

**Senators, bishops, *decuriones* and barbarians, in the 4th to 5th
centuries**



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Introduction

Intellectual inspirations, research questions and timeframe

The barbarians were adapting themselves to Roman ways, were becoming accustomed to hold markets, and were meeting in peaceful assemblages. They had not, however, forgotten their ancestral habits, their native manners, their old life of independence, or the power derived from arms. Hence, so long as they were unlearning these customs gradually and by the way, as one may say, under careful watching, they were not disturbed by the change in their manner of life, and were becoming different without knowing it.¹ (transl E. Carey and H. B. Foster)

Cassius Dio's description of the romanisation of the indigenous people of Germania at the turn of eras is one of the earliest attempts at conceptualising processes modern scholars would label as the assimilation, acculturation or integration of peoples living at the northern peripheries of the Roman Empire, collectively known as the 'barbarians'. According to Cassius Dio, the transformative power of the Roman Empire on the social practice and customs of conquered peoples was eventually held back by Publius Quinctilius Varus' taxation regime and the resulting hostile backlash from the locals. The passage reveals not only consciousness of how the blurring of boundaries between 'barbarians' and Romans, such as customs and socio-economic relations, served to gradually strengthen imperial control over them, but also a discourse on policies of acculturation and subjugation in the Early Empire. The fragility of the process, threatened by individual mistakes did not escape Cassius Dio's attention.

It is fitting to begin a thesis, titled *Senators, bishops, decuriones and barbarians, in the 4th to 5th centuries*, concerned to a great degree with issues of establishing and transcending cultural, social and ethnic boundaries between 'barbarians' entering the Roman Empire from the Northerneast and the Roman elites, by acknowledging that

¹ Cassius Dio, *Roman History* 56.18.2.

similar themes were issues not only of the period discussed and a matter of study of modern scholars, but indeed accompanied the Roman Empire from its very beginning.

The impact of the so-called “Migration Period” [Völkerwanderung] on the Roman Empire and its fall has been a topic of lively academic discussions for centuries. In recent decades, the predominant sides of the discussions labelled as ‘romanists’, who perceived the post-Roman world as demonstrating considerable continuity with the previous era, and ‘germanists’, who claimed that the coming of the ‘barbarians’ meant a clear break with the previous political and social realities, gave way to the views of ‘transformationists’, best represented by the current generation of scholars of the so-called Vienna School, such as Walter Pohl and his pupils.² Taking the view of a transformation of the Roman world, rather than its fall and collapse, they also nuanced the approach towards questions of ethnic identities and their impact on political change within the Empire. In the new approach these identities became fluid constructs first instrumentalised by the Romans, and only later on employed by ‘barbarians’ as a basis for a political identity. There are no longer believed to be fully fledged ‘barbarian’ peoples

² For a survey of these theoretical frameworks, their origins and their positions in debates at the beginning of the 21st century see W. Pohl, ‘Rome and the barbarians in the fifth century’, *Antiquité Tardive*, 16 (2008), pp. 93-101. The ‘romanist’ and ‘germanist’ positions certainly did not disappear, but have been refined over the last couple of decades. The most notable ‘romanist’ in recent years was Walter Goffart and some of his pupils. One foundation of the ‘romanist’ approach is the theory of accommodation of the ‘barbarians’ in the Roman Empire expressed in W. Goffart, *Barbarians and Romans, A.D. 418-584: the techniques of accommodation* (Princeton, 1980), developed and pushed even further by J. Durliat, ‘Cité, impôt et intégration des barbares’ in: W. Pohl (ed.) *Kingdoms of the Empire* (Leiden, 1997), pp. 153-179, and criticised, amongst others, by W. Liebeschuetz ‘Cities, taxes and the accommodation of the Barbarians – the theories of Durliat and Goffart’ in: W. Pohl (ed.) *Kingdoms of the Empire*, pp. 135-151. The second foundation of this approach is criticism of using the literary sources for examining non-Roman collectives and their ethnicity, articulated in W. Goffart, *The narrators of barbarian history A.D. 550-880. Jordanes, Gregory of Tours, Bede and Paul the Deacon* (Princeton, 1988) and W. Goffart, *Barbarian tides: the Migration Age and the later Roman Empire* (Philadelphia, 2006), which argues for the insignificance of ethnic identities or boundaries between collectives for the collapse of the Roman Empire (see also below). Goffart’s arguments were employed by G. Halsall, *Barbarian migrations and the Roman West, 376-568* (Cambridge, 2007). The ‘germanist’ position was supplanted by a ‘barbarianist’ one, which, recognising that there was no ‘Germanic’ collective in antiquity that could be ‘blamed’ for the destruction of the Roman Empire, still attributed its demise to the ‘barbarian’ groups and individuals who entered it. This approach can be found in P. Heather, *The fall of the Roman Empire: a new history of Rome and the barbarians* (Oxford, 2005), P. Heather, *Empires and barbarians: migration, development and the birth of Europe* (London, 2010) or B. Ward-Perkins, *The fall of Rome and the end of civilization* (Oxford, 2005).

invading the Roman Empire. Nor were they elite groups of warriors bearing a kernel of tradition, which then served to reconstitute their ethnic identity within the new realities, according to the model of ‘Traditionskern’ of Reinhard Wenskus, later developed by Walter Pohl’s teacher – Herwig Wolfram.³ The Viennese school, increasingly influenced by the ‘constructivist’ view on ethnic identity, now dominant in academic discourse, refined its idea of ethnogenesis. Constructivists, unlike essentialists, who believe ethnic identities provided a stable concept regardless of different social contexts, argued for ethnic identity as something ‘constructed’ and ‘contested’ in the process of constant becoming.⁴ Scholars from the Vienna school adopted this approach, though not uncritically, and began to study ethnic identity as a process in which communities constructed and reconstructed their sense of identity in the Roman context, using elements of non-material and material culture as well as Roman and Christian discourse.⁵

This thesis aims to follow up the strain of scholarship of the Vienna school by examining relations between Roman and ‘barbarian’ elites within the Roman Empire in the 4th and 5th century, studying the impact and role of identities in shaping the political and social realities of the times, while at the same time critically analysing the literary

³ R. Wenskus, *Stammesbildung und Verfassung: das Werden der frühmittelalterlichen Gentes* (Köln - Graz - Böhlau, 1961); H. Wolfram, *History of the Goths* (Berkeley - London, 1988).

⁴ For definitions of constructivism see: A. Wimmer, *Ethnic boundary making: institutions, power, networks* (Oxford, 2013), pp. 1-7; R. Brubaker ‘Ethnicity, race and nationalism’, *Annual review of sociology* 35 (2009) pp. 21-42, particularly p. 28.

⁵ W. Pohl, ‘Telling the difference: signs of ethnic identity’ in: W. Pohl and H. Reimitz (eds) *Strategies of distinction: the construction of ethnic communities, 300-800* (Leiden-Boston-Köln, 1998), pp. 17-69 particularly pp. 67-68; W. Pohl ‘Ethnicity, theory, and tradition: a response’ in: A. Gillett (ed.) *On barbarian identity: critical approaches to ethnicity in the early Middle Ages* (Turnhout, 2002), pp. 221-239, where he describes his approach at p. 238: “They were *gentes* among many others, distributed over wide areas; to give them a sense of community required more sophisticated forms of communication. This is an idea that I have repeatedly proposed, and it is not simply functionalist or instrumentalist. It takes the social construction of reality into account but is not wholly constructivist either.” *Contra* his positions, in the same volume, W. Goffart ‘Does the distant past impinge on the Invasion Age Germans?’, pp. 21-37, and A. C. Murray ‘Reinhard Wenskus on ‘ethnogenesis’, ethnicity, and the origin of the Franks’, pp. 39-68, who criticise the possibility of studying the ethnic identity of ‘barbarians’ on the basis of literary sources. For how the discourse of identity could be mediated through biblical terms, see G. Heydemann ‘Peoples of God? The uses of the Bible and the language of community in the post-Roman West’ in: E. Hovden, C. Lutter, W. Pohl (eds) *Meanings of community across medieval Eurasia* (Leiden, 2016), pp. 27-60.

image of these groups and individuals created by the Roman authors. In my study, I am also employing non-constructivist concepts such as the idea of ‘boundary’ introduced by the sociologist Andreas Wimmer and elements of the intersectional approach, when relevant.⁶ The survey of these phenomena is the subject of the first part of the thesis: *Roman commanders – barbarian warlords*. The second focus of the thesis is the political and diplomatic forms in the emerging sub-Roman kingdoms, as well as earlier socio-cultural practices such as *amicitia* that provide more personal context to these developments; these are the subject of the second part: *Emperors, kings and amici*. The final part, *Bishops and women: At the intersection of ethnic, religious and gender identities*, returns to the subject of the impact of identity within the elites, but concentrates on its role for the clergy and women, considering its influence on the Church and intersection with gender roles and identities.

The first part is devoted to individual cases of ‘barbarian’ warlords and commanders operating in the Roman Empire: Tribigild, Gainas and Ardaburii. I follow their careers to explore how their relationship with the imperial apparatus and Roman elites was shaped by their backgrounds. Was their background instrumentalised in power plays, coming down to a cynically employed characterisation? Was a salient ethnic identity merely an obstacle to advancement in the Roman establishment or perhaps a potential asset to exploit? How were boundaries made meaningful by specific cultural and political requirements and conditions?

⁶ For the concept of boundary, see Wimmer, *Ethnic boundary making*, p. 204: “[Boundary-making approach] asks how and under what conditions cultural difference is produced, how and under what conditions closely knit communities emerge, and how and under what conditions individuals do identify with which ethnic categories.” For the intersectional approach, which examines how a combination of different identities can contribute to a different position in the social hierarchies than the one resulting from each of these separate identities, see R. K. Dhamon ‘Considerations on mainstreaming intersectionality’ *Political research quarterly*, 64/1 (2011), pp. 230-243.

The second part of the thesis focuses on the process of development of post-Roman authority, with ‘barbarian’ leaders and kings ruling over former Roman provinces and arranging their relations with the local elites and the remaining imperial establishment. In this part I discuss Roman and ‘barbarian’ sources for the emergent forms of political power in the early sub-Roman kingdoms. Following these issues, I take a look at the ways diplomatic exchange between emperors, ‘barbarian’ kings and provincial elites took place in the 5th century, preceding it with a discussion of *amicitia* between Romans and ‘barbarians’ in Roman service.

In the third and last part of the thesis, attention is brought to other groups that could be labelled as ‘barbarian’, but were not warlords, officers or kings. This part is devoted to bishops, clergy and women, offering a study of the intersection of ethnic, gender, religious and social identities, and the resulting social and cultural practices conducted by them within the reality of the late and post-Roman world.

The timeframe of the 4th to 5th century is chosen to account for the processes of integration of the ‘barbarians’ within the Roman Empire, the creation and recreation of identities and boundaries that would be later employed to shape the post-Roman West, as well as political and social practices produced in the context of the Late Empire. I agree with ‘barbarianists’ and ‘transformationists’ on the saliency of the period, even if I diverge from their positions in certain aspects, where I find ‘romanist’ views to be more accurate. At the same time, I recognise the fact that issues I am discussing in this thesis are by no means limited to the chosen period or separate from processes and phenomena in the preceding and following centuries. Especially the evidence on the 6th century, with its fully-fledged sub-Roman kingdoms, could be argued to present certain subjects of this thesis in a much more pronounced way than the 5th century. I take note of this by making excursions into the 6th century when needed, but I have no ambition to engage fully with

this evidence and issues of the 6th century. This is partly due to the length limitations of a thesis, but predominantly because I aim to study the beginnings of post-Roman royal power in the presence of a failing, but still existing, imperial authority in the West.

Terminology

One of the problems of exploring questions regarding identities in this period, ethnic identities among them, is that we are dealing with many different authors, who had their own specific understanding of identities, their mental maps and attempts at conceptualisation of identities in order to present their narratives. Nor is it simply a binary system of 'self' and 'other', of 'Roman' and 'barbarian', but rather a spectrum on which one can be less or more Roman, less or more 'barbarian', simply by virtue of different factors making specific boundaries salient. Social position, acculturation marked by forms of participation in literary or material culture, ethnicisation and exclusion done for political purpose, or systemic social hierarchy orchestrated by others could all contribute to make non-Roman identity meaningful or not. There were degrees of exclusion and inclusion applied to and by individuals and groups, depending on how identity boundaries were drawn at a time. As we are going to see in the case of the family of the Ardaburii or of the Roman military commander Silvanus, one could be 'othered' and 'normalised' depending not just on the specific political situation, but many different factors stemming from pre-existing networks of friends and associates or links to communities.

I understand the term 'barbarian' within this thesis in two ways. Firstly, as the term used in the Latin and Greek of the period for a number of different meanings. A 'barbarian' could be a synonym for a savage, uncultured man. He could be the quintessential 'other', a representative of foreign peoples with their exotic language and customs as described by ethnographers of the ancient world, such as Herodotos and Tacitus, who often constructed their 'other' more as a mirror in which a Greek or Roman

could see himself, than as an actual individual.⁷ ‘Barbarian’ could also be a politicised term, synonymous with the enemy of the Roman Empire.⁸ One individual could be described by the same author as ‘barbarian’ when he opposed the Roman order, to be called an ally on a different occasion.⁹ As work of Patrick Amory and Jonathan Arnold shows, this political language of ‘us’ vs ‘barbarians’ was easily employed in 6th century Ostrogothic Italy by Theodoric the Amal and his court; here ‘us’ meant Romans and Goths, and the role of ‘barbarians’ was played by Franks and Burgundians.¹⁰

Secondly, I employ modern scholarship’s understanding of the term deriving from antiquity, but applied consistently towards individuals and groups either of the so-called *Barbaricum* or descendants of such who forged their careers and kingdoms in the Roman Empire. The subtle difference is in the consistency with which modern scholarship applies the word ‘barbarian’ as an umbrella term for all non-Roman peoples, in contrast to the inconsistent application of it by the primary sources.

No less controversy may be invoked by the usage of the term ‘Germanic’. Walter Goffart criticised its applicability to late antique northern ‘barbarians’. He considered it to be more of a 19th century concept of German romanticism and nationalism, which projected onto the past the vision of a great unified German world encompassing most of Northern and Central Europe, with shared myths, customs, political organisation and

⁷ See more in chapter 3.3.

⁸ It is such an understanding of ‘barbarian’ as an enemy that can be found in the law prohibiting marriages with ‘barbarians’ found in *Codex Theodosianus* 3.14.1, which is examined by H. S. Sivan, ‘Why not marry a barbarian? Marital frontiers in late antiquity (the example of CTh 3.14.1)’ in R. W. Mathisen and H. S. Sivan (eds.), *Shifting frontiers in late antiquity* (Aldershot, 1996), pp. 136-145, who argued that the legislation had to do with the specific case of Firmus’ rebellion in Africa, rather than a general policy towards *Barbaricum*.

⁹ M. S. Bjornlie ‘Romans, barbarians and provincials in the Res Gestae of Ammianus Marcellinus’ forthcoming in: C. Grifoni, C. Gantner, W. Pohl and M. Pollheimer (eds.), *Transformations of Romanness: regions and identities*.

¹⁰ P. Amory, *People and identity in Ostrogothic Italy, 489-554* (Cambridge, 1997); J. J. Arnold, *Theoderic and the Roman imperial restoration* (Cambridge, 2014); J. J. Arnold ‘The battle of Vouillé and the restoration of the Roman Empire’ in: R. W. Mathisen, D. Shanzer (eds.), *The battle of Vouillé, 507 CE: where France began* (Boston-Berlin, 2012), pp. 111-136. Theoderic’s propaganda of reclaiming Gaul for the Roman Empire from the barbarians is particularly illustrative for this.

language, than a term academics could and should use to describe the ‘barbarians’.¹¹ Goffart’s criticism is certainly correct, although he aims it at many modern scholars who certainly do not subscribe to such an understanding. However, as a recent conference in York showed, the term is still used in problematic ways.¹²

When ‘Germanic’ is used in this thesis it is either as a reference to Germanic languages or to *Germani*, an antiquarian term used by late antique authors towards Franks, Suevi or Alammani, with no intention of denoting them as a collective that would self-identify as such.¹³ I do not apply it to other groups, such as Tervingi, Greuthungi, Silingi and Hasdingi, who Romans would call Gothic or Scythian¹⁴. It is also worth noting that employing ‘Germanic’ as an alternative to ‘barbarian’ does not work even when we consider it as a strictly linguistic category, ignoring differences between Western-, Eastern- and North-Germanic languages, as it leads to the exclusion of influential ‘barbarian’ groups who were not originally Germanic speakers, such as the Alans and Huns.¹⁵

A word of caution is necessary also in regard to terms such as Franks, Alammani, Goths and Vandals. They presuppose a certain uniformity of the collectives designated by them and were part of the Roman discourse of power and of putting the world in order.¹⁶ It is difficult to define to what extent they reflected the self-identification of individuals and groups labelled with such ethnonyms. Primary sources for the 4th century

¹¹ Goffart, *Barbarian tides*, pp. 40-55.

¹² *Interrogating the ‘Germanic’: A Category and its Use in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages*, University of York, May 13-15 2016.

¹³ Ammianus is one late antique author to employ this term, for example in XVI 11 6 and 10-11 or XVI 12 19, much the way other authors would describe for example Goths as Scythians.

¹⁴ See below, especially Synesios’ usage of the term in chapter 1.1.

¹⁵ Given the association of some Alans with Tervingi and Greuthungi, and then with Suevi, Silingi and Hasdingi, it is possible they adopted the Germanic languages of their allies. Multilingualism is attested for the Hunnic elites. According to Priskos, fr. 8, Hunnic, Gothic and Latin were languages of the elites in the Hunnic Empire.

¹⁶ For contradicting views of ancient authors on the limits of Roman power and whether ‘barbarians’ were imperial subjects or not, see C. Ando, *Imperial ideology and provincial loyalty in the Roman Empire* (Berkeley, 2000), pp. 293-298; also see chapter 2.3.

often attest smaller groups: such as Tervingi, Greuthungi and Taifali labelled as Goths; Hasdingi and Silingi labelled as Vandals; Chamavi, Bructeri, Chattuari, Chatti, Amsivarii, Tubantes and Salii counted as Franks; or Bucinobantes and Lentienses counted as Alamanni. But we cannot tell whether these supra-groups were more reflective of unity, political, social or cultural, observed at some point by Romans, or only a matter of Roman imperial and literary discourse.¹⁷ It is certain these terms eventually became identifiers for the people in question, especially after the formation of the sub-Roman kingdoms, but this may very well have been due to the influence of the Roman discourse. There are indications that Romans were aware of the role of the Empire in shaping peoples beyond its borders.¹⁸

If models discerned for the Early Empire and ‘barbarian’ peoples in its sphere of influence can be indicative also of the ways the Later Empire reified identities, then the role of imperial discourse and institutions acting on it cannot be downplayed. The case of the Batavians, one ethnic group in the border regions at the Rhine frontier of the Roman Empire, can be particularly illustrative. Batavian soldiers who served in the auxiliary units of the Roman military, were credited by Roman authorities with characteristics that made them valuable soldiers. The Roman Empire shaped the meaning of the Batavian identity and its markers, much as the British Empire did with Gurkhas, naming military units ‘Batavian’ and recruiting them solely amongst peoples labelled as ‘Batavian’ by Roman

¹⁷ For a view doubting their applicability to political and cultural realities over longer periods of time, see A. Gillett ‘Was ethnicity politicized in the earliest medieval kingdoms?’ in: A. Gillett (ed.), *On barbarian identity: critical approaches to ethnicity in the early Middle Ages* (Turnhout, 2002), pp. 85-121, particularly p. 120.

¹⁸ The *Laterculus Veronensis* headlined a list of ethnonyms: *Gentes barbarae, quae pullulaverunt sub imperatoribus*. in: *Notitia dignitatum: accedunt notitia urbis Constantinopolitanae et Laterculi provinciarum*, ed. O. Seeck, (Frankfurt am Main, 1962), pp. 251-252; R. Steinacher ‘Who is the barbarian? Considerations on the Vandal royal title’ in: G. Heydemann and W. Pohl (eds) *Post-Roman transitions: Christian and barbarian identities in the early medieval West* (Turnhout, 2013), pp. 437-485, particularly p. 443.

institutions, creating what Cynthia Enloe called an ‘ethnic soldier’.¹⁹ At the same time nearly all epigraphic evidence of individuals identifying themselves as Batavians comes from regions outside of the soldiers’ homeland, suggesting that expressing such identity was relevant in the Roman context.²⁰

For the relevant period, we lack such evidence, except for an often cited inscription of an individual identifying himself as a Roman soldier and Frankish ‘citizen’, ILS 2814: *Francus ego cives, Romanus miles in armis egregia virtute tuli bello mea dextera sem[p]er*. In this case the inscription was also found far away from the homeland of ‘Franks’, in Aquincum on the Danubian frontier and could denote a similar model to the Batavian one, that is that the Frankish designation was relevant only in a Roman context, while locally individuals and groups would self-define differently, as Salii, Chamavi etc. Bearing this in mind, I am still going to employ such ethnonyms throughout the thesis, not just for the 5th century rulers, who made the first steps on the road to defining their political communities as ‘Goths’ or ‘Vandals’, but also for various individuals and groups in the 4th century. First of all, to be consistent with the language of the primary sources and that of many modern scholars. Secondly, because these exonyms are part of the discursive formation of boundaries between groups in the Roman society. Much as I sympathise with Vesi or Tervingi, who might have subscribed to their endonyms instead of identities such as ‘Goths’ projected on them by the imperial regime and the rest of the Roman society, they still operated in a socio-political reality in which they were denoted as such.

¹⁹ C. H. Enloe, *Ethnic soldiers: state security in divided societies* (London, 1980). C. van Driel-Murray ‘Ethnic soldiers: the experience of the Lower Rhine tribes’ in: S. Seibel and T. Grünewald (eds.), *Kontinuität und Diskontinuität: Germania inferior am Beginn und am Ende der römischen Herrschaft* (Berlin, 2003), pp. 200-217.

²⁰ N. Roymans, *Ethnic identity and imperial power: the Batavians in the early Roman Empire* (Amsterdam, 2004), pp. 221-234: the self-image propagated by the Batavians in their own homeland was still mediated through engagement with the Roman discourse. They took an active role in constructing and reconstructing their identity, becoming a subject of the process not just an object.

The term that is often used in opposition to ‘barbarian’ – Roman – is not without its own conceptual problems. A convergence of cultures, economies and societies in the Mediterranean region could be observed since the 3rd century B.C. The Roman conquest was as much an amplifier for this process as its result.²¹ Yet the ‘Roman’ world we discuss was one of countless different identities: linguistic, ethnic, religious or regional. All were present in the Empire.

Latin may have been the dominant language of the West, but it did not fully replace the indigenous languages. In Roman Africa, Punic, associated with the ancient Carthaginians, was still present in the countryside and known by the representatives of the local civic elites, such as Augustine of Hippo. In Britain, the predecessor of modern Welsh clearly survived Roman rule to resurge after its collapse. The case was similar in the East, where the dominant Greek coexisted with such languages as Syriac in Syria and Mesopotamia, or Coptic in Egypt, even stronger than their western counterparts, due to their position as languages of the local Churches. Greek and Latin also subverted each other’s dominance. Southern Italy and Sicily were Greek-speaking, as the old Greek colonies remained the most important civic centres of the region, while Latin had a strong presence in the northern Balkans and in cities like Berytos, a famous centre for Roman law, and Constantinople. Language was, however, often a mark of a differing ethnic identity that did not exclude the Roman, ethnic identity. One could be a Jew by birth and a Roman citizen, as Paul the Apostle or later on a Phoenician by birth, a Greek by education and a Roman in the legal and political sense, as the Neoplatonist philosopher Porphyrios.

