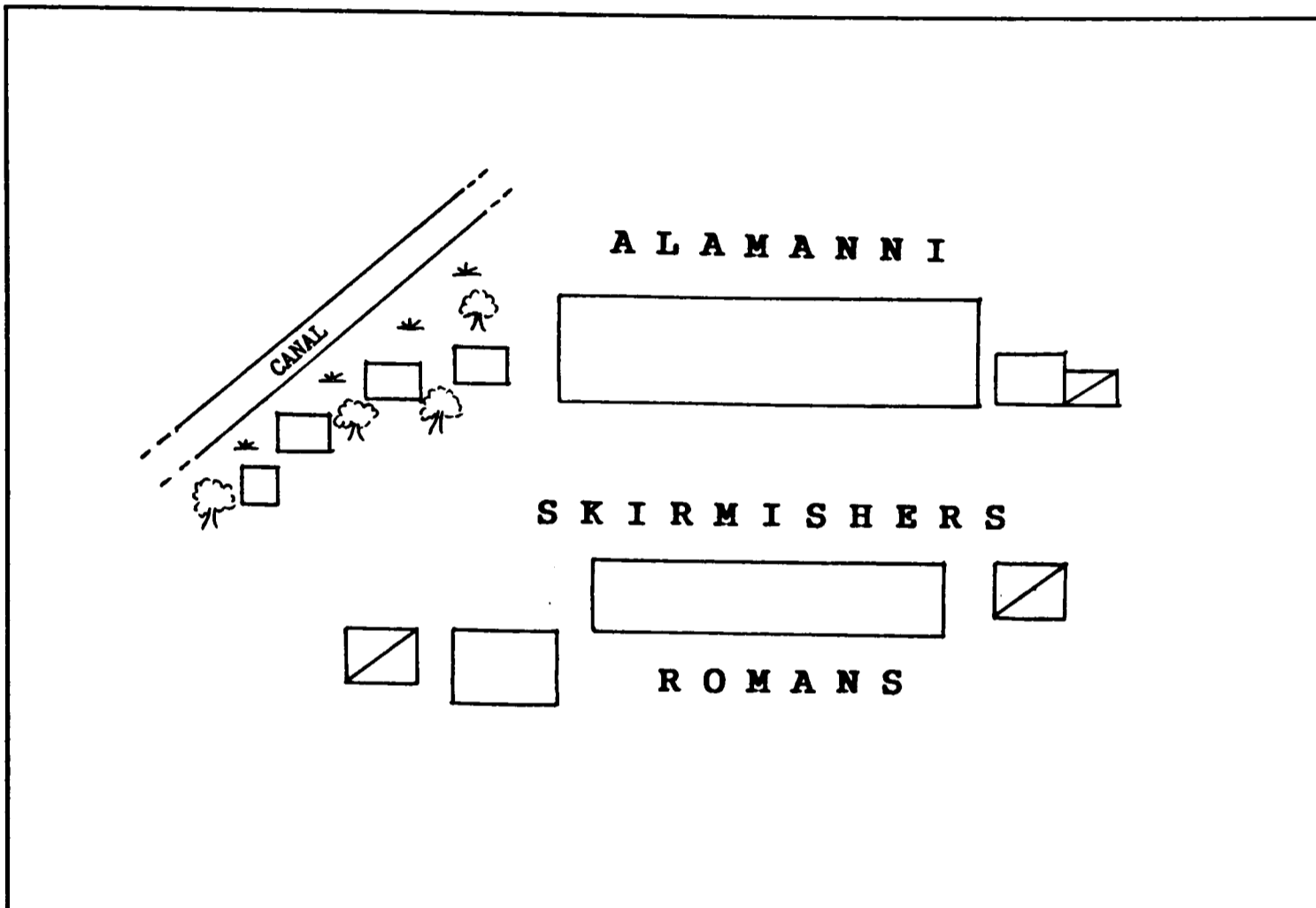


Figure 22: The Battle of Strasbourg, AD 357

without difficulty and drive them back. Such an ambush was only dangerous if it was not spotted.

The battle began with missile exchanges and skirmishing, then the Alamanni charged the Roman line. The initial shock of their attack swept away some of the right flank Roman cavalry, but these were able to rally behind the Roman infantry. In the centre, the impetus of the Alamannic charge was unable to break the Roman line and steady hand-to-hand fighting followed. The Romans would expect quickly to gain the upper hand in these circumstances, but at this point the second wave of optimates attacked and

managed to burst through the first Roman line before being repulsed. The rest of the Roman line remained intact and the breakthrough was repulsed by the second line of Romans. With the failure of this attack, the Alamanni routed and were pursued by the Romans as far as the Rhine. In the course of the retreat the Alamannic leader Chonodomarius was captured, though at least five other kings escaped.

Despite the apparent ease of Roman victory, the battle was probably a closely fought affair. The disparity in casualties, 247 Roman to 6-8,000 Alamanni, reflects the fact that the Romans won and were able to pursue the defeated enemy, who also suffered by having to cross the Rhine to escape. Since the Romans held the battlefield, they were able to save many of their wounded and could kill any wounded Alamanni that they found. The exactitude of Ammianus' account suggests that he had official reports to work from, being able to name three of the four dead tribunes and giving a precise number of Roman deaths.<sup>622</sup>

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<sup>622</sup> Strasbourg, AM XVI.12; Lib. Or. XVIII.53-68; Zos. III.3.3-5; Bitter, N., Kampfschilderungen bei Ammianus Marcellinus (Bonn, 1976), 56-101; Austin, N.J.E., 'In Support of Ammianus' Veracity', Historia XXII (1973), 331-335; Crump, G.A., Ammianus Marcellinus as a Military Historian (Wiesbaden, 1975), 85-89

## NAVAL BATTLES

The Romans seem to have regarded naval warfare as an extension of land warfare, not as a branch of service in its own right. This, together with the lack of a permanently established large fleet, meant that most naval actions were land actions on water, consisting of an exchange of missile fire in the approach, followed by ramming and boarding actions.