The model of Mediterranean civilisation meant that civic communities were the most prevalent kind of communal identity. Local traditions, city monuments, games and

²¹ J. Conant, *Staying Roman: conquest and identity in Africa and the Mediterranean, 439-700* (Cambridge, 2012), pp. 5-6.

festivals organised by the curial elites all contributed to a strong sense of belonging, often manifested in fierce rivalries with neighbouring cities. Citizens felt pride in their homes and often identified themselves by their place of origin, retaining contacts with their communities even long after permanently leaving the city, as well as feeling obligation towards it, by sending funds for games and renovation projects, or influencing the imperial authorities on behalf of their cities. Religious identities often went in hand with civic ones. Many cities and local communities had their local religious traditions, with specific rituals and versions of deities. When Christianity became the dominant religion, the cult of local saints served to reinforce such regional identities.

What was Roman identity in such a diverse empire? This dissonance, between a relatively unified material culture and political loyalty, and diverse ethnic, linguistic and religious identities, has been explained by modern scholarship with different models of romanisation. The traditional view presented romanisation as a top-down spread of Roman culture. Romans imposed their dominant culture and language upon the conquered peoples. In this perspective, any continuing non-Roman languages, cultures and identities proved romanisation unsuccessful. Yet it is difficult to claim the provinces remained thoroughly un-Roman with countless remnants of romanisation of the landscape still to be seen throughout the Empire. Another model sees romanisation as a process of acculturation, in which the inhabitants of the provinces appropriated elements of Roman culture of their own choice. Roman influence would be shallow, but visible. However, this would not explain the prevalent political identity of the Empire. Yet another view tried to describe romanisation as creolisation, in terms of communities emerging from the hybridisation of cultures and languages. Local populations would partly appropriate *Romanitas*, at the same time subverting it, by retaining elements of previous cultures.

However, there is hardly any proof to back this model up, with no new cultures emerging under the Roman Empire, but rather the old ones evolving and coexisting together.²²

According to Wallace-Hadrill, the Roman Empire, its culture and identity, served as a “middle ground” for a continuous multi-sided cultural exchange, rather than a contestant in a fight for complete cultural domination. Inside it, multiple, overlapping identities and cultures could coexist.²³ This poses a question, one that I am afraid this thesis does not give a definite answer to, whether opposition and distinction between ‘Roman’ and ‘barbarian’ was truly possible in such a context. Perhaps, to these characteristics of romanness, one should attribute the ease with which an identity earlier belonging to the ‘barbarian’ set, such as a Gothic one, could eventually overlap with the Roman one.

A final set of terms to take note of are the ones denoting religious views and communities. The ‘barbarians’ of the 4th and 5th century came to be associated with ‘Arianism’, as opposed to ‘Nicene’ orthodoxy, as notable groups of ‘barbarians’ in the Roman Empire were adherents of this Christian creed. An examination of the intricacies of the 4th century dispute on Trinitarian theology, and relations between God the Father and Jesus Christ, is not the aim of this thesis, but it is necessary for clarity of the terminology used in this thesis to acknowledge the issues with the usage of ‘Nicene’ and ‘Arian’.

The very concept of ‘Arianism’ was coined by proponents of the homoousian theology, who believed the Father and Son were of the same substance, to denote their homoian opponents as followers of Arius, an Alexandrian presbyter who became the symbolic initiator of the controversy. In the spirit of antique heresiology, which ascribed

²² For a discussion of different models of Romanisation, see A. Wallace-Hadrill, *Rome’s cultural revolution* (Cambridge, 2008), pp. 9-14.

²³ Wallace-Hadrill, *Rome’s cultural revolution* pp. 23-28.

opposing religious views to specific teachers, ‘heresiarchs’, as a polemical device to differentiate these views from orthodoxy said to be derived from Christ himself, the opponents of the homoousian theology were named ‘Arians’.²⁴ This umbrella term came to cover many different Trinitarian views, which had little to do with Arius himself. Recognising that individuals labelled as ‘Arians’ in this thesis certainly did not consider themselves spiritual or intellectual descendants of Arius, but thought of themselves as orthodox, I am still going to employ this term, as a reflection of the language used towards them in the primary sources.

In a similar manner, for simplicity, the term ‘pagan’ is employed in inverted commas to denote adherents of the traditional religions of the Mediterranean World. It is a product of Christian discourse, having little to do with the self-definition of the religious communities in question, but that is precisely the reason it is employed in the thesis to reflect the language of the sources.²⁵ When writing from the perspective of adherents of traditional cults, I choose to refer to them by their own designation, as ‘Hellenes’.

Anthroponyms

One piece of evidence used in this thesis to study the relations between Romans and barbarians in the Roman Empire are anthroponyms – names. Often these are the sole markers distinguishing individuals of non-Roman background within the elites of the Roman Empire. However, issues with using such evidence are numerous. Firstly, there are limitations to our understanding of the ancient languages of the ancient world. Besides names of Latin, Greek, Coptic and Syriac origin, modern scholarship is capable to some degree of identifying names and their meanings stemming from Gothic or other less-preserved ancient Germanic languages, to the point where we can cautiously speculate on

²⁴ H. C. Brennecke ‘Introduction: framing the historical and theological problems’ in: G. M. Berndt and R. Steinacher (eds), *Arianism: Roman heresy and barbarian creed* (Farnham, 2014) pp. 1-20.

²⁵ A. Cameron, *The last pagans of Rome* (Oxford-New York, 2011), pp. 14-32.

the social position of the bearer of the name. However, other language families are less well known and studied. For example, some names associated with Alans may originate from completely different language families (see chapter 1.2).

Another issue is if names can be treated as markers of differing identity. On a very basic level, if names do signify the expression of an identity, then it is in fact an identity determined by the name-giver, most likely a parent. For the first and second generation of people originating from communities outside or on the peripheries of the Empire, the naming evidence can still be indirectly associated with belonging to ‘barbarian’ groups. A name, accompanied by social networks and other markers of non-Roman background, would still single out the bearer from the rest of Roman society, even if he strove to self-identify as a Roman. There are also cases of first and second-generation newcomers, who already bear Roman names, such as Silvanus and his father Bonitus, and yet are still labelled by primary sources as ‘barbarians’.²⁶ The post-Roman period saw the reversal of the practice, with individuals of Roman descent adopting Germanic names, and the naming practices of different communities merging.²⁷

A different approach must be employed to names of members of the Roman elite beyond the second generation of descendants of ‘barbarians’, especially in the 5th century. Many of these people adopted Roman names, that is for example the case of Eudoxia or Pelagia (see chapter 3.3). Sometimes a recurrence of a ‘barbarian’ name can be observed in the family; such seems to be the case of Verimodus, a possible son of Pelagia and

²⁶ A. Paradziński ‘The usurpation of Silvanus and ethnic identity’ in D. Lewandowska, K. Marciniak and H. Rajfura (eds), *ΣΧΟΛΗ: Cupido dominandi: Lust for power- Power over lust*, (Warszawa, 2015) pp. 73-94. It is not impossible they in fact had two names, a Roman one and a Frankish one, much like many modern minorities, for example Jews in 19th century Warsaw, for whom see: A. Jagodzińska, *Pomiędzy. Akulturacja Żydów Warszawy w drugiej połowie XIX wieku* (Wrocław, 2008). A case from our period, but not of a northern ‘barbarian’, could be the emperor Zeno, who changed his original name in favour of one of another Isaurian, who had achieved success in the Roman establishment, see Evagrios, *HE* II 15.

²⁷ For problems connected to the analysis of naming practices in the later period, see J. Jarnut ‘*Nomen et gens*: political and linguistic aspects of personal names between the third and the eighth century’ in: W. Pohl and H. Reimitz (eds), *Strategies of distinction: the construction of ethnic communities, 300-800* (Leiden-Boston- Köln, 1998), pp. 113-116.

Bonifatius, who bore the name of his Gothic grandfather (see chapter 3.3). It is unlikely that in this case a Roman father and romanised mother had any intention of signifying the ‘Gothicness’ of their son. Nor is it probable that the 5th century poet and Roman commander, Flavius Merobaudes, was named after his Frankish ancestor, to stress his Frankish identity.²⁸ Similarly, *comes* Arbogastes of Trier is unlikely to have considered himself a Frank, just because of his famous ancestor of the same name (see chapter 2.2). Keeping the naming practice for the sake of a family tradition, as a marker of descent, is a much simpler interpretation than attributing a strong sense of a differing identity.

Yet there are also instances in which the context of the evidence allows us to draw the opposite conclusion. When an entire family retains a non-Roman naming practice over many generations, after not just entering the Roman Empire, but also achieving high rank, wealth and prestige, and combines it with other elements apparently contributing to the construction of a boundary between them and the rest of the Roman elite, it is difficult not to see names as a marker of a differing identity (see chapter 1.2).

Primary sources

The dominating category of primary sources analysed and interpreted in this thesis are literary sources of various kinds: classical histories, church histories, abbreviated histories, chronicles, hagiographies, letters and orations. They are supplemented by epigraphical, numismatic and visual material when appropriate, but literary sources remain the main body of the evidence. Due to limitations of length of the thesis, I am not discussing authors, their perspectives, aims, works and the transmission of these in full, separately from the subject of the study here. These matters are brought up in regard to

²⁸ For Flavius Merobaudes the poet and Roman commander, see chapter 3.3; For Merobaudes the Roman officer of Frankish, see *PLRE* I, pp. 598-599; A. Szopa, *Flavius Merobaudes: wódz i poeta z V wieku* (Kraków, 2014), pp. 36-37; C. R. Whittaker, *Frontiers of the Roman Empire: a social and economic study* (London, 1994), p. 261.

specific cases examined in the successive chapters. Sources are quoted in translation with relevant words of the original in brackets. When not specified otherwise, translations are my own.

Part I: Roman commanders – barbarian warlords

Chapter 1.1 Tribigild's rebellion and Gainas' coup – between ethnic officer and a warlord

Introduction

Gainas' downfall and the chain of events that led to his ascendancy, initiated by Tribigild's revolt, has been widely analysed and commented on by historians. Many have considered it a crucial moment that proved to be decisive in the survival of the eastern part of the Roman Empire. Slaughtering the "barbarian" soldiers under Gainas' command had been perceived as a purge of the eastern Roman military of the "barbarians", which supposedly saved the eastern part of the Roman Empire from the later fate of its western counterpart. Although this view has been challenged and refuted, the case of Gainas remains a striking example both of an influence exercised by "barbarian" commanders in Roman service and their precarious position in the Roman world.²⁹

Gainas appeared on the scene as one of the commanders in Theodosius' campaign against Eugenius and Arbogast in 394, winning promotion from among the ranks of common soldiers. Later he played a role in a conflict between Stilicho and the praetorian prefect of the East Rufinus, leading a military contingent sent to the East and ordering the assassination of the eastern prefect, allegedly at Stilicho's command.³⁰ If that was so, then the assassination of Rufinus did not lead to Stilicho's domination over the East, but merely to a change of officials. The new chief courtier, Eutropius, the *praepositus sacri cubiculi* 395-399, exercised a similar level of power to that of Rufinus.³¹

²⁹ For examples of a "nationalists against barbarians" view, see: J. B. Bury, *History of the later Roman Empire: from the death of Theodosius I to the death of Justinian* (New York, 1958), vol 1 pp. 126-137, J. Bregman, *Synesius of Cyrene, philosopher-bishop* (London, 1982), pp. 50-55. For studies that challenged and superseded this notion see: A. Cameron, J. Long, *Barbarians and politics at the court of Arcadius* (Oxford, 1993) especially pp. 121-126, J. H. W. G. Liebeschuetz, *Barbarians and bishops: army, church and state in the age of Arcadius and Chrysostom* (Oxford, 1990), pp. 105-106 and P. Heather 'The anti-Scythian tirade of Synesius' "De Regno", *Phoenix* 42/2 (1988) pp. 152-172.

³⁰ For Gainas see *PLRE* I pp. 379-380; For Rufinus see *PLRE* I pp. 778-781.

³¹ *PLRE* II pp. 440-444.

Our sources describe Gainas as discontented with his position in the imperial establishment, but as Liebeschuetz rightly pointed out many army officers and units had reasons to contest the rule of Constantinopolitan officials and courtiers at that time. Eutropius got rid of such commanders as Abundantius and Timasius and did not hesitate to nominate new ones more loyal to himself; an example of such was Leo, who will be mentioned later.³² Eutropius' predecessor had not been popular in military circles after a quarrel with Timasius and Promotus.³³ Eutropius must have been fully aware of the threats the military commanders could pose to his rule, hence he took command into his own hands in the campaign against the Hunnic incursion in Anatolia in 397/398.³⁴ The strained relations between Eutropius and the military provide the context of Tribigild's uprising in Asia Minor which eventually led to Gainas' bid for power.

After the outbreak of Tribigild's rebellion in spring of 399, Gainas and Leo, Eutropius' adherent, were sent to quell it. The rebel commander of Gothic background and in charge of a contingent of 'barbarian' soldiers in Roman service achieved some success, to the point where Leo's forces were defeated and Gainas advised the emperor to seek peace. With the coming of Gainas to the capital, Eutropius was deposed and Aurelian, now praetorian prefect of the East rose to the position of power.³⁵ Later on, the power struggle between the initial partners led to Gainas pressuring Arcadius into exiling Aurelian and a number of other officials. Tribigild died soon after leaving Gainas as the sole leader of their combined forces. For a limited period Gainas held a position similar to that of Stilicho in the west, receiving the rank of *magister utriusque militiae*.³⁶ Yet reports of conflict with the city's bishop, Chrysostom, and the hostility of the empress

³² Liebeschuetz, *Barbarians and Bishops*, pp. 94-98.

³³ *PLRE* I pp. 778-781.

³⁴ *PLRE* II pp. 440-444.

³⁵ *PLRE* I pp. 128-129.

³⁶ Sozomenos, *HE* VIII 4 5; Sokrates Scholastikos, *HE* VI 6; Theodoret of Cyrus, *HE* V 32.

Eudoxia seem to imply his position was still questioned.³⁷ It came to an abrupt end after the riots in Constantinople. Gainas attempted to cross the straits into Asia, which was prevented by Fravitta, another Goth in Roman service. The “traitor” managed to escape beyond the Danube, only to reach his eventual death in battle against Uldin's Huns. This has been reconstructed on the basis of the source material.³⁸

The notion of these events as a struggle of a “nationalists” or “anti-barbarian” party against barbarians in the Roman establishment concluding in an ethnic purge has been thoroughly debunked in the literature on the subject.³⁹ Although some considerations on the saliency of ethnicity in what followed Gainas’ flight from Constantinople can and will be offered, such as for example his action of slaughtering Romans, who remained loyal to him, and leaving borders of the Roman empire to become a warlord, the focus is going to move away from Gainas. Scholarly discussions of these events concentrated understandably on him, Constantinople, intrigues and powerplays at Arcadius’ court. If attention was given to Tribigild and his rebellion it was only as a prelude to the following events or as an element of Gainas’ political plan. As we are going to see this attitude reflects the framework established by the primary sources, however Tribigild, his rebellion and men under his command merit a separate consideration.

Tribigild’s motivations and more importantly the character of his position in the Roman military should receive more attention. In this chapter I would like to argue that in fact Tribigild is a case of what one could describe as an “ethnic officer” – an individual

³⁷ For the alleged hostility between Gainas and the empress see K. Holum, *Theodosian empresses: women and imperial dominion in late antiquity* (Los Angeles, 1989), pp. 64-69, who claims that Eudoxia's coronation in January 400 was a way for the imperial court to rouse the people of Constantinople against Gainas and Eutychianus, and that hostility of Eudoxia proved to be one of the reasons for Gainas’ downfall. The traditional identification of Synesios' Typhos with Eutychianus aside, the argument about Eudoxia's elevation used as a rallying call for a popular revolt that happened half a year later seems to be far-fetched.

³⁸ For the chronology, see Bury, *History of the later Roman Empire*, pp. 126-137; Liebeschuetz, *Barbarians and Bishops*, pp. 93-125.

³⁹ Cameron, Long, *Barbarians and politics*, pp. 121-126.

commenced to command soldiers of ethnicity perceived by the ruling elite as the same as that of the said individual. That choice would be made precisely to keep the ethnicity and more importantly characteristics associated with it intact, as they were deemed beneficial by the policymakers.

Source material

Both Tribigild's rebellion and Gainas' coup are prominent in the sources from the following period. The closest to the events are Claudian's second speech, *In Eutropium*, and Synesios' work, *De providentia*. Synesios presents events in the form of an allegorical story re-imagining the Egyptian myth about Typhos and Osiris. With its rather obvious new element of Scythians deposing Osiris and establishing Typhos on the throne, historians interpreted *De providentia* as depicting Gainas' coup. Nevertheless, the identity of the other characters has remained a subject of discussion. Typhos and Osiris were identified with Eutychian and Aurelian. We are going to follow Cameron's proposition of identifying Typhos and Osiris as Caesarius and Aurelian, with the contest for Egyptian kingship recreating a rivalry for the praetorian prefecture of the East.⁴⁰

It seems *De providentia* could be the very earliest of the sources for Tribigild's rebellion and Gainas' coup, with the first book being written after the exile of Aurelian and the second one after Gainas had fled Constantinople.⁴¹ The problem with using this source is its character. *De providentia* is not supposed to be a faithful report of events, its main concern is the image of a good ruler and of a tyrant, and how evil is ultimately purged by the gods restoring balance. Therefore, it is difficult to differentiate between Synesios' literary creation and what he considered the actual events that happened at Constantinople.

⁴⁰ For the arguments behind both versions see Cameron, Long, *Barbarians and politics at the court of Arcadius*, pp. 149-197.

⁴¹ Ibidem, pp. 239-240.

Claudian, on the other hand, represents the perspective of the western court or what could be called Stilicho's circle. Claudius Claudianus, author of panegyrics to Stilicho and his adherent, composed two speeches against Eutropius both entitled – *In Eutropium* – the first during the *praepositus*' domination, and the second shortly after his deposition, probably in September 399.⁴² The second of Claudian's speeches refers to Tribigild's rebellion, arguing that its outbreak should be blamed on Eutropius.

The rebellion and coup are also mentioned in the histories of the Church of Philostorgios, Sozomenos and Sokrates Scholastikos. A more classical approach is represented by Eunapios, only fragmentarily preserved, and Zosimos. Zosimos, Sozomenos and Sokrates seem to derive their material from Eunapios. In the case of Zosimos' narrative, he must have been the main if not the only source. The church historians are using additional sources. Other than Philostorgios, whose account we only have in the form epitomised by Photios, Sokrates provides us with the names of the authors and the character of the works he used. This tells us a lot about the significance Gainas' coup was ascribed at the time. One case of such a work is Eusebios Scholastikos' *Gainea*, which is said to have been a four books hexameter epic written by the bishop of Dorylaion, presenting events in Constantinople.⁴³ According to Sokrates, the poet Ammonios also wrote a poem on this matter and declaimed it in front of Theodosius II.⁴⁴

There is one source of a non-narrative character – the column of Arcadius. The monument no longer exists, except for elements of the base and first spiral, but it was drawn by a traveller to the capital of the then Ottoman Empire. This drawing was dated to January 1575 and is ascribed to David Ungnad von Zonneck, Habsburg ambassador to

⁴² A. Cameron, *Claudian. Poetry and propaganda at the court of Honorius* (Oxford, 1970), p. XV.

⁴³ Sokrates, *HE* VI 6.

⁴⁴ Sokrates, *HE*, VI 6; One may wonder whether this poem presented the imperial version of the story as shown on the column of Arcadius.

Constantinople. The column fell in 1719.⁴⁵ The column presented an imperial message, as a monument to the emperor's victory. The base of the column seems to focus on the concept of unity between the two emperors, placing great importance upon the reinstated concord between Honorius and Arcadius. It focused on the military actions undertaken by the regular units, omitting the riot, which led to the expulsion of Gainas.⁴⁶ It was hardly unexpected for the emperor and his officials to choose a version that would stress the importance of the imperial actions rather than the divine intervention we find in the narratives of the church historians and Synesios' work.

Tribigild – a ‘Gothic’ officer for ‘Gothic’ soldiers

Establishing the background and therefore the position of Tribigild before the outbreak of the rebellion requires a closer look at his link to Gainas and the political role he played. Was he a kinsman of Gainas, recruited by him and placed in his command to assist him in a plot against Eutropius? Or perhaps he was a barbarian warlord with his own force employed by Romans, who decided he and his warband are not sufficiently rewarded for their service? Sokrates', Sozomenos' and Zosimos' narratives agree in accusing Gainas of plotting together with Tribigild and actually inciting the rebellion. Placing Tribigild at his new command post was to be the first step in that. Zosimos describes the situation on the eve of rebellion in this way:

Such was the state of the empire in both the east and the west. All senators were distressed at the present plight, not least Gainas who was neither accorded the honour appropriate to a Magister nor able to satisfy his barbarian insatiability for gifts [δωρεαῖς ἀπληστίαν ἐμπλῆσαι βαρβαρικὴν]; what

⁴⁵ K. Weitzmann (ed.) *Age of spirituality: late antique and early Christian art, third to seventh century* (New York, 1979), pp 79-81.

⁴⁶ R. Grigg “Symphōnian Aeidō tēs Basileias”: an image of imperial harmony on the base of the column of Arcadius’ *The art bulletin*, 59/4 (1977), pp. 469-482.

especially worried him, however, was that all the money went to Eutropius. Angered for these reasons, he confided in Tribigildus, a daredevil ready for any desperate undertaking;⁴⁷ (trans. R. T. Ridley)

Sokrates stressed Gainas' role in instigating Tribigild's revolt in Asia Minor:

Then when Tribigildus, one of his kinsmen [τῶν αὐτοῦ συγγενῶν] who had the command of the forces in Phrygia, had at the instigation of Gainas broken out into open revolt, and was filling the people of Phrygia with confusion and dismay, he managed to have deputed to him the oversight of matters in the disturbed province.⁴⁸ (trans. P. Schaff and H. Wace)

Sozomenos points to the kinship between Gainas and Tribigild as well as their collusion:

Tribigild, a relative of his [αὐτῷ γένει], who commanded a large body of troops in Phrygia, commenced an insurrection; and to all persons of judgement it was patent that he was preparing the way. Under the pretext of resenting the devastation of many of the Phrygian cities, which had been committed to his superintendence, Gainas turned to their assistance; but on his arrival, when a multitude of barbarians [πλῆθος ἔχων βαρβάρων] had been equipped for war, he disclosed his plan which he had previously concealed, and pillaged the cities which he had been commanded to guard, and was about to attack others.⁴⁹ (trans. P. Schaff and H. Wace)

These narratives explain Gainas' conduct in Anatolia with an accusation of a plot prepared with Tribigild. There are a couple of possible sources of this conviction: the

⁴⁷ Zosimos, *Historia Nova*, V XIII 1.

⁴⁸ Sokrates Scholastikos, *HE*, VI 6.

⁴⁹ Sozomenos, *HE*, VIII 4.

local population's views, developed after reinforcements sent by Gainas to Leo switched sides, or an explanation created by Eunapios himself to understand the unfolding events: the later deposition of Eutropius in order to reach an agreement with Tribigild and the occupation of Constantinople may well have left such an impression, to the point where this was indisputable to the later authors such as Zosimos, Sozomenos and Sokrates.⁵⁰ As we shall see later, even Synesios' account, which is near contemporary, mentions accusations pointed at Gainas. (see below)

Yet not all the authors were so convinced of Gainas' role in stirring up the rebellion. It is not entirely clear whether Philostorgios held such a view. In the version of his work that we possess, he did not give a specific reason for Tribigild's rebellion and considered Gainas' later actions opportunism rather than a long-prepared plot.