Fleets usually deployed in linear formations, sometimes more than one line deep. Variations on this included concave or crescent formations, with the best ships on the wings to encircle the enemy, or a convex formation with the best ships in the centre, to break through the enemy line.<sup>623</sup>

Battle was fought under oars, since sails would not give the required mobility. As ships approached, there would be an exchange of missile fire, from individuals and artillery pieces mounted on towers. This fire included incendiary weapons. At closer quarters ships would start ramming. At the same time, boarding actions would take place, either from bridges or by grappling hooks. In these actions, troops fought in full armour. As well as boarding, attempts were made to cripple ships by cutting ropes and sails using axes and halberds, sometimes using small boats to get closer to enemy vessels.<sup>624</sup>

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<sup>623</sup> linear formations, Syrianus IX.30; multiple lines, Syrianus IX.32-33; concave, Syrianus IX.30-31; Veg. IV.45; convex, Syrianus IX.35

<sup>624</sup> oars, Veg. IV.43; missile fire, Veg. IV.44; Procopius, BG VIII.xxiii.30,34; Zos. V.21.3; artillery, Mauricius, Strat. XII.8.21; Veg. IV.44; Agathias, Hist. III.21.4; towers, Veg. IV.44; incendiaries, Veg. IV.44; ramming, Veg. IV.46; AM XXVI.8.8; Procopius, BV III.vi.21, BG VIII.xxiii.34; Zos. V.21.3; boarding, Veg. IV.44; Procopius, BG VIII.xxiii.30; armour, Veg. IV.44; AM XXVI.8.9-10; Procopius, BV III.vi.23; Agathias, Hist. V.22.4; cutting sails and ropes, Veg. IV.46; falces [=δουδρεπανά], Veg. IV.46; Agathias, Hist. V.22.4,9; bipenni, Veg. IV.46; AM XXVI.8.10 (though Austin, N.J.E., Ammianus on Warfare (Brussels, 1979), 147n16 argues that this is a sledgehammer); small boats, Veg. IV.46; fireships, cf Procopius, BV III.vi.17-20

## SIEGE WARFARE

Most sieges took place in civil wars or when defending against barbarians. Attacks against barbarians in fortified positions were rare. Sieges tended to be more structured than battles and this allows a clear division into phases. This discussion can be subdivided into attack and defence. Though we understand the mechanisms, there is only one detailed account of a siege in Europe in this period, that by Ammianus describing the siege of Aquileia in 361, and there are few examples to quote here. Therefore many of the references are to operations conducted in Persia, though techniques in Europe seem similar.<sup>625</sup>

### Attack

When a fortified site was to be attacked, the first Roman action was to surround the site. They then had the choice of blockade or assault in order to capture the fortified site. Assaults would only be chosen if there was a need to capture the site quickly, (usually only if there was an enemy army able to relieve it) otherwise blockades were preferred (perhaps because they resulted in fewer friendly casualties). Attacks on barbarians in fortified sites were usually blockades, for example the siege of a group of Franks in two Roman forts on the Meuse in 358. Conversely, in civil wars, most attacks on fortified sites were assaults, for example, Procopius' seizure of Cyzicus in 365. The decision to assault was usually based on strategic, not tactical, criteria. Thus Ricimer besieged Rome for eight months in 472 since he had no immediate need to storm the city.<sup>626</sup>

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<sup>625</sup> in general, Veg. IV.1-30; Mauricius, Strat. X; Anon. PS 11-13

<sup>626</sup> strategic choice, Zos. II.49.2-4; cf AM XIX.2.1, 7.1, XXI.12.3; Meuse, AM XVII.2; Lib. Or. XVIII.70; Cyzicus, AM XXVI.8.7-11; Rome, J.Ant. fr.209.1; others, Priscus fr.5

When blockading a site units were deployed around its circumference to stop entry and exit of troops, supplies, etc. Earthworks or palisades might also be constructed. As the blockade continued the defenders would run short of food and eventually be forced to surrender. The time this took depended on the amount of food stored in the city. Theoderic the Great's siege of Ravenna lasted from 490 to 493, though it took so long because there was no naval blockade until 492/493, allowing the defenders to be supplied by sea. Long sieges were common and the defenders were often reduced to eating horses and occasional rumours of cannibalism surfaced. Once the city was surrounded an appeal might be made to the enemy to surrender, though such appeals were rarely successful.<sup>627</sup>

When assaulting a site the major decision for the attackers was how to get across the walls. There were three methods of doing this, over (using siege towers, mounds or ladders), through, (rams), or under, (mining).

Before any assault took place attempts were made to dominate the wall area by missile fire. Unless the attackers were able to deny the continued safe use of the wall to the defenders an assault would be unlikely to succeed. This domination was accomplished by killing or demoralising defenders and destroying their artillery.<sup>628</sup>

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<sup>627</sup> Ravenna, AM XXI.11-12; J.Ant fr.209,1; circumvallation, Austin, N.J.E. Ammianus on Warfare (Brussels, 1979), 144n9; AM XIX.2.2, 5.1, 6.6, XXI.12.4, XXIV.2.9, 4.10,12; Veg. IV.28; Mauricius, Strat. X.1.2; appeals, AM XIX.1.3-6, XX.7.3-4, 11.7, XXIV.1.8, 2.1,9, 4.11; Mauricius, Strat. X.1.6-7; food shortages, Malchus fr.2; Olymp. fr.29.2; Zos. V.39; Soz. IX.8; Theoph AM 5964; blockade, AM XVI.4.1-2 (1 month), XVII.2.3 (54 days); J.Ant. fr.209.1 (5 or 8 months)

<sup>628</sup> missile fire, AM XIX.1.8, 2.8, XX.7.6, XXIV.2.9; Zos. III.21.3; Priscus fr.5; Veg. IV.21

It was in this phase of the battle that artillery was of most use. Its main use was to destroy enemy artillery, to stop the latter being used against the attacker's siege equipment. The available artillery equipment can be divided into two types by their area of effect, on individuals or on groups. Bolt-throwers (ballistae) were usually used for sniping purposes, to pick off prominent individuals. Stone-throwers (scorpiones, onagri) were used to fire stones at large groups of enemy. In both cases, the morale effect could be as great as, or greater than, the physical damage caused. Stone-throwers could also cause structural damage, but were generally confined to firing at towers, gates or siege machinery.<sup>629</sup>

Artillery might use incendiary ammunition when firing at gates or equipment. Individual archers could also use fire arrows with an incendiary effect. Starting fires within the city would divert defenders' attention and resources from the walls.<sup>630</sup>

Once domination of the wall area had been gained, an assault could begin. To get close to the walls it would be necessary to fill the ditch surrounding the site, so that equipment could be brought into position next to the walls. Once the ditch was filled a siege tower or ram could be brought into the selected position. At the same time missile exchanges continued.<sup>631</sup>

Rams were used to attack gates, towers or vulnerable points in the wall. Vulnerable points would be areas weakened by subsidence or recent

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<sup>629</sup> ballistae for sniping, Zos. I.70; AM XX.11.20, cf XIX.5.6; stone-throwers vs personnel, AM XIX.2.8, 7.5, XXI.12.10; vs structures, AM XXI.12.14; vs siege equipment, AM XIX.7.6-7

<sup>630</sup> incendiaries, AM XXIII.4.14-15; Veg. IV.18; Mauricius, Strat. X.1.13; Brok, M.F.A., 'Ein spätromischer Brandpfeil nach Ammianus', Saalburg Jahrbuch XXXV (1978), 57-60; cf AM XXXI.15.8

<sup>631</sup> ditch filling, Zos. III.21.3; AM XXIV.2.11, 4.12; Veg. IV.16

repair. A similar tactic was to try to collapse a wall section, tower or vulnerable point by attacking it with crowbars, picks etc. The rams, or men with crowbars, could be protected by mobile penthouses.<sup>632</sup>

Siegetowers were brought up to the wall and used to launch an attack onto the walkway, aided by missile fire (sometimes including ballistae) from the higher levels of the tower. At the same time, or on their own, attacks with scaling ladders took place.<sup>633</sup>

A siege mound consisted of building an earth ramp to the height of the walls, to allow a storming party to enter. These mounds sometimes had artillery emplaced on them.<sup>634</sup>

At the same time as any of these methods, mining could take place. To hinder countermining concealed entrances might be used. Thus, even if the defenders realised a mine was being dug, they would not know which part of the wall was being attacked. From the minehead a tunnel was dug until it was inside the walls, then a storming party attacked the town. Alternatively, the tunnel could be fired to collapse a wall section or tower, then the breach would be assaulted on the surface. Mines are not known to have been used in sieges in Europe in this period.<sup>635</sup>

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<sup>632</sup> rams, AM XX.6.5-6, 7.12-13, 11.11-15,21, XXI.12.8, XXIII.4.8-9, XXIV.2.12, 4.19; Zos. III.21-22; Veg. IV.14; Mauricius, Strat. X.1.14; vulnerable areas, AM XX.6.5-6, 7.9-13, 11.6; crowbars etc., AM XX.6.3, 11.8,21, XXI.12.6; Veg. IV.14; penthouses, Veg. IV.14-15

<sup>633</sup> towers, Zos. III.18.3; AM XIX.5.1, 7.5, XXI.12.9 (on boats), XXIII.4.10-13, XXIV.2.18-19; Veg. IV.17, 21; Merobaudes, Pan. II.168-169; ladders, AM XIX.5.6, XX.6.3, 7.6, 11.21, XXI.12.6,13, XXIV.4.24; Veg. IV.12, 21, 26; Procopius, BG VI.xix.19-20; Mauricius, Strat. X.1.14

<sup>634</sup> mound, Zos. III.21.3; AM XIX.6.6, 8.1-2; Veg. IV.15; Mauricius, Strat. X.1.14

<sup>635</sup> mining, Zos. III.21.4, 22.2-5; AM XX.11.8, XXI.12.8, XXIV.4.12, 21-23; Veg. IV.24; Anon. PS 13.1-21; Procopius, BG V.xxiii.17-18; cf Agathias, Hist. I.10.3-8; assault, AM XXIV.4.22-24; Zos. III.24; Rostovtzeff, M.I., et al. ed., Excavation at Dura-Europos: Sixth Season (London, 1936), 188-203

Once a breach was made a storming party would enter the city. These storming parties usually used a testudo as the attack formation for protection against missiles. The fighting here was usually very fierce with heavy casualties on both sides. After its fall the city could be sacked.<sup>636</sup>

### Defence

Defence against barbarians attacking fortified sites was simple for the Romans. Provided that the walls were in good condition and there was plenty of stored food, all the Romans had to do was wait to be relieved. While waiting, walls and gateways had to be guarded and care had to be taken that morale was kept high to avoid the possibility of treachery or infiltration (above p129).<sup>637</sup>