As if that were not enough, Tribigild, a Scythian by birth [ἄνθρωπος Σκύθης] who was of those now surnamed “Goths” (the Scythian nationalities are quite numerous and diverse) [ἐπικαλουμένων Γότθων (πλεῖστα γὰρ καὶ διάφορα τούτων ἐστὶν τῶν Σκυθῶν γένη)] and who had a barbarian force [δύναμιν βαρβαρικὴν] where he dwelt in Nacolea in Phrygia with the title of count, turned from friendship with Rome and became an enemy. Starting with Nacolea itself, he captured most of the cities of Phrygia and wrought a great slaughter of the people. General Gainas (himself a barbarian [βάρβαρος δ' ἦν καὶ αὐτὸς]), who was sent out against him, gave away victory, since he was planning to do the same to the Romans himself.⁵¹ (trans. P. R. Amidon)

⁵⁰ For Gainas' reinforcements joining Tribigild see: Zosimos, V 17 2; Eunapios, Fr. 10 refers to the pact between Tribigild and Gainas, but at the point of narrative after the deposition of Eutropius, which cannot conclusively demonstrate whether Eutropius believed the two commanders colluded to incite a rebellion or cooperated in the aftermath of Tribigild's military successes. However, given that Eutropius is the source for Zosimos', Sozomenos' and Sokrates' accounts it is likely they derived the first of this version from him.

⁵¹ Philostorgios, *HE* XI 8.

In Philostorgios' narrative, Gainas appears to be merely considering his own rebellion. He is not the one to incite Tribigild to revolt in the first place. In the epitomised version we have, there is hardly any explicit suggestion about coordination between the two, as Tribigild died not long after crossing into Thrace and Gainas continued with his bid for power.

Tribigildus, as though escaping from Gainas [ὥς δῆθεν τὸν Γαῖνᾱν διαφυγόν], came from there upon Pisidia and Pamphylia and utterly destroyed them. Then, having seen his force reduced through many hardships and Isaurian battles, he won through to the Hellespont, crossed over to Thrace, and shortly after perished. As for Gainas, after his treachery he returned to Constantinople in his general's guise and began thinking how he could take it over.⁵² (trans. P. R. Amidon)

Burns insists this passage shows Philostorgios' conviction about Gainas dutifully fighting against Tribigild, as the latter runs away from the confrontation.⁵³ But Amidon is wholly right to translate “ὥς δῆθεν” as bringing doubt about the following action's genuineness. The ambiguity in Philostorgios, whether Gainas merely tried to benefit from the crisis or was in fact cooperating with Tribigild, may be an effect of epitomisation.

One author certainly did not tie Gainas' later coup into a consistent plot with Tribigild's rebellion. Claudian in his speech against Eutropius insisted the mutiny was the *praepositus*' fault, and did not mention any agreement between Gainas and Tribigild. He focused mainly on championing Stilicho's cause. An element of the unique western perspective that Claudian provides us with is the connection drawn between Alaric's

⁵² Philostorgios, *HE* XI 8.

⁵³ T. S. Burns, *Barbarians within the gates of Rome: a study of Roman military policy and the barbarians, ca. 375-425 A.D* (Bloomington, 1994), p. 344 note 88.

successes, and rebellious attitudes amongst the barbarians in Roman service. The spoils and honours won by Alaric are a clear sign that it is more rewarding to be an enemy of the Empire than a faithful servant. When Bellona comes in the disguise of Tribigild's wife, she initially asks the barbarian commander what gifts Eutropius bestowed upon such a worthy officer; when he answered that he had not received any gifts she begins her argument:

Go then, busy yourself with the plough, cleave the soil, bid your followers lay aside their swords and sweat over the harrow. The Gruthungi will make good farmers [*bene rura Gruthungus excolet*] and will plant their vines in due season. Happy those other women whose glory is seen in the towns their husbands have conquered, they whose adornment is the spoils so hardly won from an enemy, whose servants are fair captives of Argos or Thessaly, and who have won slaves from Sparta [*felices aliae, quas debellata maritis oppida, quas magnis quaesitae viribus ornant exuviae, quibus Argivae pulchraeque ministrant Thessalides, famulas et quae meruere Lacaenas*]. Fate has mated me with too timid, too indolent a husband, a degenerate who has forgotten the valour of Ister's tribes [*totum qui degener exuit Histrum*], who deserts his country's ways [*qui refugit patriae ritus*], whom a vain reputation for justice attracts, while he longs to live as a husbandman by favour rather than as a prince by plunder. Why give fair names to shameful weakness? Cowardice is called loyalty; fear, a sense of justice. Will you submit to humiliating poverty though you bear arms? Will you weep

unavenged, though so many cities open to you their undefended gates?⁵⁴

(trans. Platnauer, modernised)

After that comparison, the wife [Bellona] moves on to a critique of Eutropius' policy in handling Alaric. The comparison between Alaric's and Tribigild's fortune is provided, as the latter is going to walk the path of the previous:

Do you fear the consequences? Rome's old way was to reward merit and vent on rebels a hate that knew no bound. Now he who breaks a treaty wins riches, while he who observes one lives in want. The ravager of Achaea and recent devastator of defenceless Epirus is lord of Illyria [*vastator Achivae gentis et Epirum nuper populatus inultam praesidet Illyrico*]; he now enters as a friend within the walls to which he was laying siege, and administers justice to those whose wives he has seduced and whose children he has murdered. Such is the punishment meted out to an enemy, such the vengeance exacted for wholesale slaughter — and do you still hesitate? Have you regard to the small numbers of your followers? No, have done with peace: war will give you allies. Nor would I urge you so instantly to face men. It is another sex that is in arms against you; the world has entrusted itself to the protection of eunuchs; such leaders the eagles and standards of Rome follow. It is time for you to return to a barbarian life [*incipi barbaricae tandem te reddere vitae*]; be in your turn an object of terror, and let men marvel at your crimes who despised your virtues. Laden with booty and plunder you shall be a Roman when it pleases you [*spoliis praedaeque repletus cum libeat Romanus eris*].⁵⁵ (trans. Platnauer)

⁵⁴ Claudian, *In Eutropium* II 196-212.

⁵⁵ Claudian, *In Eutropium* II 213-230.

What are the reasons for Claudian bringing up Alaric in his description of the events leading to the downfall of Eutropius? Clearly he suggests that it was Eutropius' fault. The loyal soldiers of Rome were convinced by his agreement with Alaric that it was solely through violence that they could achieve the honours and riches they craved. But a further answer may lie in the concluding lines of Claudian's poem. He claims Stilicho is the sole saviour of the Empire from the barbarian blight and its general moral downfall.⁵⁶ If we put the perceived reasons for Tribigild's rebellion in such a context, it seems Claudian is making a parallel – another Alaric has risen. He implies that the only person capable of standing up to such an enemy is Stilicho who has already battled Alaric, though Claudian omits to what avail. Hence Stilicho should be able to stop Tribigild. Albeit, as we shall see later, the genesis of the second *In Eutropium* is somehow convoluted, it seems to provide us with a more prosaic reasoning and context for Tribigild's rebellion, than the narrative sources.

Liebeschuetz and Heather rightly point out that, if there were any doubts about Gainas' loyalty, he would not have been constantly sent to deal with Tribigild's threat.⁵⁷ The argument that any infidelity visible to the local population would also have been visible to the court at Constantinople and therefore have caused a reaction on their part is rather strong. One could argue that lack of action in Constantinople simply meant that other members of the ruling elite were either conspiring with Gainas and Tribigild or merely exploiting the opportunity to weaken the position of Eutropius, but that seems rather unlikely.

Curiously enough, unlike the narrative histories, the two works that were closest to the events, that is the *De providentia* of Synesios and Claudian's *In Eutropium II* do not offer much to put the blame for Tribigild's rebellion on a barbarian plot. It is easy to

⁵⁶ Claudian, *In Eutropium II* 506-520.

⁵⁷ Liebeschuetz, *Barbarians and Bishops*, p. 103; Heather 'The anti-Scythian Tirade', pp. 152-172.

argue that in the case of Synesios it is mostly *licentia poetica*, which allows him to draw upon real events, while shaping them to the requirements of a story in which a rival to the highest power is the main antagonist and perpetrator of the coup. He limits himself to the deposition of Aurelian, that happened in the autumn of 399, drawing more upon the example of Gainas than Tribigild. Both authors place most of the blame on the corrupt individuals amongst the Romans. Synesios' barbarians are simply reacting to what had been presented to them as a threat. Claudian's barbarians are provoked into the rebellion by Eutropius' policies of appeasing Alaric. In both Synesios' and Claudian's works women are the ones to inspire their husbands to take a stand against the Romans, or literally Egyptians in Synesios' case.⁵⁸ Here the similarities end, as Claudian's reasoning for the entire matter focuses on the person of Eutropius and how Tribigild's rebellion is in fact an intervention of the gods against the unnatural rule of a eunuch. It is Bellona who takes the shape of Tribigild's wife to convince him to rebel against Rome. Yet in regard to Tribigild's rebellion and its impact, Synesios took a less obvious approach:

The general of the foreign troops [τῷ στρατοπεδάρχῃ τῶν ἀλλοφύλων] had his home in the royal city. He and his troops appeared to be fighting for the Egyptians [ἡ πλῆθὺς Αἰγυπτίοις ἐδόκουν στρατεύεσθαι]. They were currently conducting a campaign of sorts, unsuccessfully, against a contingent of their own people that had rebelled, and some Egyptians villages had been faring badly. The demons had devised this for the purpose of their drama.⁵⁹

Lack of a success against Tribigild is visible even here, but the evidence for Tribigild's and Gainas' plot is not so evident. One word, “ἐδόκουν”, implies doubt about the action following it. It bears some resemblance to the ambiguity in Philostorgios' passage.

⁵⁸ Synesios, *De providentia* I 108 C-110 C.

⁵⁹ Synesios, *De providentia* I 108B.

Should we interpret it as an echo of the version so widely spread amongst later historians? The next lines strongly reinforce that impression.⁶⁰ Phrases such as “συγκείμενον πόλεμον” and “ἐν κοινωνία γνώμης μερισσμένων στρατόπεδα” leave no doubt that Synesios must have known the rumour about cooperation between Tribigild and Gainas, the one we find in Zosimos and the church historians. Clearly Eunapios was not the only one to accuse Gainas of plotting against the Empire; even if Synesios is very subtle in casting suspicions, they are quite evident.⁶¹ It is chronologically the first attestation of that accusation against Gainas. But once again one motivated by the stereotype of plotting barbarians.

The rumour of Gainas' betrayal stems from the perception of the rebellion's course. Tribigild managed to continue with his campaign even after some significant losses, moving from one region to another with relative ease and usually leaving already pillaged regions and setting out for ones as yet unscarred by war, an efficient way of replacing the regular supplies from which he was cut off by inciting rebellion. He managed to do so even when his forces dwindled, attacked by a privately raised army and the military forces of Leo.⁶² Zosimos presents us information on a couple of different sources for Tribigild's army: barbarian units given to his command in Phrygia, slaves and other outcasts, barbarians settled in Asia and Gainas' units, which switched sides after having been sent to Leo.⁶³ Zosimos also mentioned unrest in Lydia that was caused by refugees from

⁶⁰ Synesios, *De providentia* I 108C.

⁶¹ It also proves that Synesios did not try to appease barbarians in the 1st book as Cameron claims; Cameron, *Barbarians and politics*, p. 370 suggests that the reason for positive image of barbarians in the first book is the fact that Synesios was writing it before deposition of Gainas, and points to return of antibarbarian attitude in the second book. But there is a certain problem with this argument, other than the one already mentioned. If Synesios could expect repercussions from Gainas, then why would he not expect such from Caesarius who he criticises throughout the entire work? I would argue the more positive picture of barbarians in the first book serves a literary purpose, to better stress Typhos' villainy, contrasting it with more moderate behaviour of the Scythians. The Villain of the story is presented as even more evil than the barbarians.

⁶² Tribigild was defeated at Selge by locals see Zosimos V XV 5.

⁶³ For slaves and renegades, see Zosimos V XIII 4 and V XIV 1. In the first instance, he called them ἀπερριμμένοι – outcasts – in the second, μγάδες which can be translated as a mob of mixed people. Liebeschuetz, *Barbarians and Bishops*, p. 101. For barbarians sent to Leo see: Zosimos V XIII 3, 4; V

territories pillaged by Tribigild.⁶⁴ The image of social disorder spreading throughout Asia explains Tribigild's success better than the version of a barbarian conspiracy. The strategy of Gainas and Leo, to divide their forces in order to control strategic points and encroach on Tribigild, at the same time dealing with the threats caused by the dissolution of order in Phrygia and Lydia, must have seemed to the locals to be dictated by incompetence or ill will.⁶⁵

Zosimos' description of barbarian betrayal is not consistent. According to him none of the allied barbarian soldiers in the area remained loyal to Romans and instead they joined their kin. However, these soldiers were to move against those who stayed "under the Roman command", which implies not Roman units, but either regular auxiliaries or irregulars called upon from the Roman allies.⁶⁶ Zosimos either meant 'barbarians' here as solely soldiers of widely-understood Gothic background and implied that only they went to Tribigild's side, excluding other auxiliary soldiers and units, or he uncovered the exaggeration of his claim of the mutiny of all barbarians in the Roman service in the region. Both implications are interesting and are going to be discussed together with considerations on the character of Tribigild's initial force.

The source that wholly omits any involvement of Gainas – second *In Eutropium* was conceived shortly after Eutropius' fall from grace, albeit it probably had been worked on even before it, and clearly before he was executed after being called from exile.⁶⁷ Curiously we find no trace of Gainas in the entire work, not in the context of an alliance with Tribigild, nor even when it came to naming commanders sent to quell the rebellion. It is possible that Claudian simply was not aware of Gainas' involvement in the agreement

XV 2; V XVII 1-2 that last claim seems to be an exaggeration to reinforce his version about Gainas' plot.

⁶⁴ Zosimos V XIII 4.

⁶⁵ Liebeschuetz, *Barbarians and Bishops*, pp. 101-103.

⁶⁶ Zosimos V 15 2.

⁶⁷ Cameron, *Claudian. Poetry and Propaganda*, pp. 136-137.

at the point of preparing the speech.⁶⁸ Nevertheless Claudian mentioned Leo and some of the events that happened during the campaign against Tribigild. There are two possibilities to explain that phenomenon: either Claudian purposefully hid Gainas' role for his own reasons or he simply did not know of it.⁶⁹ Stilicho's poet appeared to believe that Tribigild was still a threat to the eastern court, hence he spoke in favour of Stilicho dealing with him.

Cameron proposes a solution, based on the assumption that *In Eutropium II* was being reworked as the news about changes in the east were slowly reaching the western court. According to him, Claudian finished the preface and majority of his piece when news of Eutropius' fall was fresh and he hoped for reconciliation between the emperors under Stilicho's supervision. But when he finally finished *In Eutropium II*, at a time when it had become clear the new eastern establishment was not interested in submitting to Stilicho, he reflected on this vain hope in the part Cameron called the proem, by ascertaining Eutropius' corruption took root and prevented concord. In such an interpretation, Claudian would know full well the role of Gainas, and that Tribigild's rebellion ended in an agreement, and that by the time the speech was finished, any intervention by Stilicho was no longer needed. Cameron argues that Claudian's silence was on purpose, just as in the case of describing Rufinus' death he did not mention Gainas for political reasons, starting to see him as a rival to Stilicho. *In Eutropium II* would be outdated the moment it was completed.⁷⁰

Regardless of which version we accept, Claudian is the one to provide us with important details regarding the fate of Leo. Apparently, this commander associated with

⁶⁸ M. Dewar, 'The fall of Eutropius', *The classical quarterly*, vol. 40, no. 2 (1990), pp. 582-584.

⁶⁹ Dewar named as such reasons the rivalry between Gainas and Stilicho and preference for presenting Eutropius as deposed by the emperor's will rather than under pressure. If such was the case, then why was Tribigild still perceived as a threat?

⁷⁰ Cameron, *Claudian. Poetry and propaganda*, pp. 149-152.

Eutropius, and therefore not spared any slight by Claudian, lost his life in one of the battles with Tribigild.⁷¹ This might clarify why the government in Constantinople was responsive to Gainas' offer of negotiations and why the Gothic commander felt the need to negotiate. Leo's death probably meant the dissolution of his units and therefore changed the military situation. It also explains the weak position of Eutropius whose favourite commander had utterly failed. Combined with the negative attitudes of the military towards Eutropius, plausibly assumed by Liebeschuetz, it is no wonder that both Gainas and the senatorial opposition acted on the opportunity to forward their position, and got rid of the consul, who fell from the emperor's grace.⁷²

When we put all these considerations together it is evident that Gainas' and Tribigild's secret 'barbarian plot' served as an explanation for the later cooperation. That puts in question Sozomenos' and Sokrates' claim about kinship between Tribigild and Gainas, one that is not found in Zosimos' narrative, and whether it can be understood as a familial connection of any sort.⁷³ The rumour required connection between two barbarian commanders to make the story of their betrayal even more believable and self-explanatory. Perhaps the shared 'Goth' label sufficed to draw a kinship connection between the two. As it was already mentioned, it is rather improbable that Eutropius would send Gainas as one of two commanders in charge of quelling the rebellion, if he had doubted his loyalty. It was Gainas who held the senior command and gave orders to Leo during the campaign.⁷⁴ A familial kinship between loyal and rebel commander would certainly be considered a factor too dangerous to ignore. The lack of connection between Gainas and Tribigild, beyond their shared exonym, sadly means that we know even less

⁷¹ Claudian, *In Eutropium* II 456-460 apparently a death in a lost battle did not satisfy Claudian's desire to present Leo as a degenerate servant of Eutropius; the poet claimed that Leo died after escaping from the battlefield out of fear for his life.

⁷² For opposition to Eutropius rule in Constantinople, see Liebeschuetz, *Barbarians and Bishops*, p. 105.

⁷³ Sozomenos VIII 4; Sokrates Scholastikos VI 6; Zosimos V 13 2.

⁷⁴ Zosimos V 16 5.

about the latter. Where Gainas advanced from a common soldier, Tribigild could have followed either a similar path from down the ranks to the top, join the military as an aristocrat of one of Gothic groups operating within the empire at the time or even one that came to Roman service directly from beyond the *limes* and receive a high rank from the start of his career.

What is then known about Tribigild? Goths under Tribigild's command are called Ostrogoths and Greuthungi by Claudian.⁷⁵ On this basis, Heather conjectured it might mean Tribigild was part of the group which crossed the Danube into Roman territory in 386 led by Odotheus.⁷⁶ Burns argues against this, insisting that Tribigild had no prior links to units stationed at Nacoleia in Phrygia, coming to them simply as a newly appointed Roman commander.⁷⁷ Although it is possible to question whether we can base the identification upon only one source, Burns' claim that Claudian only identified the ethnicity of the soldiers and not of Tribigild himself is faulty. The speech the goddess Bellona gave, while impersonating the commander's wife, implies he is of the same ethnic group as his units: *I nunc, devotus aratri scinde solum positoque tuos mucrone sodales ad rastros sudare doce. bene rura Gruthungus excolet et certo disponet sidere vites...*; "Sodales" describes a comradeship and though it could be understood simply as joint military service, a threat of rural life used on both Tribigild and the Greuthungi seems to have an ethnic subtext. Warrior kin should not be forced to labour in the fields.⁷⁸ On the other hand, Zosimos makes it clear Tribigild was placed in his command by the imperial authorities, not recruited with his own force.⁷⁹ He even finds it relevant to stress in the

⁷⁵ Claudian, *In Eutropium* II 153 and 197.

⁷⁶ Heather 'The anti-Scythian', pp. 152-172.

⁷⁷ Burns, *Barbarians within the gates of Rome*, p. 168.

⁷⁸ Claudian, *In Eutropium* II 197.

⁷⁹ Zosimos, V 13 2.

same passage that Tribigild commanded barbarians and not Romans. This would hardly need a clarification if he indeed was a barbarian warlord and not an imperial officer.

The exact character of Tribigild's force and his rank is a matter of question. Philostorgios calls him a *comes*, which could mean a command of more than one 'regiment' of *foederati* soldiers (*numerus*/ἵλη), a combination of a unit of infantry and a unit of cavalry, safely putting the strength of units under Tribigild's command over thousand men.⁸⁰ However, Sokrates Scholastikos and John of Antioch, who derives his evidence partially from Sokrates, describe Tribigild as χιλιαρχοῦντος, which can be both a way to describe that he was simply in command or to mean that he held the rank of χιλίαρχος, a tribune.⁸¹ This could correspond to Sozomenos calling Tribigild's force τάγμα, yet again a term that could mean a generic force or more specifically a single 'regiment'.⁸² Claudian does not add much to the evidence, using a generic term *dux* to describe Tribigild's position and 'Geticae alae' for his men, which once again may have a precise meaning of a cavalry unit or a generic regiment.⁸³ Zosimos is similarly vague with his barbarian ἱλαί, but the plural suggests more than one regiment of soldiers.⁸⁴ One or two regiments as the core of Tribigild's rebellion fits the number of survivors after rebels suffered heavy losses at Selge – 300.⁸⁵ Based on the evidence of Philostorgios Elton claims that unit in question was a cavalry one, however its description as δύναιμις, "force", can be hardly indicative of its type.⁸⁶ If anything it is Claudian's use of term *ala* that may indicate the cavalry character of the unit, however ancient authors, even ex-

⁸⁰ I am following here the definition of the term *foederati* as set in H. Elton, *Warfare in Roman Europe, AD 350-425* (Oxford, 1997), pp. 91-92 as one denoting units recruited from barbarians, equipped, supplied and paid by the Roman Empire, incorporated within its military command structure etc. rather than forces that would be called upon under the term of foedus. For the usual strength of a force under the command of a *comes* see ibidem, p. 91. Philostorgios XI 8.

⁸¹ Sokrates Scholastikos, VI 6 5; John of Antioch Fr. 190.

⁸² Sozomenos, VIII 4 2; Elton, *Warfare in Roman Europe*, pp. 89-90.

⁸³ Claudian, *In Eutropium* II, 176-177.

⁸⁴ Zosimos V 13 2.

⁸⁵ Zosimos, V 16 3.

⁸⁶ Philostorgios XI 8; Elton, *Warfare in Roman Europe*, pp. 93-94.

soldiers, are notorious for the lack of precision in using military terms and interchanging them.⁸⁷ Depending on his rank Tribigild could have been put in command of a force of circa 800-1800 men.⁸⁸ The name of ‘Greuthungi’ applied by Claudian to the rebels could be as much an ethnic description as a regimental one. The *numerus* in question could be named after the group it was recruited from, like many other units initially drafted from barbarians.⁸⁹ It seems the soldiers Tribigild led had no previous links to him. Can we then reconcile the perspective of Claudian and Zosimos?