When being attacked by Roman armies (and on those rare occasions when barbarians had obtained siege machinery) a more active defence was needed. No attack could take place unless the attackers could reach the walls so the defenders tried to keep them as far away as possible. The main method of doing this was by missile fire from hand-held weapons and artillery. The major function of artillery was to destroy enemy siege equipment (often using incendiaries), but it also had an anti-personnel function and ballistae could be used for sniping.<sup>638</sup>

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<sup>636</sup> storming parties, AM XX.7.14-15; testudo, AM XX.11.8, XXIV.2.14, 4.15, XXVI.8.9; sacks, AM XX.6.7, XXIV.4.25; Zos. III.24.5-7

<sup>637</sup> these problems are discussed by Aeneas Tacticus, ed. and trans, D. Whitehead, (Oxford, 1990); Veg. IV.26-27; Mauricius, Strat. X.3.10

<sup>638</sup> missile fire, AM XIX.1.8, 2.7, 7.4, XX.6.4, 7.2, 11.8,12, XXI.12.6,9, XXIV.2.9, XXVI.8.8, XXXI.6.3, 15.10-11; artillery, sniping, AM XIX.1.7, XX.7.2, XXI.12.10, XXIV.5.6; Veg. IV.23 (suggesting the use of monumental architecture), 29; vs personnel, AM XIX.2.7, 5.6, 6.6, 7.4, XX.6.4, 11.22, XXI.12.9-10, XXIV.2.13,15, 4.16, XXXI.15.12; Veg. IV.22; vs siege equipment, AM XIX.7.6-7, XX.6.4-6, 7.10,12, 11.15; Veg. IV.22; Mauricius, Strat. X.3.5; incendiaries, AM XIX.7.7, XX.6.6, 7.10,12, 11.15-

Passive measures included keeping attackers and their equipment away from the walls was by the ditch. Other defensive measures included hides or padding which could be hung away from and in front of the walls to provide a screen to reduce the impact of enemy artillery missiles. Cloth screens could also be set up overhanging the wall to reduce the effectiveness of arrow fire.<sup>639</sup>

As the attack proceeded the defenders might identify the sector to be assaulted. If so, a second wall might be constructed inside the original circuit. Though this would not be as strong as the original wall, it would still have to be breached and this time the process of attack would take place in close proximity to the defenders, exposing the attackers to more casualties.<sup>640</sup> If rams were used the wall could be padded to absorb the impact and nooses, chains or hooks used to snare their heads. Against siege towers and mounds the wall could be heightened, forcing the attackers to increase their efforts, thus lengthening the siege. Caltraps could be scattered outside attack points such as gates.<sup>641</sup>

Mines were more difficult to defend against. If it was known that the enemy were mining then a countermine could be constructed and used to collapse the attackers' mine. They could also be used to undermine siege towers. Mines could be detected by careful observation or by methods such

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16,18,22-23, XXI.12.10,13, XXIV.4.16; Zos. III.21.1; Veg. IV.8, 18; Anon. PS 13.102-114; Mauricius, Strat. X.3.5

<sup>639</sup> padding, AM XXIV.2.10; Mauricius, Strat. X.3.2-3; Theophylact, Hist. II.18.3; Anon. PS 13.115-120; screens, AM XXI.11.9; Veg. IV.6

<sup>640</sup> second wall, Jul. Or. II.66B; AM XIX.6.67, 8.1-2; Anon. PS 13.49-60

<sup>641</sup> padding, Mauricius, Strat. X.3.3-4; Anon. PS 13.72-91; nooses, etc., Veg. IV.23; AM XX.11.15,19; Mauricius, Strat. X.3.4; caltraps, Procopius, BG VII.xxiv.15-18

as stones in metal bowls placed around the wall circuit which would vibrate if there was underground movement.<sup>642</sup>

Another option open to the defenders throughout the siege was to sortie, often at night, generally in a bid to kill the opposing general or to destroy siege equipment. Julian wished to sortie against the Alamanni besieging him in Sens in 356/457 but was prevented by lack of men and Odovacar was able to sortie from Ravenna in 491, disrupting the Ostrogothic besiegers in a night attack.<sup>643</sup>

Many of these techniques were employed in Julian's siege of Aquileia in 361. Although the city had accepted him as Augustus, it rebelled following the arrival of troops theoretically submitted but still loyal to Constantius II. The rebels consisted of two legions, a regiment of archers and a regiment of cavalry, probably numbering no more than 4,000. The artillery used in the defence of the town was probably integral to these units rather than part of the urban defences.

When Julian learnt of the revolt he detached the magister equitum Jovinus to deal with it. When he was advised that the siege would be long but not difficult Jovinus was replaced by Immo, a comes rei militaris.

Immo's first action was to encircle the city with defence works, after which an unsuccessful attempt was made to induce the defenders to surrender in a session of negotiations. Then a first wave of attackers approached the walls under screens in an attempt to undermine the walls

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<sup>642</sup> detection and countermining, Anon. PS 13.22-48; Veg. IV.20; cf Rostovtzeff, M.I. et al., ed., Excavations at Dura-Europos: Sixth Season (London, 1936), 188-199

<sup>643</sup> sorties, AM XIX.6.4-11, XXI.12.13, XXVI.8.3; Cass. Chron. 1326; Anon. Val. 54; Lib. Or. XVIII.44; Veg. IV.18; Mauricius, Strat. X.3.7

with picks and crowbars, while others used scaling ladders. Both these attacks were driven off.

After the failure of this assault engineering operations began. Nowhere suitable could be found to employ rams, to conduct an effective artillery bombardment or to dig a mine under the walls. One reason for the difficulties was the river Natesio which ran along the eastern edge of the city. But the river did provide the means of the next attempt on the city. Towers of a height able to overlook the wall (i.e. > 10 m) were built on rafts of three boats lashed together. The plan was to lower ramps from the towers to allow an assault on the wall. The attempt failed because of accurate artillery and incendiary fire from the defenders (the towers were large targets and presumably easy to hit), as well as being more vulnerable by being placed on rafts.

The third attack consisted of an assault on the gates, combined with scaling ladders. This attack on the gates was unsuccessful and the defenders began to act more aggressively, sortieing from the posterns and repulsing some of the scaling parties.

Continued reconnaissance by the attackers in the suburbs (the city walls were obviously well within the urban section of the city) was unable to find any weak points and after this a blockade of the city was undertaken. To make this more effective the aqueducts were cut and the river diverted, though the existence of wells within the city meant that this had little immediate impact. Not long after this the garrison of the city surrendered once reliable news of Constantius' death had been received. Negotiations took some time since the garrison was wary of this being a ruse to induce them to surrender.

The length of the siege is impossible to calculate. We know it began before Constantius' death, i.e. before November 3, and the city was still

under siege when Julian reached Constantinople on 11 December. The siege must therefore have lasted at least five weeks, but could have taken a few weeks longer.<sup>644</sup>

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<sup>644</sup> Aquileia, AM XXI.11-12; cf third-century siege, Herodian VIII.2.1-5.9; 452 siege, Jordanes, Getica 219-222; Procopius, BV III.iv.30-35; defences, Boura, M., 'Le Mura Medievali di Aquileia', Antichita Altoadriatico XXXII (1988), 323-363

## DEVELOPMENT

At the start of this chapter it was suggested that little change occurred in operational aspects of the Roman army between 350 and 500. This is a simplification, though in view of the shortage of evidence perhaps a justifiable one. At least we can say that there is little recorded change.

Other sections of this thesis have suggested that there was little change in the military abilities of the barbarians at this period. Claims of growing tactical sophistication, increasing numbers of cavalry or use of horse archers appear unjustified. Thus there were no external factors which might have forced change.

On the Roman side there were no technological or tactical developments that brought about changes. The suggestion that infantry ceased to use armour appears unfounded. The increasing use of allied contingents of barbarians may have had some impact, but this is hard to assess. It seems unlikely that those barbarians employed affected operational matters greatly.

## CONCLUSION

The threat posed by barbarians to the Roman empire has been shown to be spasmodic and never intended (or indeed likely) to cause the empire's fall. Though barbarian military methods and equipment were effective, the social factors limited their ability to compete with the Romans.

The continuity apparent between the Roman army of the fourth century and that of the early-sixth century, between the army of Ammianus and that of Agathias and Procopius, is very striking. There were developments over this period, usually as a result of political, not purely military considerations. This continuity is also present in theoretical writings between Vegetius and Mauricius and the Anonymous author of the Peri Strategikes. Just as importantly, there appears to be a strong link between theory and the practices actually carried out by armies. Furthermore, within Europe at least, the eastern and western means of defence appear to have been similar. All these conclusions involve, to a greater or lesser extent, arguments from silence, but the cumulative weight of evidence in all areas that have been examined supports these conclusions.

The last major conclusion, and perhaps the most important, is that there appear to have been few weaknesses in the army itself, i.e. the Late Roman army was an effective army. This efficiency, best defined as placing the strengths of the Roman army against the weaknesses of its enemies, can be discussed in four areas, political, strategic, operational and tactical, all, inevitably, overlapping.<sup>645</sup>

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<sup>645</sup> discussion criteria derived from Millett, A.R. et al., 'The Effectiveness of Military Organisations', Military Effectiveness, eds. A.R. Millett and W. Murray, (London, 1988), vol. I, 1-30, though some modification is necessary since this work concerns the twentieth century

In what can be defined as the political sphere, where the army competed with other government institutions, the Roman army was very effective. Until the division of the empire in 395 there were no major budgetary problems and these only occurred thereafter in the west, gradually becoming more serious as the fifth century progressed. Otherwise, the army seems to have had no major problems in gaining access to men, horses or equipment.

Strategically, there were some weaknesses. Long-term security for the empire was never possible, though it remained an ideal. The short-term solution adopted after 378, of settling barbarians within the empire, was politically effective, but lessened tax resources and affected internal security. Individually, no settlement was dangerous, but each increased the risks caused by other threats. In general the strategy followed would not, in itself, undermine the state, because of the disparity in resources between barbarian groups and the empire. Otherwise, the army appears reasonably efficient in strategic terms. It seems not to have been overcommitted anywhere and there were no serious adjustments to its structure after 350, though there was some decentralisation of the comitatenses. However, after 395 the cooperation between the eastern and western parts of the empire appears weak and though cooperation occurred over the problem of Vandal Africa, there was none against the Huns.

The operational aspects of the army appear strong. From our limited evidence, the officers seem to have had a professional and realistic outlook on their tasks, though sometimes political considerations affected their activities. Most operations appear to have been effective combined operations, with cavalry, infantry and skirmishers and bridging capabilities present on most occasions. At least until Aetius' death in the west, later in the east, field armies were highly mobile, flexible in their

response to crisis and made good use of their technology, e.g. their armour and bridging equipment. Support services appear generally to have been adequate and the supply problems we know of were usually the result of poor planning, not inherent shortages. Intelligence was not neglected either. Operational doctrine was generally consistent with strategy, though occasionally the requirement to subdivide large forces could not be met satisfactorily and too much depended on a competent general. When this subdivision did occur, the army was at its most efficient in operational terms; though the running battles produced long wars, no decisive results and extensive collateral damage, the maximum number of enemy were destroyed at minimum cost.