Perhaps. If we keep in mind the character of Claudian’s work, the contradiction between his and Zosimos’ evidence becomes less stark. Author needed to convey his point – the mutiny was caused by the very ‘nature’ of soldiers and their commander, mishandled by incompetent and effeminate eunuch Eutropius. For that reason, Tribigild and his men needed to belong to the same ethnic group, which shared the natural warlike traits. Claudian’s perspective, though most likely inaccurate in terms of presenting existing boundaries of identity, reflects the perspective of the Roman elites, which in turn influenced and was influenced by imperial policies. Different groups such as Tervingi, Taifali and Greuthungi were all seen as ‘Goths’, regardless of their divisions and markers of distinction. Use of such umbrella exonyms was common. Perhaps it is on such a basis that one ‘Goth’, Tribigild, was chosen to lead other ‘Goths’, the intricacies of their tribal distinctions being of little consequence to policymakers. A ‘barbarian’ could be selected to command other ‘barbarians’ precisely to keep them the way Romans characterised them, as fierce and powerful warriors. An echo of that concept can be seen in Claudian’s

⁸⁷ H. Elton ‘Military forces’ in: *The Cambridge history of Greek and Roman warfare*, eds P. Sabin, H. van Wees and M. Whitby (Cambridge, 2007), vol. 2, pp. 270-309, particularly pp. 271-272.

⁸⁸ Elton, *Warfare in Roman Europe*, p. 89.

⁸⁹ Claudian, *In Eutropium* II, 197; Relatively contemporary cases could be two units of *auxilia palatina* Visi and Tervingi or *cohors prima Gotthorum* probably formed during the emperor Theodosius’ reign *La Notitia Dignitatum: nueva edición crítica y comentario histórico*, ed. N. C. Faleiro (Madrid, 2005), pp. 165, 172 and 271.

depiction of an argument between the goddess Bellona, impersonating Tribigild's wife, and the commander (see above).⁹⁰ Tribigild is chastised for the fact that he let himself and his men act contrary to their nature. The Empire could be interested in reifying the ethnic category of 'Gothic' soldiers to keep their desirable characteristics. A commander belonging to the same constructed ethnic category served that purpose. It is quite plausible that placing in command individuals such as Tribigild was one instrument of applying this practice in the 4th century. If such was the case, then the Empire in fact needed some military officers to be 'barbarian' (Goth, Frank etc.), and, one expects, acted on that need by projecting and reinforcing ethnic boundaries. It would be a policy of "ethnic officer" in command of "ethnic soldiers". Is it a tool that we can observe in other instances of ethnicised military and more importantly could it have been conceptualised and applied in the Roman Empire of the 4th century?

An interesting case to answer the first question with can be found in one of the colonial era empires. In the 70s of the 19th century amongst the governing circles of the Russian Empire took place a discussion on the percentage of Polish officers in the imperial military. Then Minister of War, Dmitrij Milutin, stated that the share of Poles in the Officer Corp exceeded by far the regulated quota of 20%, by his count reaching 35.5%. This percentage was a false one, but the reason the Minister of War came up with it is one relevant for this study.⁹¹

At the time in military journals of the Russian Empire appeared a series of articles arguing for a raise in the quota of Polish officers. Arguments brought up in favour of this policy change were based in ascribing characteristics to ethnicity and nationality. High ranking officers of the Russian Imperial Army argued that Poles, as a nation with great

⁹⁰ Claudian, *In Eutropium* II 196-212.

⁹¹ W. Caban, *Służba rekrutów z Królestwa Polskiego w armii carskiej w latach 1831-1873* (Warszawa, 2001), p. 41.

military traditions and characterised by bravery bordering recklessness, would improve military capabilities of cavalry and Cossack units they would command. This suggestion caused a reaction of nationalistically-minded generals and officers, Milutin included, who rejected the policy proposition not only because they mistrusted the loyalty of Polish officers, with the memories of the January Uprising of 1863-1864 against the Russian regime still very fresh, but also because the idea was championed predominantly by officers of German origin. Russian officers' fears of compromising their national hegemony aside, this is a clear case of conceptualising ethnicity of officers as a factor influencing characteristics of soldiers under their command that can be employed to shape them.⁹²

Another case closer in time and place to the Roman Empire of the 4th and 5th centuries is that of Byzantine policy towards Armenians settled within the Empire and enlisted in its military. In the 10th century Byzantine Empire pursued military colonisation of Cappadocia employing for that aim Armenian settlers. Policies designed to keep the number of soldiers and their military organisation stable through legal limitations and microtransactions of the military apparatus evoked ethnic categories and contributed to re-creation and saliency of ethnic boundaries, as Armenian ethnicity was characterised with valuable traits for military service.⁹³ This ethnicised landscape still remained very much within the imperial system by which it was created.

Yet around 1020 an Armenian king of Vaspurakan was given Sebasteia and surrounding region in exchange for his kingdom. Granting this 'Armenian' region to an 'Armenian' king was recognised by Byzantine policy-makers as natural. Even though king John-Senek'erin had no previous connection to the region or its inhabitants. At the

⁹² Caban, *Służba rekrutów z Królestwa Polskiego w armii carskiej*, pp. 42-43.

⁹³ N. S. M. Matheou, forthcoming, 'Settlement, the State Apparatus, and the Reproduction of Ethnicity: Armenians in East Roman Cappadocia, c.900-1071'.

same time, he and his descendants retained control over monasteries in his former kingdom, giving them additional tool for recreating the ethnic boundaries with religious and cultural means.⁹⁴

This way of thinking about ethnicity, martial ethnic groups and provisions for retaining it (such as ethnic leaders) characteristic for ‘colonial’ regimes of the 19th century, such as Russia, and studied amongst others by already cited Cynthia Enloe, has been perceived as applicable to the Early Roman Empire.⁹⁵ Particularly 19th and early 20th century historians, who shared concerns and attitudes of their empires, tried to describe Roman *auxilia*, regular units of the Roman military recruited from among non-Roman population, in these terms.⁹⁶ Some specific units were to be kept ‘ethnic’, with new soldiers recruited from the area of unit origin, rather than the area of its service. That was to be the case with Syrian archers and *auxilia* recruited in Britain. Recruits from the Eastern provinces were to be predisposed to archery to a greater degree than people of other provinces, while British needed to be kept separate and away from the province of their origin.⁹⁷ Such interpretations were proven wrong by the study of Ian Haynes, who argued convincingly that imperial authorities had little concern for ethnic character of units of the *auxilia* and certainly did not seek to keep them ethnicised, any ethnic coherence of a unit being either a by-product of a prolonged service in a specific area or certain provinces being the focus of more exhaustive recruitment, like Britain in the 80s of the 1st century.⁹⁸ However, Haynes admits that there is an exception to this rule – the

⁹⁴ Matheou, ‘Settlement, the State Apparatus, and the Reproduction of Ethnicity’.

⁹⁵ Enloe, *Ethnic soldiers*, passim.

⁹⁶ A good example is G. L. Cheesman, *The auxilia of the Roman imperial army* (Oxford, 1914), p. 7: “But while much space must necessarily be devoted to details of military organization, the subject opens up social and political questions of wider range. The extent to which a ruling race can safely use the military resources of its subjects and the effect on both parties of such a relation, the advantages and dangers of a defensive or an aggressive frontier policy, these are questions of universal historical interest, on which even an essay of so limited a scope as this must necessarily touch in passing.”

⁹⁷ Cheesman, *The auxilia of the Roman imperial army*, pp. 82-84 and 85.

⁹⁸ I. Haynes, *Blood of the provinces: The Roman auxilia and the making of provincial society from Augustus to the Severans* (Oxford, 2013), pp. 80 and 125-129.

Batavians.⁹⁹

Already mentioned Batavians (see Introduction) seem to have been a case of Roman ethnicization of units. The identity of Batavians was a product of Roman imperialism transforming the socio-political landscape of Lower Rhine and purposefully reifying it to separate Batavians from the Chatti, a tribal unit to which they originally belonged. Batavians were considered to have physical and mental qualities desirable for military service, such as strength and bravery.¹⁰⁰

One of the most noteworthy descriptions of Batavians as a ‘martial race’ can be found in Tacitus’ *Historiae*.¹⁰¹ His perspective is particularly valuable, because he was not just an ethnographer and historian, but also a member of the circles that enacted Roman military policies and it is likely that his way of stereotyping this ethnic group did not differ much from that of Roman officers and governors, such as his father-in-law Agricola.¹⁰² What is relevant for our study is that Tacitus mentions Batavians having their own leaders in charge of the military units in Roman service as one of their distinctive characteristics and indeed it seems that the local elite had a role both in recruiting and commanding units formed from their kinsmen. It remained this way even after their famous rebellion of 69 led by a Batavian aristocrat – Julius Civilis.¹⁰³

The recruitment through local authorities could have been a mere practical solution for the Roman regime. Romans may have considered conducting it on their own in a distant border area a waste of resources and found it easier to delegate the process to

⁹⁹ Haynes, *Blood of the provinces*, pp. 112-116.

¹⁰⁰ Roymans, *Ethnic identity and imperial power*, pp. 222-234; van Driel-Murray ‘Ethnic soldiers: the experience of the Lower Rhine tribes’ pp. 202-208.

¹⁰¹ Tacitus, *Historiae* IV 12 1-3; Haynes, *Blood of the provinces*, p. 113.

¹⁰² van Driel-Murray ‘Ethnic soldiers: the experience of the Lower Rhine tribes’ p. 204 argues that Tacitus’ *Germania* with its tribal descriptions and the selection of cultural traits could be based on some sort of Roman military handbooks, similar to British military handbooks of the 19th century. I would not go as far, but it is evident that Tacitus’ view of Germanic people beyond the Rhine at least partially derived from that of Roman military elite.

¹⁰³ Haynes, *Blood of the provinces*, pp. 114-116.

local elites. However, the appointment of Batavians as commanders of regular units (irregular ones led by their own warlords were still in use throughout the Empire) is more difficult to explain. Especially when we take into account the fact that this practice continued even after rebellion incited by one such Batavian commander. It is plausible that imperial authorities allowed for this risky policy of recreating local hierarchies within the military, because in their mindset it guaranteed these units kept the desirable traits attributed to their ethnicity and having leaders of the same ethnic group in charge was perceived as a one of the tools to achieve that.

As we can see the policy of appointing an ethnic officer or leader and rationale behind it is not only observable in colonial regimes of the 19th century, such as the Imperial Russia, the Byzantine Empire of the 10th and 11th century, but also in the Early Roman Empire. It is therefore plausible that same policy could have been applied in the Later Roman Empire, which inherited both the theoretical framework of conceptualising ethnicity and with modifications the continued practice of forming regular units from specific ethnic groups. As Haynes showed taking the approach to intentionally keep intact ethnic identification of units within the Roman military was certainly not a rule, but it did happen in specific cases and periods of time. Nominating Tribigild for his command because of his perceived ethnicity and that of his soldiers could be such a case.

The course of the rebellion reveals potential consequences of such a policy. As already noted Zosimos claimed other barbarians in Roman service joined the mutiny, but at the same time described the ones opposing them as under the Roman command rather than as Romans.¹⁰⁴ This must have been other *foederati* units and soldiers in the region. This leaves the question of how widespread the rebellion was an open matter. Zosimos' contradiction may stem from an exaggeration, a hyperbole that was designed to stress the

¹⁰⁴ Zosimos V 15 2.

scale of the betrayal. One that was accidentally undermined by Zosimos further narration of the events. This variant leaves little for additional interpretation.

The second possibility is more interesting. Tribigild was successful in finding support for his mutiny against the regime in Constantinople not only in the force he was put in command of, but among other Gothic *foederati* soldiers, with non-Gothic *foederati* units and soldiers opposing him and remaining loyal to Eutropius. If such was the case then one could applaud the imperial officials for selecting Tribigild as the commander of the Gothic regiment. Exceeding their expectations, he succeeded in gaining support of soldiers of similar ethnic background shortly after taking his command and keeping their group identity intact, regardless whether its boundary was projected by the Roman Empire or stemmed from self-identification. To achieve that in such a short was a remarkable feat.

However, this would be a simplistic reconstruction. Even if one leaves the first interpretation of Zosimos' passage aside, the one that assumes the mutiny spread throughout *foederati* units regardless of ethnic boundaries, there remains the evidence of local inhabitants joining Tribigild.¹⁰⁵ The description of slaves and outcasts gathering under the banner of rebellion is of course a conventional element of discussing a state of social disorder by the Roman historiography, but there is no reason to doubt it happened here. That alone at least partially dispels the presumption of the lines of conflict being drawn along the ethnic boundaries. Nor do we find indications of self-perception of Tribigild as anyone but a rebel military commander discontent with his superiors. The deposition of Eutropius is the only issue brought up in the sources as rebellion's aim and there is no evidence of Tribigild's soldiers pressuring him into expressing any other demands.¹⁰⁶ Soldiers and their commanders gained spoils from battles and pillaging of

¹⁰⁵ Zosimos V 13 4 and 14 1.

¹⁰⁶ Zosimos V 17 5.

the affected provinces, but that was not the political aim. The rebel appears as an actor following the logic of Roman internal politics. The mutineers and their commander were ‘ethnic soldiers’, but they were ‘ethnic soldiers’ of the Roman Empire and like in the case of their Batavian predecessors they were incorporated within its political structure.

The strong sense of identity, local hierarchies, military commanders of their own, ethnic regiments, as well as the civil war that erupted in the empire facilitated Batavian rebellion in 69. However, they did not seek to form a political unit separate from the Roman Empire that would be defined along the ethnic boundary. Rather than that, their political aim and that of gallic *civitates* that joined them was to proclaim independent Gaul, but one which was formed and transformed over a century of Roman rule after conquest.¹⁰⁷ Even in their moment of their political independence Batavian leaders depended on concepts and structures left by the Romans.

This applied in a way to Tribigild and his men. Ethnic identity certainly played a role in facilitating the rebellion. It appears to be the factor and the tool that allowed the commander with no previous connection to his soldiers to push them into a risky open mutiny against the Roman state. However, it did not become the political agenda of the endeavour in any sense. Besides the core force other Goths in Roman service may have joined the rebellion, but so did members of marginalised social groups of local inhabitants. The political aim of the insurgence stemmed from the conflict between part of the military and the civilian official dominating the imperial court, one that as Liebeschuetz noted was grooming for a time. Ethnicity mattered as an instrument of organising support, but not necessary a driving force behind the rebellion itself.

¹⁰⁷ Tacitus, *Historiae* IV 17-18, 55-57.

Rebellion concluded

The later movement of Gainas' and Tribigild's forces reported by Zosimos did not indicate, contrary to what he claimed, a planned move against Constantinople. According to Zosimos first they marched together through Phrygia and Lidia, joined at Thyatira, only to turn around in order to make a failed attempt at sacking Sardes, then Gainas moved to Bithynia, Tribigild in the direction of Hellespont.¹⁰⁸ Ultimately one reached Chalcedon and the other one Lampsakos, allegedly their forces pillaged the country on the move.¹⁰⁹ Only then Gainas demanded a meeting with the emperor.¹¹⁰ Had Gainas been the real perpetrator of Eutropius' fall, would he not move to Constantinople straight after in force in order to establish his new position? Instead he wasted couple months, as it seems on joining with Tribigild and move his forces into a strategic position. Perhaps Gainas was not as a prominent figure as ancient authors wanted us to believe and it was rather failure of Eutropius' protégé Leo and his death in battle against Tribigild that prompted opposition at court to act against him. That would mean Gainas' later actions were of opportunistic character, he moved into a better bargaining position while the new order at court at Constantinople was being established.

Tribigild seems to have given reins of negotiations to Gainas. He died sometime after the fall of Eutropius and before Gainas' move against the court faction of Aurelian. Sources say nothing about any issues Tribigild's former soldiers might have had with submitting to Gainas' command. This seems to suggest their links to Tribigild had to do with military hierarchy rather than any 'tribal' one, as Gainas took on the command organically as the highest-ranking officer in the imperial army that rebels were once again

¹⁰⁸ Zosimos V XVIII 4-5 apparently rains which caused a flood prevented Gainas and Tribigild from reaching Sardes, but this line looks suspicious given how it describes more an intention than any actual action and may be just a literary creation to prove Gainas' and Tribigild's infidelity.

¹⁰⁹ Zosimos V XVIII 6.

¹¹⁰ Zosimos V XVIII 7.

recognised as part of. This is not to downplay the factor of common ethnicity that could serve as an instrument of building trust between new leader and his followers. The transition may have been further facilitated by the fact that earlier in his career Gainas appears to serve a similar function of an 'ethnic officer' in the Roman military. He was not only a recruiter of *foederati*, auxiliary units, but also one of designated commanders of the barbarian auxiliary contingent of Theodosius' army in campaign against Eugenius.¹¹¹

Later on, Gainas' force is perceived as a coherent mass of soldiers, without any distinction between Tribigild's original men, the ones that joined the rebellion over its course or Gainas' soldiers. They are all called 'barbarians' or 'Scythians'.¹¹² The evidence of the iconography of Arcadius' column or to be precise transmission of this iconography bears similar perception. The enemy is presented as barbarians, not former Roman soldiers.¹¹³ However, as is going to be evident from passage of Zosimos discussed in the final section of this chapter the reality was more complicated.

Gainas' demise – a warlord in the making?

After the massacre in Constantinople in July of 400, Gainas was forced to retreat. He was to pillage Thrace and prepare to cross the straits. This attempt was an utter failure, with Gainas' followers crushed by fleet commanded by Fravitta.¹¹⁴ The ties Gainas had to the Roman world have been visible. His engagement in a struggle for power in the eastern part of the Roman Empire is indisputable. But could such an individual, owing his rank and power to the imperial military structure, take an opposite direction on the

¹¹¹ Zosimos IV 57 2 and 58 2.

¹¹² 'Barbarians': Zosimos V 18 10; Sokrates Scholastikos, *HE* VI 6; Sozomenos, *HE* VIII 4; Eunapios Fr. 68; 'Scythians': Synesios, *De providentia* II 118 C.

¹¹³ M. McCormick, *Eternal victory: Triumphal rulership in late antiquity, Byzantium, and the early medieval West*, (Cambridge, 1986), pp.49-55; Liebeschuetz, *Barbarians and bishops*, pp. 273-278.

¹¹⁴ Zosimos V 21 3; Sokrates Scholastikos, *HE* VI 6; Sozomenos, *HE* VIII 4; Philostorgios, *HE* XI 8.

path a lot of barbarians walked after no longer being recognised as the *magister utriusque militiae*? Could a Roman officer become a barbarian warlord? Zosimos' account of Gainas' death can answer that question.

He was now afraid that another Roman army might follow and attack the few men he had; he also suspected the Romans accompanying him, so he killed them all before they could anticipate his intentions [οὐκ ἔξω δὲ ὑποψίας ἔχων τοὺς ἐπομένους αὐτῷ Ῥωμαίους, ἐκείνους μὲν οὐ προιδομένους τὸ βούλευμα πάντας ἀπέκτεινεν]. Then with his barbarians he crossed the Danube, intending to return to his native land [εἰς τὰ οἰκεῖα ἐπανελθεῖν διανοούμενος] and there spend the rest of his life. Meanwhile, Uldes, the leader of the Huns at this time, considering it unsafe to allow a barbarian with his own army to live over the Danube [οὐκ ἀσφαλὲς ἡγησάμενος εἶναι βαρβάρῳ στρατόπεδον οἰκεῖον ἔχοντι συγχωρῆσαι πέραν τοῦ Ἰστροῦ τὴν οἴκησιν ἔχειν], and thinking also that he would gratify the Roman emperor by driving him off, made preparations to meet him in battle. He assembled his army and ranged it against the enemy. As Gainas was unable to return to the Romans and unable, on the other hand, to avoid the threatened clash with Uldes, he armed his followers and advanced to meet the Huns. The armies engaged many times and in several battles Gainas' side held out, but many of them fell, including Gainas himself, fighting strongly and nobly.¹¹⁵ (trans. R. T. Ridley)

Cameron insists that Zosimos' description of Gainas' plan to cross the border and save himself from Fravitta's pursuit is not credible. He argues, based on Silvanus' case, that Gainas did not have such an option.¹¹⁶ But the example of Silvanus in Ammianus'

¹¹⁵ Zosimos V XXI 6-XXII 2.

¹¹⁶ Cameron, Long, *Barbarians and politics at the court of Arcadius*, p. 331.

narrative is significantly different from that of Gainas in Zosimos'. Silvanus was pondering the question of crossing the Rhine on his own and joining "barbarians" on the other bank, out of fear of the legal investigation caused by an intrigue against him.¹¹⁷ Gainas was a commander whose open bid for increasing power had failed. Clearly, according to Zosimos, he planned to leave the Roman Empire leading his men with him. Slaughtering Roman soldiers under his command before crossing the Danube is logical in the context of this particular narrative, no matter whether it actually took place. Zosimos deemed it believable.¹¹⁸ This is not to say "barbarian" soldiers were so much more willing to leave Roman territory. They belonged to military units brought together by their two commanders to achieve political goals for which they would be rewarded with spoils, additional payments and gifts. Although the core of this force likely belonged to the nominally same ethnic group, at least as perceived by Romans, there is no indication the men in question were connected by tribal links. They stationed in different parts of the Empire, Thrace and Phrygia. Shared experience of military service as foreigners in the Roman Empire was probably what bonded the group together with loyalty to the military commander, who managed to take control over the imperial court for couple of months. One can assume many of them had families and ties to the Roman population, but after the massacre in Constantinople, Gainas and his men had every reason to feel threatened.

It is difficult to interpret reasons behind Gainas' decision to slaughter Romans in his service. If they remained at his side why remove them at that point? They were likely servants and soldiers who followed him from Constantinople, rather than any political associates. Caesarius, who was installed as a praetorian prefect after Aurelian's exile

¹¹⁷ See Ammianus Marcellinus XV V.

¹¹⁸ Zosimos V XXI 6.

probably at Gainas' behest, did not suffer in the aftermath of the massacre in Constantinople and remained in his function.¹¹⁹ The same probably applied to other members of the civil elite, who cooperated with Gainas during his short period of dominance at the eastern court. Gainas did not manage to create his own court faction and it is very unlikely that any civilian officials followed him after his defeats at Constantinople and against Fravitta's forces. Ridding his host of those Romans, who even then chose him over the loyalty to Constantinople, appears to be more a literary device of Zosimos stressing the final break of Gainas and his 'barbarian' soldiers with the Roman order than a sound strategy undertaken by a commander in a dire situation.

Regardless of the credibility of the rationale offered by Zosimos for the slaughter of Romans in Gainas' force, the possibility of escaping Roman authority and of Gainas becoming one of the warlords existing just outside the Roman borders, with the units under his command transforming into another warband, does not seem as implausible as Cameron believes.¹²⁰ That is precisely what the Zosimos suggests in the passage regarding Uldin's involvement, as the Hunnic warlord perceived Gainas as a threat to the territory under his control and moved against him.¹²¹

A number of Roman generals later in the 5th century would easily qualify as warlords. By this term I mean military commanders whose power-base did not depend on the backing of the central government, while not making any attempts at usurping the purple for themselves. Although many of them were of "barbarian" background, Ricimer or Odoacer being the best-known, Roman warlords also emerged such as Marcellinus, Aegidius and Syagrius. In these cases, the units they commanded were usually recruited

¹¹⁹ Cameron, Long, *Barbarians and politics at the court of Arcadius*, pp. 196-197.

¹²⁰ Liebeschuetz's hypothesis, *Barbarians and bishops*, p. 104 about Gainas acting in response to wider army discontent against Eutropius, might explain why the Roman units followed their commander, events in Constantinople having more a shape of conflict between civil population and field units garrisoned in the city by Gainas.

¹²¹ Zosimos V XXII 1.

through Roman structures or private means, whether they were recruits from amongst the population of the Empire or of “barbarian” origin. The loyalty of these soldiers proved enough to give one a position of warlord.¹²² The passage of Zosimos raises the question whether such a possibility had been already posed before the gradual dissolution of the imperial structures in the second half of 5th century?