Tactically too, the army was very strong. Its tactical approach did not overemphasise battle (and the risks inherent), troops fought in combined arms formations, with good use of missile capability. The concept of surprise attacks was well-exploited and the army was generally aggressively handled. However, at times it could be too aggressive and could commit itself too soon to hand-to-hand combat. The tactical system was simple, though it demanded that officers and non-commissioned officers kept units rigidly in formation. Training, however, was not well-suited to this, with perhaps too much emphasis on individual weapon skills and physical fitness and too little accent, for officers at least, on leadership and command. These skills instead tended to be learnt on the job. The simplicity of the tactical system put very little stress on the logistical system. But the tactical system did function well in placing the strengths of Roman missile power and armoured troops against the mostly unarmoured troops of the enemy.

Overall, the Roman army was at its most efficient on campaign and on the battlefield, but was less effective in political and strategic terms.

The concentration on battlefield competence probably contributed to its inefficiency at these levels. These conclusions accord well with traditional views of the army in the period covered by Ammianus Marcellinus' history, but diverge from orthodoxy by suggesting that the fourth-century army was little different in the years after 378, when the battle of Adrianople was lost and Ammianus' history comes to an end. The army of the fifth century, in both east and west, appears little different from that of the fourth, though lack of evidence makes detailed assessment of its performance difficult.

#### NOTES ON SOURCES

A number of theoretical writings on military affairs have been used in this thesis and some notes on them may be useful. They are, in chronological order, the Anonymous de Rebus Bellicis, Vegetius, Urbicius, Syrianus, the Anonymous Peri Strategikes and Mauricius.

The anonymous author of the de Rebus Bellicis wrote in the mid-fourth century, probably under Valentinian and Valens. His work is a series of suggestions for improving the defence of the empire. There are two types of suggestions, ideas already in use and 'inventions', the latter varying between implausible and useless. The author seems not to have had any military experience and is probably best used as a guide to what could be done, not what was done. A text, translation and conference papers are presented by M.W. Hassall and R.I. Ireland, eds. De Rebus Bellicis, BAR S63, (Oxford, 1979) and a Teubner text is available, ed. R.I. Ireland, (Leipzig, 1982)

Like the de Rebus Bellicis, Vegetius' de Re Militari is a confusing work. Its date is uncertain, the parameters being 383-450. Scholarly opinion is divided between Theodosius and Valentinian III as dedicatees of the work. The latter is preferred here, though the date used has little effect on the thesis as a whole. A second set of problems lie in determining the period Vegetius is discussing, since he deals with both contemporary events and an antiqua legio, a composite of early imperial practice. Much of the material, especially in books III and IV is very practical and the work was very popular with medieval and Renaissance soldiers. The text of Vegetius is edited by C. Lang, De Re Militari (Leipzig, 1885). A good English translation is needed and has been promised by N. Milner (pers. comm.). For dating, Goffart, W., 'The Date and Purpose

of Vegetius' *De Re Militari*', Traditio XXXIII (1977), 65-100 argues convincingly for a fifth-century date, but see also Barnes, T.D., 'The Date of Vegetius', Phoenix XXXIII (1979), 254-257, who argues for composition under Theodosius I.

Urbicius' Epitedeumata was written in the reign of Anastasius. It is in some senses similar to the de Rebus Bellicis, though most of its suggestions are more practical and confined to military affairs. It is a short work. Only three manuscripts of Mauricius' Strategikon contain the work and it is not well-known. The most easily accessible text is Mihaescu, H., ed. Arta Militară (Bucharest, 1970), 368-373, with a Rumanian translation. The manuscript illustrations are now unfortunately lost. There are some comments in Dain, A., 'Les Stratégistes Byzantins', Travaux et Memoires II (1967), 317-392 at 341-342. Two other comments on Urbicius are necessary. He wrote a Tactica which is an epitome of Arrian's Tactica, not an original work. Text and translation are presented by Frster, R., 'Studien zu den griechischen Taktikern: II. Kaiser Hadrien und der Taktika des Urbicius', Hermes XII (1877), 449-471. Secondly, Urbicius is named as the author of Mauricius' Strategikon in some manuscripts. This is almost certainly an error for Mauricius and as far as is known Urbicius did not write a Strategikon.

Syrianus wrote on naval warfare in the late-fifth or early-sixth century. The work (whose beginning is lost) is a practical consideration of naval warfare, discussing ship types, tactics and strategy. A text is published in Dain, A., Naumachica (Paris, 1943), 43-55 and there is a brief discussion in Dain, A., 'Les Stratégistes Byzantins', Travaux et Memoires II (1967), 317-392 at 342. See also Lammert, F., 'Die älteste erhaltene Schrift über Seetaktik und ihre Beziehung zum Anonymous Byzantinus des sehtes Jahrhunderts zu Vegetius und zu Aineas' Strategikon', Klio XXXIII

(1940), 271-288. Redd<sup>ς</sup> M., Mare Nostrum (Rome, 1986), 680-684, translates IX.1-7, 9-41

The Anonymous Peri Strategikes has also lost its beginning. It has to be dated from internal evidence and seems to belong to Justinian's reign. However, it has been pointed by Lee, A.D., Information, Frontiers and Barbarians, unpublished, (Cambridge, 1986), 111n63, that section 43 is identical to the proemium of the tenth-century De Legationibus, which one would expect to be original. There is a treatise on archery appended to the work. The text is written simply and clearly by a soldier, though probably not by a commander of combat troops. It has recently been edited and translated by Dennis, G.T., Three Byzantine Military Treatises (Washington, 1985), 1-136.