Gainas was said to take an active part in the recruitment of barbarians of his “tribe/kin”.¹²³ Remarks about putting them into offices implies they were of higher standing than low-ranking barbarian warriors. Clearly Gainas must have retained or, which is more likely given how we are told only about his service to Rome, developed links with individuals of higher standing among the barbarian groups. New officers in Roman service could hardly be men of no significance. Perhaps such links could play a role in considering the possibility of becoming a warlord. At the same time, it is curious that having such contacts Gainas did not seek safe haven among barbarian groups and leaders within the Roman Empire, most notably Alaric, whom he commanded during Theodosius’ campaign against the usurper Eugenius in 394.¹²⁴ Perhaps the reason he did not do so is the fact that he would be seen as a rival, a contender for the leadership of the warband and therefore a threat. A threat that could be easily dealt with by handing him to Constantinople and gaining imperial favour. A case of a contender was Sarus, who in was conflict with Alaric and went over to the service of the court of Ravenna with his own retinue. He was willing to fight Alaric even when the imperial regime sought a cease of hostilities and died doing so.¹²⁵ Perhaps there was no room for another military leader

¹²² For a study of these cases, see P. MacGeorge, *Late Roman warlords* (Oxford-New York, 2002) and J. W. P. Wijnendaele ‘Warlordism and the disintegration of the western Roman Army’ in J. Armstrong (ed.), *Circum mare: themes in ancient warfare* (Leiden-Boston, 2016), pp. 185-203.

¹²³ Sokrates VI 6; Sozomenos VIII 4.

¹²⁴ For Gainas as one of Theodosius’ officers put in charge of allied barbarian contingent see Zosimos IV 57 2, 58 2, for Alaric’ involvement see V 5 4.

¹²⁵ Sozomenos IX 9 3; Olympiodor Fr. 3; Zosimos VI 13 2.

with his own force at Alaric's side. Getting out of the Roman sphere of power would allow Gainas to retain his forces in some shape, and either wait for a change of rule in Constantinople or settle for raiding the border regions and building his independent power-base. With his way to Asia Minor cut off, he had hardly any choice.

Conclusions

In the end Gainas was finally dealt with, far away from Roman rule, commanding remnants of his forces and fighting for the position of a warlord. Gainas and Tribigild were well entrenched in the Roman system and politics, but it did not take much for the later Roman historians to consider them foreigners bent on destruction of the civilized order. Contrary to what some people would claim, Tribigild's and Gainas' ethnicity did matter.¹²⁶ Claudian used it to stress the corruption of Eutropius, blaming him for being unable to properly handle barbarians. Synesios stressed how unnatural the reign of "Typhos" was, by presenting the "Scythians" as the foundation of his rule and their dominance over the "Egyptians". Others elaborated upon the barbarian origin of Tribigild and Gainas to explain to their audience the genesis and course of the rebellion, blaming its outbreak on the plot of Goths tied together by kinship, and seeing barbarian greed as the source of constant plundering. It was the reality of literature and images, but it was not wholly detached from the political and social reality of the time. In fact, in case of Tribigild this perception likely echoed the role this commander was designed to fulfil within the imperial system – an 'ethnic officer' in charge of keeping soldiers under his command 'Gothic'. This role allowed Tribigild to gather support beyond just the units he led for the purpose of pressuring the imperial court and furthering his position within the

¹²⁶ Burns, *Barbarians within the gates of Rome*, p. 169 insists we would know nothing of Gainas' ethnicity if he had not rebelled. Perhaps such is the case, but only because rebellion made him a more important figure. Had he played a different role, yet one that would bring the focus of the sources, we would surely also hear about his origins.

Empire. Yet it was Gainas who in the end profited most from Tribigild's rebellion. He had little difficulty in gaining the loyalty of Tribigild's men after the death of the rebel commander. That was both because of his own ethnic identity and the role of 'ethnic officer' he played in his career earlier on. The moment he lost the fight for dominance at court, Gainas attempted the career of a warlord outside of the Roman borders, transforming his units of auxiliary 'barbarian' soldiers into a warband.

We are unable to tell whether Gainas and Tribigild considered themselves more Goths than Roman commanders, how they self-identified, but certainly their ethnic identity played some role in the way they were perceived and the way they acted. The imperial apparatus and elites projected ethnic identity upon them. The boundary between them and the 'Roman' elites was constructed of elements such as perceived kinship networks and ethnic stereotypes. Tribigild employed his status as designated 'Gothic officer' to mobilise the support of his men in his mutiny against his political superior, Eutropius, but he did not live long enough to fully reap the fruits of his success or face the consequences of embracing the role of the 'barbarian'. Gainas on the other hand may have been a Roman commander and aspired to become a Roman politician, but after losing in the struggle for power in the Empire, the only remaining path for him was to be the 'barbarian' warlord he became in the minds of his opponents. The path of an 'ethnic officer' in the imperial service was paved both with opportunities and pitfalls.

Chapter 1.2 Ardabur, Aspar et consortes – A family of barbarians in Roman service

History of the Ardaburii

In just half a century, a family of officers of Alanic origin rose to power within the Roman Empire. The Ardaburii, as they came to be called by modern scholars, achieved the highest position in the Roman state by leading military campaigns, taking part in church controversies, elevating emperors and overthrowing usurpers. They were counted amongst consuls and *magistri militum*, one of them even became a Caesar, though not for long and failed to achieve the rank of Augustus (see below). The interpretative framing of their careers, particularly that of the most prominent member of the family, Aspar, are varied. According to some, they were fully romanised, reliable officers and statesmen, unjustly eliminated because of their ethnic background and Arian creed. Others see them as barbarians championing their own agenda. Yet another view presents them as a dynasty of military officials aiming to accumulate more influence, titles and power, but little interested in the matter of their own identity.¹²⁷ Three models have been offered: of a forced exclusion based on their ethnic and religious identity after a relatively successful socio-political inclusion; of a self-exclusion on the same basis; and, third, of an inclusion so complete that it actually led to the destruction of the Ardaburii in the power struggle of the elite they became part of. These models are not irreconcilable.

The path to power of the family began with Ardabur, who appears in the primary sources for the first time as a *magister militum* waging war against Persia in 421-422, plundering Arzanene, besieging Nisibis and ambushing Persian commanders.¹²⁸ The

¹²⁷ For all these views, see: L. R. Scott, 'Aspar and the burden of barbarian heritage' *Byzantine studies/Etudes Byzantines* 3/2 (1976) pp. 59-69; B. Croke, 'Dynasty and ethnicity: emperor Leo I and the eclipse of Aspar' *Chiron* 35 (2005) pp. 147-203.

¹²⁸ Sokrates VII 18, 20, 23.

exact origin of Ardabur is not known, he is believed to have been an Alan.¹²⁹ If that was indeed so, he might have originated from one of many different Alanic groups. Some Alans entered the Empire with the Goths in the 370s.¹³⁰ One group remained beyond the Danube.¹³¹ There were other Alans in the regions north of the Caucasus. His involvement on the Persian front may suggest ties to the Alans on the eastern shores of the Black Sea. However, connections to members of the Roman military elite of Gothic background, may imply the first possibility. Whatever his ethnic background may have been, he was deemed a capable leader. Ardabur was sent by the emperor Theodosius II together with his son, Aspar, to reinstate Valentinian III and his mother Galla Placidia, overthrown by John who had usurped the imperial purple. Initially thwarted by the weather conditions, Ardabur fell into John's custody, only to use that opportunity to suborn the enemy officers into betraying the usurper. After Aspar's successful defeat of John in 425, Ardabur was freed and became a consul of 427.¹³² Besides attaining military ranks and honours, Ardabur made a first marriage alliance, one of the many to strengthen the political position of the Ardaburii. He either married a daughter of Plinta, a Goth, a consul of 419 and *magister militum praesentalis* of 419-438, or married to her his son Aspar.¹³³ Ardabur must have died soon after his consulship, as there is no mention of his activities post 427,

¹²⁹ His Alanic descent is only inferred on the basis of sources identifying his son as such. The only label of an identity differing from one typical identity of a member of the imperial elite is that of an Arian: Theophanes AM 5943.

¹³⁰ Ammianus Marcellinus XXXI 8 4, 11 6, 12 17, 16 3.

¹³¹ G. Vernadsky 'Flavius Ardabur Aspar', *Südost Forschungen*, 6 (1941) pp. 38-73, particularly pp. 69-73.

¹³² Philostorgios *HE* XII 12-13; Sokrates *HE* VII 23 8; Theophanes AM 5915; Jordanes, *Romania* 328; Prokopios, *History of the wars* III 3.8; Marcellinus comes, 425;

¹³³ *ILS* 1299: The exact nature of the familial link between Aspar and Plinta is uncertain. We know of it from the representation of Aspar and his son, Ardabur (Iunior), celebrating the consulship of the former. Plinta is included in a medallion positioned above Aspar and his son, next to another medallion showing the likeness of Ardabur. That Aspar wanted to stress his connection to Plinta is beyond doubt, yet there is hardly decisive evidence to support either of the two possibilities, as the representation may mean Plinta was Aspar's maternal grandfather or a father-in-law. A. Demandt "Der Kelch von Ardabur und Anthusa" *Dumbarton Oaks papers* 40 (1986), pp. 113-117 believes Plinta's daughter was Aspar's mother.

but he left his son well-entrenched within the Roman state apparatus, with a high rank as a commander, and political connections.

In 431 Aspar was sent to command a campaign in Africa against the encroaching Vandals, possibly receiving at that time the rank of *magister militum*.¹³⁴ Although the war he fought there, together with the local *comes* Bonifatius, was eventually lost, he received a western consulship, a somewhat exceptional achievement for a commander who remained connected to the Constantinopolitan court rather than Ravennate one. He seems to have celebrated the consulship while remaining in Carthage in 434, in fact including the personification of the city, on a par with that of Rome, in the ideological programme represented in a silver *missorium* made for the occasion of receiving the consulship [Fig. 1].¹³⁵

In the 40s he is seen active in the east, first negotiating a truce with Attila in 442 and then commanding, together with Ariobindus (his consular colleague) and Arnegisclus, a failed campaign against the Hunnic warlord. These military defeats did not diminish his position at the court.¹³⁶ The selection of Marcian, a former *domesticus* of Ardabur and Aspar, to the imperial rank in 450, after the death of Theodosius II, proved this. In the next year the emperor honoured his former patron with the rank of a patrician.

Aspar gained even more power and influence during Marcian's reign and, after the death of the latter, it was the patrician and *magister militum*, who had the decisive say in the choice of the next emperor. Leo, another of his subordinates, was elevated to the imperial rank in 457 in a series of ceremonies that stressed as much the importance of

¹³⁴ Theophanes AM 5931 and 5943; Prokopios, *History of the wars* III 3.35-6; Evagrius HE II 1.

¹³⁵ G. Bevan, A. Gabov, C. Zaccagnino 'The missorium of Ardabur Aspar: new considerations on its archaeological and historical contexts' *Archeologia classica, nuova series* 53 (2012), pp. 419-94.

¹³⁶ Priskos fr. 8 mentioned that one of the envoys to Attila in 449, Maximinus, was accused of diminishing the position of Aspar and Ariobindus at the court and described them as unreliable barbarians in his conversation with the Hunnic warlord. The accusation was made by another envoy, Berichus, who was in conflict with Priskos and Maximinus. If Aspar and Ariobindus had been marginalised, making such an accusation in order to hurt his position would be pointless.

Aspar as that of the new emperor.¹³⁷ Younger sons of Aspar became consuls, Patricius in 459 and Hermineric in 465.¹³⁸ However, over the next couple of years the position of Aspar seems to have been undermined by his nominee. In 466 Leo dismissed Aspar's son, Ardabur, from the position of *magister militum per Orientem*, for planning treason with the Persian king, with little to no opposition from Aspar himself.¹³⁹ An officer of Isaurian origin, Zeno, was raised to the rank of the emperor's *comes domesticorum* and eventually married the elder daughter of Leo, Ariadne.¹⁴⁰ Ardabur's post was taken over by Jordanes, a Vandal *comes stabuli*, who was converted to the Nicene creed from Arianism by Daniel the Stylite, an ascetic with close ties to the emperor.¹⁴¹ In one clean sweep Leo managed to seriously weaken Aspar's position. However, he abstained from escalating the conflict, sparing Ardabur's life. Soon after that, Aspar's council was ignored in dealing with the conflict between Sciri and a group of Goths.¹⁴² Yet the eldest of the Ardaburii remained relevant. He held command in campaigns against the Goths and the Huns in the following years.¹⁴³

With the failure of a major expedition against the Vandals in Africa in 468, led by one of Leo's supporter, Basiliscus, Aspar could yet again attempt to assert dominance over the eastern court. In 469/70 Ardabur managed to incite to rebellion Anagastes, *magister militum per Thracias*, who felt offended by the consular nomination of Jordanes. This way the Ardaburii caused Zeno to leave Constantinople to campaign against Anagastes.¹⁴⁴ The emperor's son-in-law, Zeno, was to be assassinated, but managed to escape. Leo was forced to proclaim Patricius as Caesar and agree to a marriage with one

¹³⁷ Croke 'Dynasty and Ethnicity', pp. 151-152.

¹³⁸ PLRE II p. 842 and 549.

¹³⁹ *Vita Danielis Stylitae* 55.

¹⁴⁰ *Vita Danielis Stylitae* 65; Marcellinus comes, s.a. 475; Victor of Tunnuna, s.a. 475; Evagrius *HE* II 15, 17;

¹⁴¹ *Vita Danielis Stylitae* 55.

¹⁴² Malchos fr. 45.

¹⁴³ Priskos fr. 39.

¹⁴⁴ John Malalas, Fr. 206; Croke "Dynasty and Ethnicity", pp. 184-187.

of his daughters.¹⁴⁵ However, the Ardaburii's triumph proved to be temporary. First, Patricius' elevation caused an uproar amongst the Constantinopolitan clergy, who were aggravated by his adherence to the Arian creed. Patriarch Gennadios and archimandrite Markellos led a throng of clergy and monks to the hippodrome.¹⁴⁶ The opposition was appeased by Leo's vague agreement to their demands.¹⁴⁷ The entire affair could have been engineered by Leo himself, in order to buy time in his power play against Aspar.¹⁴⁸ Soon after, the emperor ordered the sudden murder of Aspar and Ardabur, after inviting them to a feast.¹⁴⁹ Patricius survived, although wounded.¹⁵⁰ Hermineric, the youngest of Aspar's son was not in Constantinople at the time and was spared. Some political upheaval followed, with one of Aspar's supporters, Ostrys, attempting to avenge his commander by attacking the imperial palace, but in the end, he only managed to escape with Aspar's concubine.¹⁵¹ Theodoric Strabo, whose aunt Aspar had married, demanded the position and wealth of the assassinated man in exchange for his loyalty.¹⁵²

The Ardaburii no longer played such an important role in the politics of the Empire, but that did not mean they disappeared completely. Hermineric seemingly reconciled with the imperial faction and married Zeno's granddaughter.¹⁵³ Areobindus, son of Godisthea, Ardabur's daughter, rose to prominence in the military, achieving the rank of *magister militum per Orientem* in 503/4 and a consulship of 506. Because of his

¹⁴⁵ It is debated whether it was the younger daughter, Leontia, or Ariadne, who would need to divorce Zeno in order to do marry Patricius. Ariadne is suggested by R. Lane-Fox, 'The life of Daniel' in: M. J. Edwards and S. Swain (eds) *Portraits: biographical representation in the Greek and Latin literature of the Roman Empire* (Oxford, 1997), pp. 175-226. Leontia is the usual choice, see for example: Demandt 'Der Kelch von Ardabur und Anthusa', pp. 113-117.

¹⁴⁶ *Vita s. Marcelli* 34.

¹⁴⁷ *Vita s. Marcelli* 34; Zonaras XIV 1.

¹⁴⁸ R. Snee 'Gregory Nazianzen's Anastasia church: Arianism, the Goths, and hagiography' *Dumbarton Oaks papers*, 52 (1998), pp. 157-186, particularly pp. 183-185.

¹⁴⁹ *Vita Danielis Stylitae* 66; Hydatius, 247; Marcellinus comes s. a. 471; Cassiodorus, *Chron.* s. a. 471; Victor of Tunnuna s. a. 471; Evagrius *HE* II 16; John Malalas XIV 40.

¹⁵⁰ Kandidos = Photios, *Bibliotheca* cod. 79.

¹⁵¹ *Chronicon Paschale* s.a. 467; John Malalas XIV 40.

¹⁵² Theophanes AM 5964; Malchos Fr. 2.

¹⁵³ Theophanes AM 5964.

marriage to Anicia Iuliana, daughter of the emperor Olybrius, he came close to being proclaimed emperor by rioters rebelling against the emperor Anastasius in Constantinople, but he showed less interest in the imperial rank than his ancestors, and escaped.¹⁵⁴ Nevertheless a district of the city came to be known after him.¹⁵⁵ Finally there is a possibility that a later rebellious commander, Vitalian, was a descendant of Patricius, who could have settled amongst the Alans at the mouth of Danube.¹⁵⁶

A Roman...?

Generations of Ardaburii took part in the politics and wars of the Roman Empire, but how well did they function within Roman society? Were they wholly included in it and sought such inclusion, or was it only partial? There is little trace of Ardabur's activity, besides the military campaigns he fought and the dynastic alliance he forged with Plinta, that can be analysed in this regard. The amount of evidence changes with Aspar. His western consulship was celebrated with a silver *missorium* made for the occasion and inscribed with Aspar's name and titles: *Fl(avius) Ardabur Aspar vir inlustris com(es) et mag(ister) militum et consul ordinarius*; and with a label identifying his son: *Ardabur iunior pr(a)etor*.¹⁵⁷ Above Aspar and Ardabur two other consular figures are represented: Ardabur the Older and Plinta. The last one is speculated on the basis of *missorium* to be either Aspar's father-in-law or maternal grandfather. The silver dish bore an ideological message of the might of Aspar's house, presenting his father and father-in-law/grandfather and his firstborn, who would continue the Ardaburii, favoured by

¹⁵⁴ Marcell. Com. s.a. 512; John Malalas 407; *Chronicon Paschale* s.a. 512.

¹⁵⁵ G. Siebig, *Kaiser Leo. Das oströmische Reich in den ersten drei Jahren seiner Regierung (457-460 n. Chr.)* (Berlin 2010), p. 697.

¹⁵⁶ Vernadsky 'Flavius Ardabur Aspar', pp. 68-73.

¹⁵⁷ *ILS* 1299.

personifications of Rome and Carthage. It is clear from the dish that the new consul is a pillar of the Roman order.

The missorium of Aspar originally presented here cannot be made freely available via ORA because of copyright reasons. The image was sourced at G. Bevan, A. Gabov, C. Zaccagnino 'The missorium of Ardabur Aspar: new considerations on its archaeological and historical contexts' *Archeologia classica, nuova series* 53 (2012), pp. 419-94.

Fig. 1 Missorium of Aspar (from G. Bevan, A. Gabov, C. Zaccagnino 2012, fig. 1) The missorium shows Aspar on a throne with his son Ardabur standing next to him, flanked by personifications of Rome and Carthage. Above them there are two figures subscribed as Ardabur and Plinta.

Although 42 cm in diameter, the dish is not the size of the largest known *missorium* of the period, that of Theodosius I, which is 74 cm, but the craftsmanship and value put it on a par with items of the silver imperial *largitio*, perhaps betraying Aspar's ambitions.¹⁵⁸ Consuls typically settled for diptychs rather than *missoria*. The theme of familial continuity is also unusual for the commemoration of a consulship.¹⁵⁹ It certainly betrays the political ambitions of Aspar, although perhaps Bevan's, Gabov's and Zaccagnino's suggestion of imperial aspirations is going too far. As important as the message of the dish and the mode of expressing it, which should be expected of a product of Roman material culture, is its function as a gift. The dish was found in Tuscany, in the region of Heba, which had no significant links to the Ardaburii that we know of, but was quite prosperous at the time. The most probable explanation of how it came to be in that

¹⁵⁸ R. Hobbs 'Platters in the Mildenhall Treasure' *Britannia* vol. 41 (2010), pp. 324-333, particularly p. 329 classified both dishes as belonging to the same type.

¹⁵⁹ Bevan, Gabov, Zaccagnino 'The missorium of Ardabur Aspar' pp. 419 and 439-443.

region is that it was given as a gift to the owner of the estate it was found at, or to his ancestor.¹⁶⁰ Aspar must have engaged in the game of *amicitia*, so characteristic of Roman elites since the times of the late republic, establishing and keeping political friendships and alliances (see chapter 2.2). This gift, found in central Italy, shows that Aspar forged links of *amicitia* outside of his immediate circle of allies and friends, connected to the Constantinopolitan court. As a military commander in the West and a consul appointed by the court in Ravenna, he engaged with members of the Italian elite, therefore transcending the division between the two parts of the Empire and their respective elites.

Finding new *amici* was not the only activity of a member of the imperial elite to which Aspar belonged. As was expected of the late antique elites, be they local or imperial ones, civil or military, the patrician engaged in euergetism. In 459 he funded and began the construction of a massive cistern at close to the walls of Constantinople, improving the city's supply of water.¹⁶¹ The date of this infrastructural project coincides with that of Patricius' consulship, perhaps it was meant as a celebration of that familial achievement.¹⁶² In another act of euergetism, Aspar and Ardabur gave valuable vessels to the church of Anastasia, strongly associated with the supporters of the Nicene council. According to the *Vita* of Marcian, who was in charge of the church, the community showed its gratitude by establishing services in the Gothic language.¹⁶³

The common people were astounded and the senate honoured him and
especially the one, who was counted amongst patricians, Aspar, with his son

¹⁶⁰ Bevan, Gabov, Zaccagnino 'The missorium of Ardabur Aspar', p. 439.

¹⁶¹ *Chronicon Paschale* s.a. 459.

¹⁶² Siebigs, *Kaiser Leo*, pp. 498-500 believes it has to do with a newly formed *foedus* with Goths settled in Thrace under the command of Triarius and possibly already under his son Theodoric Strabo. In his interpretation, the cistern was meant as a way to appease popular opinion in the city that could have been aggravated by the presence of barbarian Arians, but this seems highly speculative. A more mundane explanation, of Aspar simply seeking greater popularity to strengthen his political position, is the more plausible one.

¹⁶³ Snee 'Gregory Nazianzen's Anastasia Church' pp. 175-186.

Ardabur. They were at any rate unlike us, as they were by chance of the different faith than the right one, all the same, out of reverence for the pious father [Marcian], they contributed great and worth seeing precious [gifts] to the all-hallowed *martyrium* of the martyr Anastasia neighbouring it to the north. For these reasons the saint, gave to them a gift in exchange. He thanked in the form of [ordering] the reading aloud of the scriptures, inspired by God, in their ancestral language of the Goths [τῇ πατρώᾳ αὐτῶν γλώττῃ τῶν Γότθων] on the special days in the same sacred *martyrium*.¹⁶⁴

The value of this passage of the *Vita Marciani* is a controversial issue. Wortley, who dates the text to the late 8th century, believes the tradition about Aspar's and Ardabur's involvement with the church of Anastasia to be an aetiology made by the *Vita*'s author, Sergius, in order to explain the readings in Gothic.¹⁶⁵ A differing view on the genuineness of the traditions in the *Vita Marciani* is presented by Snee, who pointed out theological terminology in the text characteristic of the 5th century.¹⁶⁶ The story about Aspar's and Ardabur's beneficence is certainly not one that would be the most obvious for the 8th century author, to explain the practice of reading the scriptures in Gothic in the local church. There were other traditions that could be used for that purpose, such as John Chrysostom's mission amongst the Goths of Constantinople or the existence of the community led by bishop Selenas (see chapter 3.1). Perhaps then we should accept Sergius' explanation as genuinely older than the time of composition of the *Vita Marciani*.

¹⁶⁴ *Vita Sancti Marciani Oeconomus* 16.

¹⁶⁵ J. Wortley "Vita Sancti Marciani Oeconomus", *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 103/2 (2010) pp. 715-772, particularly pp. 726-728. His dating, based on the topographical and other discrepancies between the reality of the text and that of Marcian's lifetime, is quite convincing. This led him to push the date of the text up to the late 8th century.

¹⁶⁶ Snee 'Gregory Nazianzen's Anastasia Church', pp. 165-168.

It may appear unusual for an ‘Arian’ to extend his patronage over a Nicene community, but it is important to remember that Aspar did not spurn such relations. Although an ‘Arian’, he often engaged in settling Nicene church controversies. He seems to have taken a conciliatory approach, assisting individuals from both sides of the Christological disputes of the time. He played a role in the rehabilitation of Theodoret, bishop of Cyrus, protected Amphilochius, bishop of Side, from exile, and attempted to do the same for Timothy Aelurus, bishop of Alexandria, in a way becoming their patron.¹⁶⁷ His patronage over a local community, even of a different creed than his own, is therefore not an impossible one. Nor did Ardabur’s approach towards supporting local religious communities, overlooking sectarian issues, differ from his father’s. There is material evidence for Ardabur’s benefaction. A vessel of a liturgical character belonging to the Dumbarton Oaks Collection bears an inscription suggesting it was a gift from Ardabur and, possibly his wife, Anthusa: *ΥΠΕΡ ΕΥΧΗC ΑΡΑΑΒΟΥΡΟΥ + ΥΠΕΡ ΕΥΧΗC ΑΝΘΟΥΧΗC*.¹⁶⁸ Snee connected it to the Ardaburii’s benefaction to the church of Anastasia, but, even if the vessel was not one granted to this particular church, but rather one in Antioch, as Demandt suggests, it still attests an act of euergetism.¹⁶⁹

In 464 Aspar earned even more popularity amongst the inhabitants of Constantinople by taking active part in fighting the great fire that spread throughout the city.¹⁷⁰ Judging by Photios’ abbreviation of the first book of Kandidos’ of *History*, Aspar’s involvement was a substantial one:

¹⁶⁷ Theodoret, *Ep.* 140; Theophanes, AM 5952; Zacharias, *HE* IV 7.

¹⁶⁸ M. C. Ross, *Catalogue of the Byzantine and early mediaeval antiquities in the Dumbarton Oaks Collection, I metalwork, ceramics, glass, glyptics, paintings* (Washington D. C., 1962), no. 5, p. 4; Demandt, ‘Der Kelch von Ardabur und Anthusa’, pp. 113-117.

¹⁶⁹ Snee ‘Gregory Nazianzen’s Anastasia Church’, particularly p. 158; Demandt, ‘Der Kelch von Ardabur und Anthusa’, pp. 113-117.

¹⁷⁰ For the fire see: *Chronicon Paschale* s.a. 465; Evagrius, *HE* II 13; Theophanes, AM 5954. For Aspar’s role see: Kandidos= Photios, *Bibliotheca* cod. 79; Zonaras XIV 1 12.

The first book recounts Aspar's and his children's power, the proclamation of Leo by Aspar, the outbreak of fire in the city [Constantinople] and what great actions Aspar brought about for the common good.¹⁷¹

If we can trust Photios, dealing with the results of the conflagration was an event, which received similar attention from Kandidos to that of a general description of the Ardaburii's power and the elevation of Leo to the imperial throne. Aspar's measures must have been quite significant and most likely dwarfing any involvement on the emperor Leo's part. Amongst the Constantinopolitan εὐεργέται Aspar and his family appear as influential and well entrenched members of the Roman elite.

What evidence remains of Ardabur the Younger and his euergetic actions implies a similar willingness to earn the popularity of local communities. Sent by the emperor Marcian to Antioch in order to hold the position of *magister militum per Orientem*, Ardabur established the city as his main base of operations. After the death of the local Syrian holy man, Simeon the Stylite, the first to adopt this technique of ascetism, Ardabur acceded to the requests of the inhabitants of the city and delegated a contingent of soldiers to secure the body of the holy man and transport it to Antioch, before any of the neighbouring villages or cities claimed it first.¹⁷² A *martyrium* was built in order to host the holy relics. Ardabur may have been one of the patrons and funders of the undertaking, given his involvement in procuring Simeon's remains and the popularity it would gain him amongst the people of Antioch. An inscription found in Antioch suggests that the *magister militum* had a private bath in the city and probably also a villa to which it

¹⁷¹ Kandidos= Photios, *Bibliotheca* cod. 79.

¹⁷² *The Life and Daily Mode of Living of the Blessed Simeon Stylites* by Antonius 29 and 32; *The Syriac Life of Saint Simeon Stylites* 125; *Chronicon Paschale* s.a. 464.

What was significant about this plot, was that it was to be conducted in order to bring back the domination of ‘paganism’, a rather improbable political project at the end of the 5th century, but one that some members of Alexandrian and Athenian Neoplatonic circles, convinced that the old order was bound to return by the will of the gods, made attempts at realising. Especially the period between the 460s and 480s saw an increase of hopes of the more politically inclined ‘pagans’.¹⁷⁹ The leader of the plot, Severianus, was a ‘pagan’ with philosophical interests connected to Neoplatonic circles and a friend to Damaskios, who shared these beliefs. At the same time, as a descendant of one of the greatest families of Damascus, he became a high-ranking member of the imperial establishment. At one point he was offered the position of praetorian prefect of the East by the emperor Zeno under the condition of converting to Christianity, which he rejected.¹⁸⁰ Previous relations between Severianus and the Ardaburii were hostile, he was conflicted with Ardabur the Younger and Aspar.¹⁸¹ However, this did not stop Hermineric from joining a plot of which Severianus was the leader. The question remains whether it was for political or religious reasons. Damaskios’ framing of the plot as an attempt at a restitution of the traditional religion, even if stemming from his own perspective and the character of his work as one describing the great ‘pagan’ figures and glorifying their character and deeds, must reflect the ideological views of the very core of conspirators. On the other hand, one can surmise that there were members of the plot that did not share the religious views of Severianus, joining it for political reasons as a chance to further their careers and advance in the new regime. Hermineric’s betrayal allows us to surmise that he belonged to the second groups of conspirators, possibly seeking a chance to reclaim some of his family’s position lost

¹⁷⁹ P. Athanassiadi ‘Persecution and response in late paganism: the evidence of Damascius’ *The Journal of Hellenic Studies*. 113 (1993), pp. 1-29, particularly pp. 17-18.

¹⁸⁰ P. Janiszewski, K. Stebnicka, E. Szabat (eds), *Sofiści i retorzy greccy w cesarstwie rzymskim (I-VII w.)*. *Słownik biograficzny* (Warszawa, 2011), pp. 402-403.

¹⁸¹ Damaskios 108.

under Leo. Given the choice between supporting a coup and receiving honours in the new regime, or revealing it to the emperor Zeno and being rewarded for his loyalty, he simply chose the option that suited him better.¹⁸²

Nevertheless, the entire affair attests another vector of networks within the Roman society the Ardaburii belonged to. Adherents of the traditional religion were yet another group of the late Roman socio-political landscape they had connections with. This may have stemmed from relationships made within the ruling imperial elites, the most probable explanation for Hermineric's involvement with Severianus and others, contacts with provincial or curial elites, or patronage over sophistic and philosophical groups.¹⁸³ The Ardaburii with their widespread networks were well entrenched within the Roman society of the 5th century, transcending the sectarian and ethnic boundaries.

... or barbarian?

The Ardaburii certainly appeared as Roman officials and aristocrats, but in certain contexts a different image could emerge. For five generations from Ardabur to Areobindus, the family retained non-Roman, Alanic and Gothic names. This was a clear signifier of a differing identity. Like most of the 'barbarian' officers in Roman service, Ardabur and his descendants bore the *nomen* 'Flavius', but their personal names were Alanic and Gothic. The only exception from that rule was Patricius, who was also the candidate to the succession of the imperial throne.¹⁸⁴ Other children of Aspar, such as

¹⁸² According to Theophanes, AM 5964, Hermineric had good reasons to remain loyal to Zeno owing to him his survival of Leo's slaughter. He was sent at the time to Isauria and married Zeno's granddaughter.

¹⁸³ Imperial commanders and officials did not avoid extending their patronage over 'pagans'. During Zeno's reign Illus, military commander and *magister officiorum*, obtained a public salary and eventually the office of *quaestor sacri palatii*, and as honorary consulship and patriciate for Pamprepius, who was a known philosopher, poet and magician; see H. Elton 'Illus and the imperial aristocracy under Zeno' *Byzantion* 70/2 (2000) pp. 393-407.

¹⁸⁴ It is assumed that Patricius owed his name to the fact of having a Roman mother. Kandidos reports that Aspar had children of three wives, but he does not identify them. One of them was sister of Triarius, warlord in command over the Goths settled in Thrace, and aunt to Theodoric Strabo, who demanded inheritance over Aspar after his death. Another one could have been the daughter of Plinta (see above). But we hear nothing of any Roman wife of Aspar, only of a Gothic concubine that Ostrys was to save after Aspar's

Ardabur and Hermineric, had non-Roman names. The practice continued with the next generation. Ardabur's daughter bore the name Godisthea and gave birth to another individual of non-Roman name, the abovementioned Areobindus. Curiously enough, the names chosen came from two different languages, with Aspar and his father and son bearing Alanic names, while Hermineric and Godisthea bore Gothic ones.¹⁸⁵ The selection of names seems to go beyond family tradition and language barriers. However, only in the case of Patricius does it actually align with the conventions of the dominant Roman. The shift in practice does not apply only to Aspar, who gave the name to Hermineric, but also to Ardabur, who was Godisthea's father. The naming practice fades away with Areobindus' descendants.¹⁸⁶ Just by itself it would be insignificant. However, together with other aspects of the 'dynastic policy' of the Ardaburii, it gives an impression of a conscious strategy of drawing boundaries. The family was part of the Roman system, but carefully chose signifiers of a differing identity that would set them and some of their allies apart.

Their marriage alliances are another such aspect. The association of the Ardaburii with a powerful military official of Gothic origin, Plinta, has already been mentioned, but it was by no means the only one. Godisthea married Dagalaiphus, a consul of 461 and a patrician, son of Areobindus (Aspar's colleague as consul in 434), *magister militum* and also a patrician. Areobindus was reported to be a Goth and his name appears to be Gothic,

death (*Chronicon Paschale* s.a. 467; John Malalas XIV 40;). Another explanation for Patricius' name could be offered. Perhaps he owed his name to the patrician rank obtained by his father. The first attestation of Aspar being a patrician comes from Theodoret's letter to him (*Ep.* 140) in 451, but he must have achieved it earlier. Patricius was probably born sometime after his father's consulship in 434, as he does not appear with his brother Ardabur on the dish, but soon enough to be adult at the time of his nomination for a consulship for the year 459. It is then possible that the break in naming pattern had to do with stressing the family prestige, rather than as a signifier of Patricius' matrilineal ethnicity.

¹⁸⁵ Although, the name "Aspar" may also have had a punico-libyan origin see: F. Vattioni 'Aspar è nome libico o fenicio-punico?' *Die Sprache: Zeitschrift für Sprachwissenschaft* 26/2 (1980) pp. 191-194.

¹⁸⁶ Areobindus' son was named Olybrius see *PLRE* II p. 143.

as does that of his son.¹⁸⁷ These cases could be classified as intermarriages within the Roman military elite, having little to do with other identities, be they religious or ethnic, although a certain preference for other ‘immigrants’ within that group, based on similar experiences of a career in the Roman military, could be inferred.¹⁸⁸ Yet if we add to this another of Aspar’s marriage alliances, the trend seems to take on a different character. As mentioned above, Theodoric Strabo demanded the inheritance left by Aspar and his rank, claiming kinship with him. Theodoric’s aunt was in fact one of Aspar’s wives. This is a case of a marriage alliance that went beyond the limits of the Roman military elite. Both Theodoric and his father, Triarios, were warlords operating within the Roman Empire, yet their loyalty to it remained an open matter. The fact that Theodoric’s first attested political action was caused by Aspar’s death, and could be summed up as an attempt to strike a new favourable deal with the emperor Leo, suggests that relations between the Empire and the Thracian Goths were based on the position of Aspar.

A special connection of the Ardaburii to the Thracian Goths is also signaled by the private force in their service. An attempt to avenge Aspar’s and Ardabur’s death was made by a *comes* of Gothic origin, Ostrys, who took command over their band of followers. Goths were a visible component of it.¹⁸⁹ They were called *foederati*, a term

¹⁸⁷ John Malalas, XIV; M. Schönfeld, *Wörterbuch der altgermanischen personen-und völkernamen* (Heidelberg, 1911), pp. 27 and 68-69.

¹⁸⁸ This could be strengthened by Ardabur’s marriage to the abovementioned Anthusa, who is identified by Demandt ‘Der Kelch von Ardabur und Anthusa’, pp. 113-117 as Anthusa of Aigai, mentioned by Damaskios 52. Anthusa would be a case of a marriage into a local civic elite, embellishing the picture of the network of alliances constructed by the Ardaburii with members of different elite groups of the empire. However, Demandt’s interpretation of Damaskios’ text is not fully convincing. The text itself in its current state is rather confusing and does not imply links between Anthusa of Aigai, who predicts Aspar’s fall by aeromantic practice that she invents, and Ardabur. R. Scharf “Der Kelch des Ardabur und der Anthusa” *Byzantion* 63 (1993), pp. 213-223 is similarly dismissive of Demandt’s suggestion, additionally pointing out that it does not fit the chronology of Ardabur’s career. He proposes instead to identify this Anthusa as daughter of Illus, an Isaurian supporter of Zeno and later *magister officiorum*, and Asteria. Marrying within the imperial elites is more likely than with the civic ones. Scharf’s dating of this marriage between 466-471 suggests it could have been an attempt to mend the differences between the Ardaburii and Zeno, perhaps indicating a change of pattern in matrimonial strategy. This Anthusa would not be mother of Godisthea.

¹⁸⁹ *Chronicon Paschale* s.a. 467; John Malalas XIV 40; Theophanes, *Chronographia* 5964 also mentions Ostrys’ attack but combines it incorrectly with later hostilities by Theodoric.

rarely occurring in the Greek sources and therefore signifying a different status to that of a wholly private contingent.¹⁹⁰ The Gothic character of Aspar's private force was so apparent that Damaskios, describing a prophecy predicting the fall of the Ardaburii, called Aspar a leader of the Goths. Even the figure symbolising Aspar is that of a Goth, eaten by a lion symbolising the emperor Leo.¹⁹¹ The loyalty of these men must have been based on more than just Aspar's position as a Roman commander, if after his death they were still willing to revolt against the emperor, rather than just simply adapt to the new political situation within the state, on the support of which they were dependant. Perhaps it is right to ascribe their presence on the Ardaburii side to the political alliance between them and Triarios and his son, one that Theodoric desperately sought a substitute for in his negotiations with Leo after Aspar's death. However, unlike Theodoric, the band led by Ostrys seems to have been motivated by a need to avenge their benefactor. This speaks of an ability to mobilise political support and inspire loyalty around the sense of belonging to a separate group within the society of the Late Roman Empire.

It is possible that symbolic boundaries of this group were established by using elements of non-material culture associated with non-Romans, whom we could call 'barbarian' or 'Gothic', to complement the political and economic dependency of its members on the Ardaburii. Another possibility would be that the solidarity with the Ardaburii and particularly with Aspar stemmed from an experience of joint military service. Ostrys served with Aspar during a campaign against a warband that entered the Roman Empire in the aftermath of the dissolution of the Hunnic Empire.¹⁹² In fact actions of Aspar's member of staff, a Hun by name of Chelchal, led to infighting amongst the

¹⁹⁰ In a different version of the same text: John Malalas, *Excerpta de Insidiis* 371.20. A. Laniado, 'Aspar and his *phoideratoi*: John Malalas on a special relationship' in: U. Roberto and L. Mecella (eds) *Governare e riformare l'impero al momento della sua divisione: Oriente, Occidente, Illirico*, (Rome 2015), pp. 325-344.

¹⁹¹ Damaskios, 52.

¹⁹² Priskos, *Fr.* 49.

cornered warband, if we are to believe Priskos, along ethnic lines. Chelchal persuaded the Goths to turn against their Hunnic companions. The Roman army took advantage of the ensuing chaos and slaughtered the warband, proving Aspar and his retinue had little concern for ‘barbarians’ who stood against Rome. However, these two possibilities of a sense of community focused symbolically around common non-Roman identity, or around belonging to the military may not be mutually exclusive. One could lack connections with nominally the same ethnic group outside of the Empire, and yet inspire loyalty and solidarity among members of the military of a similar ethnic background.¹⁹³ Ethnic identity could serve as a form of expressing a sense of belonging to an exclusive group of individuals of similar life experience – a non-Roman background and a social status in the imperial system achieved through military service. But these were not the only elements that could be blended to establish a boundary between Aspar, his retinue and allies, and the rest of the Roman society.

The Ardaburii’s own religious beliefs certainly did not strengthen the image of their *romanitas*. Ardabur, Aspar and his children consistently remained Arian.¹⁹⁴ They came to associate themselves with other prominent members of the Arian community. The aforementioned Plinta managed to mend an earlier schism of Psathyrians within the community of the Constantinopolitan Arians.¹⁹⁵ Even Patricius, who was groomed for succession to the imperial throne at a time when the ‘Arian party’ was marginalised and made insignificant in imperial politics, adhered to the family’s religious creed, until he was forced to convert by Leo following a riot caused by monks and clerics in Constantinople.¹⁹⁶ The outbreak is described in a text dated tentatively by Dagron to the

¹⁹³ Paradziński, ‘The usurpation of Silvanus and ethnic identity’ pp. 73-94.

¹⁹⁴ Theophanes AM 5943, 5952, 5961; Prokopios, *History of the wars* III 6 3-4; John Malalas, XIV 41; *Vita Marcelli archimandritae* 34;

¹⁹⁵ Sokrates Scholastikos, *HE* V 2; Sozomen, *HE* VII 17.

¹⁹⁶ *Vita Marcelli archimandritae* 34; Zonaras XIV 1.

mid sixth century – the *Vita Marcelli*.¹⁹⁷ The source recounts the life of Markellos, archimandrite of the monastery of Acemetes, who was in conflict with the Ardaburii and prophesied Leo's victory over them.¹⁹⁸ Markellos led his monks into the city and together with patriarch Gennadius demanded that the Caesar be an orthodox.

The holy people [ἅγιον ἔθνος] come together, more than enough men, the imperial priesthood [τὸ βασιλειον ἱεράτευμα], the Christians from the great church [οἱ χριστιανοὶ ἐν τῇ μεγάλῃ ἐκκλησίᾳ], were advancing to the hippodrome. They were joined by Gennadius, the bearer of the great high priesthood in the city, and with him the holy Markellos, has come from the monastery into the city. The orthodox were very troubled, remembering their lot at the times of Constantius, then the excess the Arians submitted them to under the impious Valens; [...] They are going into the hippodrome, they are coming to the middle, where the emperor was accustomed to sit, they cried aloud for many hours “Kyrie eleison”, they begged that unless Caesar becomes orthodox he should not become Caesar, nor should he receive the emperor's daughter.¹⁹⁹

According to Malalas this popular reaction gave the emperor an excuse to postpone Patricius' marriage with his daughter, thereby buying him time to thwart Aspar's plans.²⁰⁰ This was not the only instance when the Ardaburii's religious creed caused negative reaction. The primary sources make this religious identity to be the main hindrance to the Ardaburii's attempts at gaining the imperial rank.²⁰¹ It also led to accusations of

¹⁹⁷ G. Dagron, 'La vie ancienne de saint Marcel l' Acémète (e codice Parisino 1491, collatis fragmentis Chalcensi, Messanensi, Vaticano, et suppletis lacunis e codice Atheniensi 1048)' *Analecta Bollandiana* 86 (1968), pp. 271-321, particularly pp. 278-279.

¹⁹⁸ *Vita Marcelli archimandritae* 33.

¹⁹⁹ *Vita Marcelli archimandritae* 34.

²⁰⁰ John Malalas, *De insidiis*, 371.9; Snee 'Gregory Nazianzen's Anastasia Church', p. 184.

²⁰¹ Prokopios, *History of the wars* III 6 3-4; Theophanes AM 5961.

collaborating with other ‘barbarians’ and ‘Arians’, such as Gaiseric.²⁰² It eventually served as a useful tool in the emperor Leo’s political offensive against Aspar. The family must have been aware of such a possibility, but they either deemed their position strong enough to withstand attempts at a political exclusion on a religious basis, or perceived this element of ‘otherness’ as beneficial to them.²⁰³

Was Patricius an exception? Did he take the final step towards blending with what was the imperial ‘mainstream’, unlike his father? That remains an open question. Some modern scholars claim that he did, or that the emperor Leo promised he would, basing their argument mostly on the passage of *Vita Marcelli* 34.²⁰⁴ In addition to the *Vita Marcelli*, *PLRE* cites the Chronicle of Marcellinus *comes* as evidence for that, but the quoted passage: *Aspar primus patriciorum cum Ardabure et Patriciolo filiis, illo quidem olim patricio, hoc autem Caesare generoque Leonis principis appellato, Arianus cum Ariana prole, spadonum ensibus in palatio vulneratus interiit* does not indicate the conversion of Patricius in any way.²⁰⁵ In a recent article McEvoy also claimed that Patricius chose to renounce his creed under the pressure of the patriarch Gennadius and archimandrite Markellos.²⁰⁶ Snee, on whose argument McEvoy built, is far more cautious, simply presenting a possibility of Patricius giving in to the protesters’ demands.²⁰⁷ Her supposition is based on a quotation ascribed by the *Vita* to the emperor Leo, who, faced

²⁰² Prokopios, *History of the wars* III 6 3-4; Theophanes AM 5961.

²⁰³ Snee ‘Gregory Nazianzen’s Anastasia Church’ particularly p. 185 proposes that adhering to the ‘Arian’ creed allowed Aspar to keep a link to his ‘Germanic’ powerbase. Although I would use a different terminology and stress the fact that ‘Arians’ in the Ardaburii’s retinue and household were not necessarily all of non-Roman background and vice versa that not all non-Romans in that group were ‘Arians’, I do believe religious and ethnic identity, and keeping the signifiers of these, served Aspar and his family to strengthen the links between them and their allies and retinue (see below).

²⁰⁴ Bury, *History of the later Roman Empire*, pp. 318-319; Croke, ‘Dynasty and Ethnicity’, p. 192.

²⁰⁵ *PLRE* vol. 2, pp. 842-843, Marcellinus comes, s.a. 471.

²⁰⁶ M. McEvoy ‘Becoming Roman? The not-so-curious case of Aspar and the Ardaburii’ *Journal of late antiquity* 9/2 (2016), pp. 483-511, particularly p. 491.