The last military writer used is Mauricius, who wrote a Strategikon in the late-sixth century. Most of the work is concerned with organisation, equipment, tactics and operations. There is some duplication, but most of the advice is clear and practical. A following section (chapter XI) consists of four short essays giving strategic and operational recommendations for fighting the Persians, Slavs and Antes, Huns and other Scythians and Western barbarians. These theoretical recommendations are similar to the practices followed by generals in the histories of Ammianus, Procopius and Agathias. The last chapter (XII) was appended after the main text was written. It incorporates a (probably) Justinianic treatise on infantry equipment, organisation and tactics (here cited as XII.8), a Cynegetica (probably written by Urbicius), a diagram of a fortified camp and, in three manuscripts, Urbicius' Epitedeumata. A text and German translation has been published by Dennis, G.T., Das Strategikon des Maurikios (Vienna, 1981) and an English translation, Maurice's Strategikon (Philadelphia, 1984). The former was not available to me, so text

references (almost identical except in chapter XII) are from the text and translation of Mihaescu, H., ed. Arta Militară (Bucharest, 1970). Dennis' editions do not include Urbicius' Epitedeumata.

A few other sources require some comment. The Notitia Dignitatum is frequently cited in this thesis. Its dating is contentious, and here I will state the assumptions I made without trying to defend them. The western part dates from 395, but has been completely revised, to c.408 then partially thereafter to c.423, with these later revisions being concentrated on military matters, particularly those concerning the office of the magister peditum. The eastern part dates from 395. The Notitia has generated a considerable body of secondary literature. Bartholomew, P. and Goodburn, R., Aspects of the Notitia Dignitatum, BAR S15, (Oxford, 1976). A new edition is badly needed, with colour plates of the major manuscripts. A new text was promised by Maier in 1968 but has not yet appeared.

The fragments of Eunapius, Olympiodorus, Priscus, Malchus, Candidus and Menander are quoted from Blockley's editions, which contain a concordance for cross-reference with earlier numbering systems. Renatus Profuturus Frigeridus (RPF) and Sulpicius are extracted from Gregory of Tours, History of the Franks II.8-9 as follows. RPF fr.1 [GT HF II.8]: Dum haec...celebrandus; fr.2 [GT HF II.9]: Interea Respendial...subvenisset; fr.3: Accito Constantinus...redituri; fr.4: Vix dum quartus...truncatus est; fr.5: Hisdem diebus...inruptione; fr.6: Eodem tempore Castinus...mittitur. Sulpicius fr.1 [GT HF II.9]: Eo tempore Genobaude...praestituerunt; fr.2: Eo tempore Carietto...diversabantur; fr.3: Nihil Arbogastis...poneretur; fr.4: Post dies...concessit; fr.5: Dum

diversa...apparere; fr.6: Dehinc Eugenius...ostentaret. The appropriate passages are italicised in Arndt and Krusch's edition of Gregory of Tours.

## Appendix 1

### Other Ranks of the late Roman Army

Name	Nationality	Regiment	Reference
Abruna	PB	Batavi Seniores	Diehl 544
Adabrandus	PB	Scutarii	CIL VI.37276
Aemilianus	PR	Cornuti Seniores	HSCP 81 (1977), 257-284
Agustus	PR	Mattiaci Seniores	CIL V.8737
Alagildus	PB	Equites Bracchiati Seniores	ILS 2804
Albinus	PR		CIL V.1796
Andia	PB	Bracchiati	CIL V.8740
Antiochus	PR	Candidati	CIL VI.32953
Antoninus	PR	Dalmatae	CIL XIII.3457
Aristophanes	PR	Candidati	Nilus, Ep. II.220
Arnpio	PR	Mattiaci Seniores	CIL V.8739
Augustus	PR		Evagrius, HE II.1
Avitianus	PR		Eugippius, V.Sev. 44.2
Bantio	PB		ILS 2807
Batemodus	PB	Heruli Seniores	Diehl 500
Buraido	O	Numerus Hippo Regium	ILS 2811
Carterius	PR		Libanius, Ep. 656
Cascinivus	PR	Schola Armaturarum	Diehl 497
Charietto	PR		AM XVII.10.5
Claudius	PR	Ioviani	AM XXIX.3.7
Constantinus	PR		Orosius VII.40.4
Danielus	PR	Scutarii Clibanarii	SEG XX.332
Dassiulus	PR	Mattiaci Iuniores	CIL V.8744
Derdio	PB	Ioviani Seniores	ILS 2789
Diocles	PR	Hiberi	CIL V.8745
Ditubistus	DR	Excubitores	Procopius, HA VI.3
Domminus	PR	Excubitores	MAMA VIII.323
Donatus	PR		AE 1956.251
Dorus	PR	Scutarii	AM XVI.6.2
Dracontius?	PR	Equites	CIL VI.31950
Emeterius	PR	Gentiles	CIL XIII.8331
Eucarius	PR	Scutarii Secundi	CIL VI.32949
Eusebius	PR	Schola Palatina Gallica	Symm. Ep. IX.55
Eutocius	DR		Suda E.3770
Eutychianus	PR	Primoarmeniaci	Malalas 330
Evingus	PB	Equites Bracchiati Seniores	ILS 2804
Exsuperius	PR	Victores	AM XXIV.4.3
Fasta	PB	Equites Batavi Seniores	Diehl 498
Firminus	PR		PL XXXII.532, Ep.116
Flainus	PB	Mattiaci Seniores	ILS 9215
Fortunatus	PR	Ioviani	Diehl 551
Frontinus	PR		ILS 2783
Gainas	DB		Soz. VII.4.1
Gaudentius	PR	Scutarii	AM XXVI.5.14
Hariso	PB	Heruli Seniores	CIL V.8750
Higgo	PB	Scutarii Tertii	ILS 2790
Ianuarinus	PR	Mattiaci Iuniores	CIL V.8751
Ilateuta	PB	Bracchiati	?
Ingenuus	PR	Equites Catafracti Seniores	CIL XIII.1848
Ioannes	PR	Schola Prima	V.Sabae 38
Ioannes	PR	Schola	CIG 8869
Ioannes	PR		AE 1891.157
Ioannes	PR	Numerus Isaurorum	V.Sabae 1
Ioannes	PR	Equites Octavodalmatae	ILS 2805
Iovinianus	PR	Excubitores?	Nilus, Ep.II.322
Isidorus	PR	Excubitores?	C.Porph, de Caer I.93498
Iustinianus	DR	Schola	Procopius, HA VI.3
Iustinus	DR	Excubitores	Theod. HE III.15.4
Iuventinus	PR	Pezetairoi	AM XXIII.5.12
Jovianus	PR		CIL V.8752
Launius	PR	Batavi Seniores	AM XXVII.10.12
Lupicinus	PR	Schola Gentilium	AE 1961.197
Lycianus	DR	Scutarii	Zos. III.26.5
Macameus	PR		CIL V.8768
Manio	PB	Bructeri	CIL V.8768
Mansuetus	PR	Leones Seniores	CIL V.8755