²⁰⁷ Snee ‘Gregory Nazianzen’s Anastasia Church’ pp. 183-185.

with the opposition from clergy and monks to the elevation of Patricius to the rank of Caesar, agreed to their demands in very vague terms:

And for our part we agree with you. Each certainly should approach god as a supplicant for the sake of family's spirit, and so that church is made firm and our souls are saved from death..²⁰⁸

After that the crowd left the hippodrome, but the *Vita Marcelli* paid little attention to Patricius and whether he in fact converted, noting only that eventually Markellos' prophecy of the Ardaburii's demise was fulfilled. The *Vita Marcelli* cannot be used as a direct proof of Patricius' willingness to give up his creed, but just as evidence of political pressure on that matter. The very fact that the work, which was set to praise Markellos' saintly achievements, did not credit him with success in pressuring Patricius into renouncing Arianism may in fact strengthen our scepticism on the matter.

There is another piece of evidence, which is more straightforward. Theophanes noted Patricius' visit to Alexandria in 468/9, and commented that it took place after he became Caesar as the result of his convincing Aspar to convert:

In the same year Aspar's son Patricius, whom the emperor Leo had made Caesar for having won over Aspar from Arianism [ἐκ τῆς Ἀρειανικῆς δόξης] and for being devoted to the emperor, arrived in Alexandria amid great pomp at the time when the Koreion bath was repaired.²⁰⁹ (trans. C. Mango and R. Scott)

Theophanes differs from earlier sources not only in his sequence of events, but also in their character. In this version, Patricius was rewarded by the emperor with the title of

²⁰⁸ *Vita Marcelli archimandritae* 34.

²⁰⁹ Theophanes, AM 5961.

Caesar for his loyalty and convincing his father to renounce Arianism, with an implication that he became orthodox earlier. The conversion of both Aspar and Patricius seems to be quite unlikely in the light of other sources making no mention of such a shift in the Ardaburii's patriarch's religious attitudes. However, Theophanes' account should not be wholly discarded. Mango and Scott pointed out that the author of the *Chronographia* had access to some local Alexandrian source.²¹⁰ The tradition of Patricius' visit to Alexandria as Caesar or Caesar-to-be should be treated as taken from that source; the question remains whether that was the case also for the explanation behind Patricius' new rank. Snee would like to see it as a distorted echo of the decision of Aspar's son to convert to orthodoxy in order to achieve the rank of Caesar.²¹¹ That is very likely, especially combined with the perspective of the *Vita Marcelli* and that of Marcellinus *comes*. It is significant that we find mentions of Ardaburii's 'Arianism' as a political issue in sources clearly independent of each other. But the issue of their religious identity did not disappear with Aspar's death.

The Ardaburii's downfall was followed by a persecution of the faction of 'Arians' they belonged to, known as the Exionites.²¹² Leo forbade the Exionites from congregating and owning churches. The emperor's action would have little sense if there was not a strong identification of this Christian community with the fallen Ardaburii, but also a perception of it as their political platform. One might imagine it was Leo's way of

²¹⁰ *The Chronicle of Theophanes Confessor: Byzantine and Near Eastern History AD 284-813*, transl. C. Mango and R. Scott (Oxford, 1997), p. 181.

²¹¹ Snee "Gregory Nazianzen's Anastasia Church", p. 185 names Cedrenus as the one who confused the tradition about Patricius converting his father and travelling to Alexandria as Caesar, but from the phrasing of the passage it is clear he followed Theophanes, AM 5961: Τῷ δ' αὐτῷ ἔτει Πατρίκιος, ὁ υἱὸς Ἀσπαρος, ὃν καίσαρα ὁ βασιλεὺς Λέων πεποίηκε διὰ τὸ ἐλκύσαι τὸν Ἀσπαρα ἐκ τῆς Ἀρειανικῆς δόξης καὶ εὐνοεῖν τῷ βασιλεῖ, παρεγένετο ἐν Ἀλεξανδρείᾳ μετὰ μεγάλης φαντασίας, ἐν ᾗ ἐστερεώθη τὸ Κορεῖον βαλανεῖον; Cedrenus, *Compendium historiarum*, vol. 1, p. 613: τῷ δ' αὐτῷ ἔτει καὶ ὁ Ἀσπαρος υἱὸς Πατρίκιος ὢν Καῖσαρ παρὰ τοῦ Λέοντος γίνεται, καὶ ἐν Ἀλεξανδρείᾳ πέμπεται διὰ τὸ ἐλκύσαι τὸν Ἀσπαρα ἐκ τῆς Ἀρειανικῆς δόξης καὶ εὐνοεῖν ποιῆσαι τῷ βασιλεῖ. The only real difference between the two authors is that Cedrenus did not mention the renovation of the Koreion bath.

²¹² John Malalas XIV 41; *Chronicon Paschale* 467.

targeting Ardaburii supporters, household members and soldiers of their private bands, who shared their leaders' religion. Just as the signifiers of ethnicity, religion could have been employed to stress the shared identity of the 'other'. It gave soldiers and *foederati*, whose favour and support was the basis of Ardabur's and Aspar's position within the imperial system, a sense of belonging to an exclusive group.

However, the Ardaburii did not limit themselves in their religious euergetism. They were willing to cooperate with the Nicenes, although not always just to gain popularity with the local population, as in the case of Antioch mentioned above. When Aspar and Ardabur played a role as benefactors to the church of Anastasia, Marcian, its administrator, showed his gratitude by establishing services in Gothic, an act of arguably little personal value to a family which was entrenched within the Roman Empire for generations. Yet the clergy of the Anastasia certainly did not give their thanks in the form of a gesture that would be considered meaningless by the recipient.²¹³ Such a response emphasised the non-Roman ethnic identity of the benefactors, definitely in accordance with their own wishes. It could be for the purpose of giving a religious space to the Gothic-speaking *foederati*. There is also evidence that this district of Constantinople was a focal point for the Gothic-speaking part of the population throughout the century and beyond.²¹⁴ The Ardaburii came to be associated with the Goths in the public eye. The question remains if it was their conscious choice to strengthen that boundary between them and their retinue and supporters on the one side, and the Romans on the other, or merely an unplanned result of associating themselves with Triarios and enlisting in their services Goths, which, to the Romans, made them look more like suspicious foreigners.

²¹³ *Vita Marciani* 17. If the Ardaburii, their entourage and *foederati* attended the services, they must have been unconcerned about the Nicene character of the place.

²¹⁴ Snee 'Gregory Nazianzen's Anastasia Church', p. 177.

This brings us back to the fading of the naming practice. Perhaps the reason for the disappearance of this signifier of identity at the time of the later descendants of the Ardaburii was that the position of the family at this point depended solely on their military rank, vast wealth and networks within the imperial elites, not the loyalty of soldiers of non-Roman background.²¹⁵ One can imagine that shaping and reifying the ethnic and religious identity of the Ardaburii's retinue and allies served to create a sense of belonging to a community over which Aspar and other members of the family held hegemony. By finding ways to symbolically express this constructed community by names and religious services in the Gothic language, they could better control various individuals and groups belonging to it and otherwise politically or materially dependent on the Ardaburii. Be they military officers such as Ostrys, co-believers such as the local Exionites, or soldiers of Gothic background, they could all be included in the Ardaburii's community.

Conclusions

The Ardaburii were well-established in the Roman Empire and included in its socio-political system. They commanded armies, played political games, funded churches and infrastructure projects, gave away gifts to their *amici*, took part in church controversies, translated holy relics and constructed villas and baths. There could be little doubt that over five generations of service to the Roman state, the Ardaburii were seen as part of its political and social landscape. At the same time, they purposefully retained marks of a differing identity, such as names and a religion that made them stand apart from the wider circle of the imperial elite, while strengthening their links to other members of the military elite of similar non-Roman background. The Ardaburii did not create new boundaries, but they made them significant in order to mobilise and manage

²¹⁵ Ardaburii and Areobindus owned a number of villas and landed estates; see McEvoy 'Becoming Roman?', pp. 494-495.

political and military power, through marriage alliances with other ‘barbarians’ and ‘heretics’, or by employing the services of soldiers of non-Roman background. They were constructing a symbolic community. As much as it served them as a useful tool, it could also be turned against them. Clergy and monks of Constantinople, or those who accused Aspar of betraying Basiliscus’ invasion fleet to Gaiseric, began to exclude the Ardaburii from the Roman community, on the basis of the abovementioned marks of identity. The emperor, engaged in a political struggle with the Ardaburii, was more than happy to exploit this perception of the family as ‘different’ in his attempt to dispose of them. The emperor Leo used the riots opposing the nomination of Patricius as a Caesar and recognition of him as the emperor’s heir due to his religion. The need for a conversion served as a pretext to postpone Patricius’ elevation to the rank of Augustus and his marriage with Leo’s daughter. Thus, the emperor made himself still necessary for any realisation of Aspar’s plan for Patricius’ succession, by preventing the younger of the Ardaburii from achieving a position a step away from the imperial rank, a step that would require removing Leo. Afterwards, when the emperor finally managed to eliminate Aspar and Ardabur, he used the religious identity of the deceased in order to break apart their supporters.

By keeping non-Roman naming customs, forming marriage and political alliances with other members of the imperial elite of non-Roman descent, and adherence to the ‘Arian’ creed, a community of ‘barbarians’ in Roman service was self-defining and effectively partly excluded itself from the rest of the Roman elite. It added another element to the arsenal of tools a Roman commander could employ in the politics of the Late Empire. Besides military rank, influence and networks at court or a personal fortune, these individuals could appeal to the other members of their non-Roman group, and soldiers who shared their ethnic and religious background. Ultimately though, it came

with a price. It was exploited against the very group that used it, as a tool to undermine their position.

Part II: Emperors, kings and *amici*

Chapter 2.1 From officials and warlords to kings

Before we move into the territory of the diplomatic exchange between the barbarian kings and the Empire, it is essential to ask about the nature and the perception of the rule they performed. At the end of the 5th and the beginning of the 6th century the political landscape of the western Roman provinces was fundamentally different from that of a hundred years, or even a couple of decades, before. Zones of increasing political power of barbarian chiefs and warlords in Roman service turned into sub-Roman kingdoms. They ruled as fully-fledged kings with their political power bearing the attributes and substance of the imperial one. The purpose of this chapter is not to examine how this situation came to be, as this is a problem engaged with by scholars for centuries, but rather to focus on the source and development of this kingship. Was this kingship 'barbarian' in nature or a phenomenon of a Roman character and background?

In the older scholarship, particularly the German speaking one, best exemplified by Herwig Wolfram, kings, dynasties and aristocracy served as transmitters of *Traditionskern*. They were an elite group which constituted a core of the greater tribe, sustaining its ethnic identity, while assimilating individuals of different ethnic backgrounds. In this view barbarian monarchies were seen as political centres, functioning unceasingly from the very moment of the ethnogenesis of their people. When these kings settled in the Roman provinces they were simply expanding their royal prerogatives over the Roman population.²¹⁶ Such an interpretation owed a lot to the works of Jordanes and Gregory of Tours, who aimed to present their rulers' dynasties with ancient pedigrees tied to their peoples' history. This view has been contested by many, especially in regards to the ideas of ethnogenesis and *Traditionskern*, and has given way

²¹⁶ Wolfram, *History of the Goths*, passim particularly pp. 29-35; J. M. Wallace-Hadrill, *The long-haired kings* (London, 1962), pp. 148-163.

to a more nuanced approach, yet the question of barbarian kingship and its role in the establishment of sub-Roman kingdoms has remained relevant.²¹⁷ Wolfram himself started to see this kingship as a development entrenched in Roman Late Antiquity, originating from Roman institutions. Originally commanders of Roman *foederati* units, future kings were eventually to take a position that could be described as “vice-imperial”.²¹⁸

Walter Pohl stated that the political kingship of barbarians allowed a greater degree of success to groups which had royal leaders than to ones without, suggesting it let them preserve their coherence after defeats, while other warbands simply disappeared.²¹⁹ Perhaps this is correct, but it would imply a kingship with a set of defined characteristics then transmittable into the Roman context. A reverse order could be possible, with successful leadership slowly formalised into kingship. What is known about barbarian kingship or kingships, to be precise, beyond the Rhine and Danube is a very fragmented and diverse set of evidence that owes a lot to later reconstructions. The very list of different words for kingship identified in the northern *Barbaricum* by scholars is very illustrative of how problematic defining any tangible characteristics might be: *kindins*, *thiudans*, *truhtin*, *kuning*, *hendinos*, *sinistus* and *reiks*.²²⁰ Different barbarian

²¹⁷ Goffart, *The narrators of barbarian history*, passim; Heather, *Goths and Romans 332-489*, pp. 98-103 suggests the position of a Gothic judge/king could have been hereditary and politically central, but also recognises the diversity of kingships among Goths; Halsall, *Barbarian Migrations*, pp. 121-124 on the nature of ‘Germanic’ kingship, and pp. 134-136 focused on the Gothic one; Burns, *Barbarians within the gates of Rome*, passim.

²¹⁸ H. Wolfram ‘Gotisches Königtum und römisches Kaisertum’, *Frühmittelalterliche Studien. Jahrbuch des Instituts für Frühmittelalterforschung der Universität Münster*, 13 (1979), pp. 1-28.

²¹⁹ W. Pohl ‘Migrations, ethnic groups, and state building’ in: M. Maas (ed.), *The Cambridge companion to the age of Attila* (Cambridge, 2015), pp. 247-263, particularly p. 258.

²²⁰ H. Wolfram, *Das römische Königtum der Germanen. Ein Überblick* in: W. Pohl and V. Wieser (eds) *Der frühmittelalterliche Staat europäische Perspektiven*, (Vienna 2009), pp. 3-10; I. Wood ‘Gentes, kings and kingdoms – the emergence of states: the kingdom of the Gibichungs’ in: H.W. Goetz, J. Jarnut and W. Pohl (eds) *Regna and gentes: the relationship between late antique and early medieval peoples and kingdoms in the transformation of the Roman world* (Brill 2002), pp. 243-269; In Wulfila’s Gothic translation of the Bible we find two different terms for a king, ‘thiudans’ and ‘reiks’ which can be used for any leader, even for a priest. I found ‘thiudans’ in: Luke 1:5; 10:24; 14:31; 19:14, 19:38; Matthew 5:35; 11:8; 25:40; 27:11; John 6:15; 12:13; 12:15; 18:33; 18:37; 18:39; 19:3; 19:2; Mark 6:14; 6:22; 6:25 6:26; 6:27; 15:2; 15:9; 15:18; 15:26; 15:32; Timothy I 1:17; 2:2; 6:15; Corinthians II 11:32; Nehemiah 5:14; Gothic Calendar 11:3; and ‘reiks’ in: Mark 3:22; Matthew 9:18; 9:23; John 7:26; 7:48; 12:31; 12:42; 14:30; 16:11; 18:22; Luke 18:18; Paul, Letter to Romans 13:3; Burgundians also had two different terms for kingship, ‘hendinos’ and ‘sinistus’ as attested by Ammianus Marcellinus, XXVIII 5 14.

groups had different kinds of functions associated by Roman authors with royalty. Furthermore, imperial policies towards the Barbaricum introduced yet another type, establishing *reges dati*, who like their counterparts in the East, for example kings of Armenia, were recognised as Roman satellites.²²¹

It is difficult to see the impact these barbarian kingships could have had on the development of the political power of a ruler and the perception of it in sub-Roman kingdoms. We know relatively little about specifics and are confined to the Roman perception of these later rulers. What we can observe are rather multiple developments based on various forms of the political power previously exercised in the Roman world by emperors and their officials, with some regional differences.²²² Tracing these developments reveals a lot about relations in the triangle between increasingly assertive officials of barbarian descent, who turned rulers, emperors and the subjects they came to rule.

In order to illustrate different influences behind the emergence of the kind of kingship of the 6th century successor kingdoms, this chapter is going to focus on the ruling families of Visigothic Balti, Vandal Hasdingi and Burgundian Gibichungs. Although this process achieved its most developed form in the cases of Ostrogothic Italy and Merovingian Gaul, they are not going to be discussed here in detail because of the chronological framework of this thesis and the lack of material for the examination of the earlier stages of Ostrogothic and Frankish development. Not much is known about the forms of power of Clovis' predecessors, while on the other hand, Theodoric was a case of his own.

²²¹ For examples of the use of the term in the imperial coinage in regards to rulers of Parthians, Armenians and Quadi see: R. Göbl 'Rex... datus. Ein Kapitel von der Interpretation numismatischer Zeugnisse und ihren Grundlagen' *Rheinisches Museum für Philologie* 104 (1961), pp. 70-80.

²²² Halsall, *Barbarian migrations*, pp. 488-489.

It is perhaps illustrative to begin this examination with how barbarian leaders were seen before they reigned over Roman provinces and how this perception became incomprehensible to the authors, used to a different kind of kingship. Gregory of Tours in his attempt to identify a single king of a Merovingian dynasty amongst the early Franks, referred to Sulpicius Alexander's account of Roman and Frankish encounters in the 4th century and in this way transmitted at least fragments of his lost work.

Many people do not even know the name of the first King of the Franks. The *Historia* of Sulpicius Alexander gives many details about them, while Valentinus does not name their first King but says that they were ruled by **war-leaders**. [*Nam cum multa de eis Sulpici Alexandri narret historia, non tamen regem primum eorum ullatinus nominat, sed **duces** eos habuisse dicit.*] What Sulpicius Alexander says about the Franks seems to be worth quoting. He tells how Maximus gave up all hope of the imperial throne, lost his reason and went to live in Aquileia. Then he adds: "At that time the Franks invaded the Roman province of Germania under their **leaders** Genobaud, Marcomer and Sunno [*Eo tempore Genobaude, Marcomere et Sunnone **ducibus** Franci in Germaniam prorupere*]. As these Franks crossed the frontier, many of the inhabitants were slaughtered and they ravaged the most fertile areas. The townsfolk of Cologne were terrified; [...] He says that these events occurred at a time when the Franks were ruled by **war-leaders**. [*Haec acta, cum **duces** essent, retulit.*] Then he continues: "A few days later there was a short parley with Marcomer and Sunno, the **royal leaders** of the Franks. Hostages were insisted upon, as was the custom, and then Arbogast retired into winter quarters in Trier." [*Post dies pauculus, Marcomere et Sunnone Francorum **regalibus** transacto cursim conloquio imperatisque ex more obsidibus, ad*

hiemandum Treverus concessit.] When he says “**regales**” or royal leaders, it is not clear if they were kings or if they merely exercised a kingly function. [*Cum autem eos **regales** vocet, nescimus, utrum reges fuerint, an in vices tenuerunt regum.*] [...] He goes on: “That same year Arbogast, urged on by tribal hatred, went in search of Sunno and Marcomer, the **kinglets** of the Franks [*Eodem anno Arbogastis Sunnonem et Marcomere **subregulos** Francorum gentilibus odiis insectans*]. He came to Cologne in the full blast of winter, for he knew well that all the retreats of Frankland 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 an ambushed foe. [...] A few pages further on, having given up all talk of ‘**duces**’ and ‘**regales**’, he states clearly that the Franks had a **king** [*relictis tam **ducibus** quam **regalibus**, aperte Francos **regem** habere designat*], but he forgets to tell us what his name was: “The next thing which happened was that the tyrant Eugenius led a military expedition as far as the frontier marked by the Rhine. He renewed the old traditional treaties with the kings of the Alamanni and the Franks, and he paraded his army, which was immense for that time, before their savage tribesmen.”²²³ (trans. L. Thorpe)

Gregory struggled with what he saw as an inconsistency on Sulpicius Alexander’s part, unable to make sense of a number of titles applied on different occasions to the same individuals, such as *rex*, *regalis*, *dux* or *subregulus*. Fanning made a convincing argument that the title of *subregulus*, whenever used by a Roman author, should be seen as an

²²³ Gregory of Tours *LH* II 9.

indication of a system of joint-kingship.²²⁴ Apparently for an author from the second half of the 6th century, the subtleties of Roman perceptions of types of barbarian kingship were already lost. At the time of Clovis, these forms of Frankish kingship, with multiple numbers of Merovingian and non-Merovingian kings, were very much intact, yet already for Gregory of Tours they were too different to the reality of the kingship he knew.²²⁵ If such is the case, then the development of the Frankish royal title to the point where there were only *reges* and no *regales* or *subreguli* seems to be quite a clear break from its barbarian origin, perhaps better understood as a transition within a Roman context rather than a barbarian one.

Franks were not the only ones to have a number of kings.²²⁶ We hear of numerous leaders of the Alamanni during the wars waged on the Rhine by Julian and Valentinian I.²²⁷ Whenever a greater leader emerged, such as in the cases of Chnodomarius or Macrianus, one of the dimensions of their domination was a special relationship with Rome. Nevertheless, unlike in the case of the Franks, no ‘supreme king’ emerged. There was none the like of Clovis, who would subjugate other rulers. However, some sort of a consolidation in the wake of the dissolution of the Roman state, by local power centres taking advantage of the situation, may have taken place in the late 5th century, leading to the appearance of a number of ‘greater kings’.²²⁸

This impression of a multiplicity of political leaders and units can be reinforced if a closer look is taken at other barbarian rulers called kings, especially at the beginning of the 4th century. One of the most prominent, yet at the same time the most disputable in

²²⁴ S. Fanning ‘Reguli in the Roman Empire, late antiquity and the early medieval Germanic kingdoms’ in R. W. Mathisen and D. Shanzer (eds), *Romans, barbarians and the transformation of the Roman world: cultural interaction and the creation of identity in late antiquity* (Farnham, 2011), pp. 43-53.

²²⁵ Gregory of Tours, *LH* II 40-42 mentions a number of kings that Clovis eliminated after the battle of Vouillé.

²²⁶ Ammianus Marcellinus, XVI 3 2 shows the emperor Julian making peace with a number of Frankish kings.

²²⁷ Ammianus Marcellinus XVI 12 1-3.

²²⁸ J. F. Drinkwater, *The Alamanni and Rome 213-496* (Oxford, 2007), pp. 332-337.

terms of holding a royal title, is the conqueror of Rome – Alaric. His kingship was discussed in one of the previous chapters (1.3.1 ‘Alaric’s origins and kingship’), but to recapitulate it here: Alaric’s kingship is somewhat doubtful, his authority owing most to his previous military record, to his relations to Rome, and to the loyalty of his men towards him personally. Alaric’s successors, Athaulf, Sigeric and Walia, seem to have been perceived as kings, possibly reflecting their reforming of Alaric’s military leadership into a more formal position in order to keep the coherence of their group. This would be in line with Walter Pohl’s argument for the importance of kingship as a binder of military force, and a catalyst for its transformation into a “people”.

After the accession of Walia in 415 and the *foedus* with Rome it took merely a generation for the rulers of the Visigoths settled in Aquitaine to be recognised as *reges* not only as a title corresponding to their leadership of a group of barbarians, but primarily as one carrying a set of characteristics associated with Roman officials, aristocrats and rulers. This is exemplified in Sidonius Apollinaris’ description of Theodoric II:

Well, he [Theodoric] is a man who deserves to be studied even by those who are not in close relations with him. In his build the will of God and Nature’s plan have joined together to endow him with a supreme perfection; and his character is such that even the jealousy which hedges a sovereign has no power to rob it of its glories. [...] The administrative duties of his sovereignty claim the rest of the morning. Nobles in armour have places near his throne [*Reliquum mane regni administrandi cura sibi deputat. circumssistit sellam comes armiger.*]; a crowd of guards in their dress of skins is allowed in so as to be at hand, but excluded from the presence so as not to disturb; and so they keep up a hum of conversation by the door, outside the curtains but within the barriers. Meanwhile deputations from various peoples are introduced, and he

listens to a great deal of talk, but replies shortly, postponing business which he intends to consider, speeding that which is to be promptly settled. The second hour comes: he rises from his throne [*solium*], to pass an interval in inspecting his treasures or his stables.²²⁹ (trans. W. B. Anderson)

Theodoric is described in superlatives and his daily routine does not diverge from that of a Roman official or an emperor: matters of state, religious services, hunting and games.²³⁰ Sidonius “romanised” the Visigothic ruler, by ascribing to him a very specific type of *Romanitas* - that of the Gallo-Roman aristocracy to which Sidonius himself belonged. As Barnwell has pointed out, Theodoric’s seat, a *solium* or a *sella*, was an object closely associated with Roman administration, unlike the *thronus*, which was the emperor’s attribute.²³¹ Theodoric was not just like one of the Romans, but like one of a specific group of Romans. It certainly made the new situation more acceptable to the local elites, their new ruler was just like them, or like other Roman officials who were earlier in charge of the region. But did ‘romanising’ a ruler make the nature of kingship itself Roman? Perhaps arguing that, to Sidonius and Arvandus, Visigothic and Burgundian kings were simply part of the Roman provincial administration is too far fetched, given the sense of cultural and ethnic distinction still present in the Roman discourse, but the symbolic undertones can hardly be ignored.