Marcianus	DR		Evagrius, HE II.1
Marcus	PR		ILS 2783
Marinus	PR		CIL XII.149
Marinus	PR		AM XV.3.10
Martinus	PR	Prima Minerva	ILS 2782
Martinus	DR	Schola	Sev. V.Mart. II
Maurus	PR	Petulantes	AM XX.4.18
Maurus	PR		Zos. III.26.5
Maxentius	PR		ILS 2783
Maximianus	PR	Martii	Diehl 473
Maximinus	PR		ILCV 822
Maximinus	PR	Pezetairoi	Theod. HE III.15.4
Memorius	PR	Ioviani	CIL XII.673
Menas	PR	Mattiaci Seniores	ILS 9481a
Mundilo	PB	Schola Gentilium	CIL XI.1708
Natuspardo	PB	Scutarii	AM XXVII.10.16
Odiscus	PB	Equites Bracchiati Seniores	Diehl 514
Olympius	PR		MAMA VII.129
Paulus	PR	Milites Histicorum	ILS 2787
Paulus	PR	Schola Secunda	CIL VI.31791
Perula	PB		ILS 2783
Plaianus	PR	Quintodalmatae	CIL XIII.3458
Reginus	PR	Candidati	Nilus, Ep. II.329
Roveos	PR	Comites Sagittarii Seniores	CIL V.8758
Sabinianus	PR		ILS 2780
Sallustius	PR	Scutarii	AM XXIX.1.16
Sallustius	PR	Ioviani	AM XXIX.3.7
Salvius	PR	Scutarii	AM XXVII.10.12
Sanctus	PR	Iovii/Ioviani	CIL III.10232
Sauma	PB	Equites Bracchiati Seniores	CIL V.8760
Savinus	PR	Batavi Seniores	CIL V.8759
Segetius	PR	Schola Gentium	CIL XI.1711
Servilius	DB	Bracchiati	?
Severinus	PR	Equites Catafractarii	Diehl 504
Silvestrius	PR	Chattuarii	CIL XIII.7298
Silvmarus	PB	Heruli	Diehl 548
Sindila	PB	Heruli Seniores	ILS 2796
Sophianus	PR	Schola	Nilus, Ep. I.236
Sporacius	PR	Schola	Malalas 387
Stephanus	PR	Schola Armaturarum	ILS 8883
Superianus	PR		ILS 2783
Theodorus	PR	Schola	MAMA VII p40n225
Thyrsus	PR		Nilus, Ep.II.238
Ursacius	PR	Batavi Seniores	CIL V.8776
Ursacius	PR	Leones Seniores	Diehl 501
Ursinus	PR		ILS 2783
Ursus	PR		Jord. Getica 235
Valens	PR	Balistarii Seniores	AE 1908.178
Valentinus	PR		ILS 2906
Valerius	PR		Bull.arch.histDalmatia33
Vassio	PR	Batavi Seniores	CIL V.8773
Victorinus	PR	Batavi Seniores	CIL V.8761
Victurus	PR	Sagittarii Nervii	CIL V.8762
Vitalianus	PR	Iovii/Victores	AM XXVI.7.15
Vitalianus	PR	Vexillatio Hip. Catafracti	BGU 316
Vitalianus	PR	Eruli	AM XXV.10.9
Vitalis	PR	Martii?	Diehl 473?
Zemarchus	DR	Excubitores	Procopius, HA VI.3
...ercus	PR	Equites Octavodalmatae	CIL V.8777
...olus	PR	Fortenses	Diehl 547
...talis	PR	Ioviani Seniores	CIL XIII.3687
...tinus	PR	Schola Scutarii Primi	CIL VI.32948
Anon.	DB		ILS 2814
Anon.	DB	Scutarii	AM XXXI.10.3
Anon.	DR	Equites	AM XVIII.6.16
Anon.	DB	Schola	Ambrose, de Tobia II.39
Anon.	DR		Evagrius, HE II.1
Anon.	DB	Candidati	Jerome, V.Hil.22
Anon.	DB		Olymp. fr.16

All abbreviations follow the conventions of PLRE I and II

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\* sources marked with this symbol receive further comment in the section 'Notes on Sources'

<u>MGH</u>	<u>Monumenta Germania Historica</u>
<u>AA</u>	<u>Auctores Antiquissimi</u>
<u>SRM</u>	<u>Scriptores Reum Merovingicarum</u>
<u>PL</u>	<u>Patrologia Latina</u> , ed. J.P. Migne
<u>PG</u>	<u>Patrologia Graeca</u> , ed. J.P. Migne
<u>FHG</u>	<u>Fragmenta Historicorum Graecorum</u>
<u>CSEL</u>	<u>Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticarum Latinorum</u>

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#### The Northwest Frontier

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