Perhaps one should look at the usage of different titles within the Roman context, to estimate the significance of the kingly title as aimed at a Roman or romanised audience. This should reveal if the royal rank of a barbarian ruler started to have more Roman

²²⁹ Sidonius Apollinaris *Ep.* I 2 1 and 4.

²³⁰ Sidonius Apollinaris *Ep.* I 2.

²³¹ P. S. Barnwell, *Emperor, prefects & kings: the Roman West, 395-565* (London, 1992), pp. 73-74 draws attention to the fact that until the time of Leovigild, Visigothic kings did not use *thronus*. Combined with the fact that they chose a provincial centre, Burdigala, as their main seat one can discern a clear pattern of positioning themselves as Roman officials and provincial administrators, rather than independent rulers.

substance. Barbarians must have seen advantages in presenting themselves in Roman categories. An early case, illustrating the significance of a barbarian royal title in the Roman context in comparison to other titles, comes from an inscription devoted to Hariulf, son of a king of the Burgundians:

Hariulf *protector domesticus*, son of Hanhavalld king of the Burgundians, who lived 20 years, nine months and nine days. Reuglo his maternal uncle made this. [*Hariulfus protector domesitigus, [f]ilius Hanhavalldi regalis gentis Burgundionum, qui vicxit annos XX et mensis nove et dies nove. Reuglo avunculu[s] ipsius fecit*].²³²

Although the themes chosen for inclusion in this inscription were not Hariulf's choice, it is most probable that Reuglo's selection did not differ much from what the young Burgundian perceived as his greatest honour. Hanhavalld's regal rank was less important than his son's Roman military office. According to Reuglo, being a *protector domesticus* mattered the most. At this point in time it seems barbarian royal rank bore lesser significance than Roman titles, when aimed at a Roman audience, as here in a Latin inscription. This emphasis on Roman rank is not limited just to Hariulf, but is a feature of other Burgundian royalty, although of a different dynasty.

The Gibichungs who ruled over Burgundians in their domain of Sabaudia, after the collapse of their first Rhine kingdom, seem to have ruled, mostly on the basis of Roman offices and a deep involvement with imperial politics. Unlike the Visigoths who used military pressure to periodically renegotiate the conditions of their *foedus*, Burgundians acted rather loyally towards the Empire, while at the same time building up both their local position and taking part in the power struggles at the imperial court. The

²³² ILS 2813.

lack of contemporary references to royal titles of members of the Gibichung family is telling. Royal titles before Gundobad, in the year around 500, are rare. Gundichar's royal title, in the early 5th century, is attested in the *Epitome Chronicae* of Prosper of Aquitania, the *Chronica Gallica ad annum 452* and Cassiodorus' *Chronica*.²³³ The two first sources were composed in the 50's of the 5th century, their authors providing us with relatively contemporary evidence on Gundichar's royal title. But the royal titles of successive rulers, Chilperic and Gundioc are only attested by Jordanes, nearly a century later.²³⁴ Contemporaries, as discussed below, avoided calling them kings, rather using their Roman ranks or other titles. The link between Gundichar and the later Burgundian rulers is also unclear. The similarity of names and the fact that they formed a series of rulers of the Burgundians may imply kinship, but we have no way of telling if Chilperic and Gundioc inherited a royal title from Gundichar. It may very well be that, after his death at the hands of the Huns and the resettlement of the Burgundians by Aetius in Sapaudia in 443, the new rulers were in no position to style themselves as kings. Their political role was based mostly on their Roman rank. A glimpse at a stemma of the Gibichungs in the 5th and the beginning of the 6th century shows that those who were attested only with a royal title are rarely mentioned, while the ones with a high Roman military office achieved a certain dose of prominence. This is obviously caused, at least in part, by the bias of the Roman sources, which would devote more focus to individuals involved in

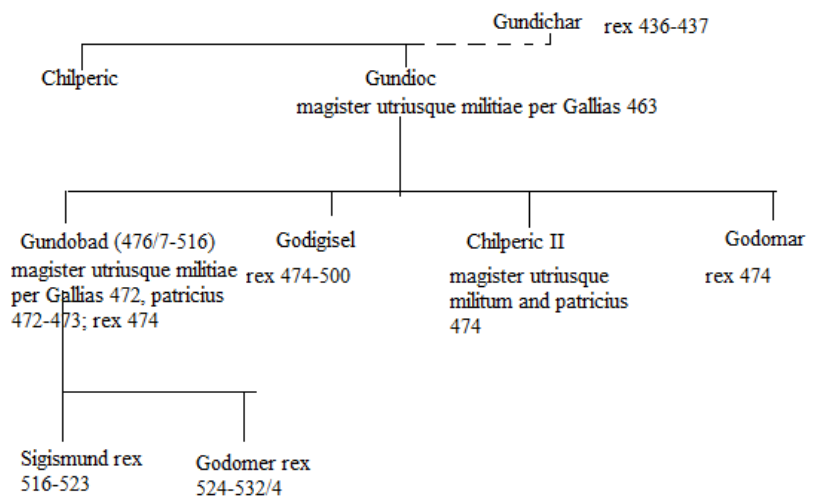
²³³ Prosper, s.a. 435: *Eodem tempore Gundicharium Burgundionum regem intra Gallias habitantem Aetius bello obrivit pacemque ei supplicanti dedit, qua non diu potitus est, siquidem illum Chuni cum populo suo ab stirpe deleverint.*; Cassiodorus *Chronica* s.a. 435: *Gundicharium Burgundionum regem Aetius bello subegit pacemque ei reddidit supplicanti, quem non multo post Hunni peremerunt.*; *Chronica Gallica ad annum 452* 118 (s.a. 436): *Bellum contra Burgundionum gentem memorabile exarsit, quo universa paene gens cum rege per Aetium deleta.*

²³⁴ Jordanes, *Getica* 231.

Roman affairs. Nevertheless, it is significant when taken together with the perception of these kings as predominantly Roman officials in sources.

One of the Gibichung rulers, Gundioc, was involved in church affairs in the territory under his jurisdiction. After the contested election of bishop Marcellus to the episcopal seat of Die, Gundioc managed to involve the bishop of Rome, who thereby attempted to assert his right to intervene over the southern Gallic episcopal network. Pope Hilarius refers to Gundioc as his

son, a *vir illustris* and a *magister militum*, who informed him of the election of Marcellus as being both against his people and in contradiction to the established rules.²³⁵ Besides the fact of a barbarian Roman



official (and an ‘Arian’) reporting to the bishop of Rome on an unlawful episcopal election, it is worth noting the way in which Hilarius describes Gundioc. It is in a manner entirely accurate for describing a Roman official by a bishop: our son, followed by the list of his functions. Gundioc is here a bearer of the higher senatorial rank, *vir illustris*, and of the military function of *magister militum*. If not attested by other sources, his barbarian origin could be inferred only by his name; his royal rank would remain utterly unknown.

A similar situation can be seen in the case of Gundioc’s brother, Chilperic. According to Sidonius Apollinaris, this Burgundian ruler, due to intrigues at court, came

²³⁵ Hilarius, Ep. 9.1: *Quantum enim filii nostri viri illustris magistri militum Gunduici sermone est indicatum, praedictus episcopus invitis Deensibus, et qui ad ecclesiarum eius numerum, quas ei apostolicae sedis deputavit auctoritas, sicut in scriniis nostris legimus, minime pertinebant, hostili more ut dicitur occupans civitatem, episcopum consecrare praesumpsit*

close to executing a brother of Thaumastus, Sidonius' uncle. What saved the Roman from the accusations against him was an intervention of Chilperic's wife. In Sidonius' letter to Thaumastus commenting on the entire event, the Gibichung ruler is never called a king, instead his is the rank of a 'tetrarch':

At last we have found out who brought before our tetrarch [*tetrarcham nostrum*] the allegation of friendship between your brother, on the one side, and the party of the new Emperor, on the other—unless indeed the stealthy tracks of the informers have misled the trusty shrewdness of our comrades.²³⁶

(trans. W. B. Anderson)

This rank recalls the political situation of 1st century AD Palestine, rather than 5th century Roman Gaul. During Augustus and Tiberius' era, descendants of Herod the Great bore the title of tetrarchs. It is plausible to interpret Sidonius' usage of the term 'tetrarch' as an attempt to describe Chilperic's status with New Testament language. Herod Antipas, one of the sons of Herod the Great, was described by Luke's gospel as a tetrarch and interestingly enough he was involved in judgement over Jesus, which may have been another reason for Sidonius' choice of 'tetrarch' as an appropriate title for Chilperic judging Thaumastus' brother.²³⁷ Sidonius' letter is rich with other references, such as comparing Chilperic and his wife to other pairs significant for Roman history: Tarquinius the Elder and Tanaquil, and Germanicus and Agrippina (see chapter 3.3). The title of tetrarch seems hardly coincidental. Sidonius consciously used it instead of any royal title, implying some degree of submission to Roman rule. Chilperic is also unattested when it comes to any Roman rank, so describing him as a tetrarch would be a way to stress his position in the Roman hierarchy without acknowledging any royal title to rule, when he

²³⁶ Sidonius Apollinaris, *Ep.* V 7 1.

²³⁷ Luke 3, 1; 9, 7-9; 23, 8-12.

held no other official position. Seemingly the title of *rex* had connotations to rank of higher power that Sidonius was unwilling to grant to Chilperic.²³⁸ As already mentioned above, he showed no such concerns for the Visigothic king Theodoric.

Focus on Roman offices continues with the next generation of Gibichungs, Gundioc's offspring: Gundobad and Chilperic. Both were patricians, the first a *magister utriusque militiae per Gallias*, the second a *magister utriusque militum*. Chilperic was presented mainly in his capacity as a local judge in a hagiographical source, the *Vita Lupicini*. Lupicinus, one of the Jura Fathers, is brought for judgement before Chilperic for claiming, even though he was a Roman citizen, that the Roman Empire was falling apart and imperial rule was yielding before the barbarians.²³⁹ If Chilperic had not been seen as ruling within the Roman system and keeping the pretence of it, but as an independent ruler, it would have made little sense for anyone to make such accusations against Lupicinus and bring him in front of Chilperic. Instead Chilperic is cast as a positive character, constantly titled a patrician, though also recognised as a king. In a judgement of Lupicinus' *romanitas*, understood as loyalty to the Roman state, the Burgundian proves to be a fair and adequate Roman official.²⁴⁰

In the later part of the reign of Gundobad and at the accession of his son Sigismund, Roman rank was still important, but so was the royal title. The evidence for this can be found in letters of bishop Avitus of Vienne to the bishop of Constantinople and the emperor Anastasius, in which he aimed to support his ruler's diplomatic actions.

²³⁸ D. Frye, 'Gundobad, the *leges burgundionum*, and the struggle for sovereignty in Burgundy', *Classica et mediaevalia*, 41 (1990), pp. 199-212, particularly p. 204 states that Sidonius presented Chilperic's authority as a joke, hence the title of 'tetrarch'. However, he fails to elaborate on the context in which Sidonius' used this title and ignores the very real concern for the fate of Thaumastus' brother.

²³⁹ *Vita Lupicini* 93.

²⁴⁰ *Vita Lupicini* 95; Frye 'Gundobad, the *leges burgundionum*, and the struggle for sovereignty in Burgundy', pp. 208-209 considers the entire story apocryphal in nature. According to him it reflected the views of the author of the *Vita*, who was highly critical of a usurpation of legal authority by Gundobad and Sigismund. This does not seem to be the case, as *Vita Lupicini* is in fact positive towards Chilperic. For Frye's views on the development of Burgundian rulers' legal authority, which required him to play down the evidence of both Sidonius and *Vita Lupicini* see below.

Since my master, your [spiritual] son, the patrician [*domnus meus filius vester patricius*] Sigismund sent out an embassy to the most glorious princeps, he provided for me as well, a doubly sacred chance to pay my respects to you.²⁴¹

(trans. D. Shanzer and I. Wood)

This is why it came about that you gave a command in a princely pronouncement that the son of your servant, the *vir illustris* Laurentius, be sent to you. I submit that I have managed to bring this about with my master, the king of his people, but your soldier [*quod apud domnum meum, suae quidem gentis regem, sed militem vestrum, obtinuisse me suggero*].²⁴² (trans.

D. Shanzer and I. Wood)

Particularly the second letter, the one to Anastasius, is striking. Avitus made a distinction between Gundobad as his master, as the king of the Burgundians, and as a soldier of the emperor. It is also worth noting that *dominus meus*, was generally used when referring to the emperor and could suggest that Gundobad filled that role in some capacity. At the same time, the royal title is clearly differentiated from that of a *dominus*. Perhaps this sophistication is caused by the diplomatic character of the letters.²⁴³

Another source implies that the royal title became increasingly significant for the Burgundians' Roman subjects. A normative act, the *Liber Constitutionum*, known also as the *Lex Burgundionum*, did not present Gundobad only as a king of the Burgundians, but more generally as the king and *dominus* of his subjects.

²⁴¹ Avitus, *Ep.* 9; I follow the numeration of letters in: *Avitus of Vienne: Letters and selected prose*, D. Shanzer and I. Wood (eds and trans.) (Liverpool, 2002) rather than *Œuvres complètes de saint Avit, évêque de Vienne*, U. Chevalier (ed.) (Lyon 1890).

²⁴² Avitus, *Ep.* 46A.

²⁴³ For the examination of Gibichungs close relationship with Constantinople, see I. Wood 'The Burgundians and Byzantium' in: A. Fischer, I. Wood (eds) *Western perspectives on the Mediterranean: cultural transfer in Late Antiquity and the early Middle Ages, 400-800 AD* (London-New York 2014), pp. 1-15.

In the name of God in the second year of the reign of our lord the most glorious king Gundobad [*domni nostri gloriosissimi Gundobadi regis*], this book concerning laws past and present, and to be preserved throughout all future time, has been issued on the fourth day before the Kalends of April (March 29) at Lyons.²⁴⁴

At the first look the dating would imply the codification was issued around 476.²⁴⁵ However, the evidence is problematic, as the dating of the legal code's issue corresponds too well with the dating of the reissuing of it by Sigismund (516-523), also done in the second year of his reign and on the kalends of April – 29th of March 517.²⁴⁶ It is also debatable which year should be considered as the second year of Gundobad's reign. There are indications that 501 is the more appropriate date. After Gundobad defeated his brother Godegisel, who initially successfully ousted him with Frankish support, he reportedly became heavily involved in issuing new laws.²⁴⁷ The prologue is more likely an expression of Sigismund's propaganda than Gundobad's, which means it should be firmly set in the 6th century. *Liber Constitutionum* in its current form contains earlier layers of legislation. Heather argued that clauses 1-41 are distinctive from the rest of the document and possibly reflect Gundobad's stage of legislating activity.²⁴⁸ A partially similar argument was presented by Frye, who attributed clauses 1-41 to the early stage of

²⁴⁴ *Liber Constitutionum*, Prologus 1.

²⁴⁵ The date of Gundobad's ascension to the throne is not sure, it could be 473 or 474. See *PLRE* vol 2, p. 524.

²⁴⁶ Wood 'Gentes, kings and kingdoms' p. 257-258; P. Heather, 'Law and society in the Burgundian kingdom' in A. Rio (ed.), *Law, custom, and justice in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages* (London, 2011), pp. 115-153, particularly p. 118 n. 6 proposes that the promulgation should be redated to 518, based on the dating of one of clauses *Liber Constitutionum* 62 to 10th June 517. I. Wood 'The legislation of magistri militum: the laws of Gundobad and Sigismund', *Clio Themis*, 10 (2016), pp. 1-16, particularly p. 4 n. 32 rejects that suggestion.

²⁴⁷ Gregory of Tours, *LH* II 33; I. Wood 'The political structure of the Burgundian kingdom' in M. Meier and S. Patzold (eds), *Chlodwigs Welt: Organisation von Herrschaft um 500* (Stuttgart, 2014), pp.383-396, particularly p. 392.

²⁴⁸ Heather, 'Law and society in the Burgundian kingdom' pp. 127-129 and 147-148.

Gundobad's rule.²⁴⁹ But unlike Heather, he considered the subsequent titles 42-88 to still be later additions of Gundobad. These were to be *novellae* introduced by Gundobad after his defeat of Godegisel. Frye argued that clauses 1-41 were an attempt at seizing legal sovereignty by Gundobad, who wanted to extend his legal authority over Romans until then limited to Burgundians. Introducing titles 42-88 was to be a resignation from adopting the territorial principle by Gundobad and a recognition of a boundary between Romans and Burgundians. Sigismund would only add the prologue and some of *novellae* and one of *constitutiones extravagantes*.²⁵⁰ Criticism of Frye's argument is not the subject of this chapter, but it is relevant to point out several issues with the picture of the development of Gibichung's legal authority offered by him.

As already mentioned above, he ignored instances of Gibichungs exercising jurisdiction over Romans before the reign of Gundobad.²⁵¹ He did not account for cases of Roman military officials exercising legal jurisdiction over civilians in the 5th century.²⁵² Another of his arguments about consular dating being a clear distinction between clauses 1-41 and 42-88 is also faulty. Frye suggested that consular dating found in the latter group of titles is a clear sign of Gibichungs giving up on claiming legal sovereignty and recognising instead the Roman law. He clearly overinterpreted the evidence, since clauses 1-41 miss any sort of dating – by consular or regnal years – and only a handful of clauses 42-88 are indeed dated.²⁵³ This is hardly a conclusive evidence for a change in practice reflecting an ideological shift in perceived legal authority. The

²⁴⁹ Frye, 'Gundobad, the *leges burgundionum*, and the struggle for sovereignty in Burgundy', pp. 199-212.

²⁵⁰ *Constitutiones extravagantes* XXI 12 contrary to what Frye claims this *constitutio* has nothing to do with Burgundians resigning from taxing Romans.

²⁵¹ *Vita Lupicini* 93-95; Sidonius Apollinaris, *Ep.* V 7 7.

²⁵² A. E. R. Boak, 'The Roman magistri in the civil and military service of the empire', *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology*, 26 (1915), pp. 73-164, particularly pp. 149-152; Wood, 'The legislation of magistri militum', p. 4.

²⁵³ LC 42, 45, 52, 76, 79 were dated by consular years, LC 62 was dated by regnal.

adoption of consular dating by Gibichungs reflected their relationship with the imperial court in Constantinople that developed during Gundobad's and Sigismund's reign.²⁵⁴

Heather's argument on the stages of development and chronological ordering of this collection of laws, with titles 1-41 being a coherent stage of legislative activity, is a much more convincing one. It is based on cross-referencing and modifications of previous laws found in substantial share of the remaining clauses.²⁵⁵ Although Wood agrees with Heather that there existed a legal collection of Gundobad that traces of can be found in the *Liber Constitutionum*, he is sceptical of pinpointing clauses 1-41 as Gundobad's recension. Wood points out that in its current form *Liber Constitutionum* is not even strictly speaking Sigismund's collection, with titles 89-105 belonging to post-517 period. In addition to that, some clauses were not ordered according to chronological principle postulated by Heather.²⁵⁶

Regardless of what were the precise stages of the development of Gibichungs' legal authority, though there is no doubt of significance of Gundobad's input, Sigismund's prologue marks the moment the barbarian ruler was to be perceived by his Roman subjects as a source of legal authority akin to the emperor. From Gundioc to Sigismund, the Gibichungs would have turned from administrators and commanders into kings supplanting the emperor. Wallace-Hadrill argued a similar development for the Merovingian kings, in which their legal codifying activity was meant to present their royal authority as mirroring the imperial power, with the help of church officials.²⁵⁷ Perhaps greater significance should be ascribed to the legal practice of provincial officials issuing

²⁵⁴ M. A. Handley, 'Inscribing time and identity in the Kingdom of Burgundy' in G. Greatrex and S. Mitchell (eds), *Ethnicity and culture in late antiquity* (Cardiff, 2000), pp. 83-102; Wood, 'The legislation of magistri militum', p. 11.

²⁵⁵ Heather, 'Law and society in the Burgundian kingdom', pp. 118-121 and 127-129.

²⁵⁶ *LC* 43 emends *LC* 60; Wood, 'The legislation of magistri militum', p. 5 and 9.

²⁵⁷ Wallace-Hadrill, *The long-haired kings*, pp. 179-181; *Early Germanic kingship in England and on the continent* (Oxford, 1971), p. 44.

edicts and setting legislation for the territory under their jurisdiction.²⁵⁸ The *Liber Constitutionum* and another Gibichung codification, the *Lex Romana Burgundionum*, seem to be an emanation of a diverse set of traditions of Roman vulgar law, and of provincial and barbarian ones, as well as of the interests of different actors in local politics: the ruler, judges, Roman and Burgundian notables, and the Church.²⁵⁹

Scholars approach the question of the role of the ruler in these processes by explaining his jurisdiction and extent of his authority over other actors in two ways. Some argue barbarian rulers adhered to the personal principle of the law – recognising legal customs of the ‘barbarian’ people he ruled, facilitating legal boundary between them and Romans.²⁶⁰ Others tend to stress the territoriality of royal legal authority, modelled on the example of the emperor and Roman officials.²⁶¹ It seems one of these models cannot fit all examples. Although later Lombard and Frankish codes may reveal greater tendency towards the personal principle of the law, the Burgundian, Visigothic and Ostrogothic examples seem to follow the territorial principle even if introducing legal distinctions between the original population and ‘barbarians’.²⁶²

²⁵⁸ R. Collins, ‘Law and ethnic identity in the western kingdoms in the fifth and sixth centuries’ in: A. P. Smyth (ed.), *Medieval Europeans: studies in ethnic identity and national perspectives in medieval Europe* (Basingstoke, 2002) pp. 1-23; R. Collins, *Visigothic Spain 409-711* (Oxford, 2004), p. 224.

²⁵⁹ P. Amory ‘The meaning and purpose of ethnic terminology in the Burgundian laws’ *Early medieval Europe*, 2/1 (1993), pp. 1-28.

²⁶⁰ Examples of these are S. L. Guterman, *The Principle of Personality of Law in the Germanic Kingdoms of Western Europe from the Fifth to the Eleventh Century* (New York, 1990); H. K. Schulze, ‘Die frühmittelalterlichen Stammesrechte als Quellen für die Sozialgeschichte des Frankenreiches’, *The Waseda Law Review*, 58 (1983).

²⁶¹ Some examples are K. Bosl, ‘Die sogenannten ältesten germanischen Volksrechte und die Gesellschaftsstruktur der Unterschichten. Bemerkungen zur Kulturkontinuität der Spätantike im fränkischen Reich der Merowinger und zu den Formen und Phasen ihrer Umwandlung’ in K. Bosl (ed.) *Gesellschaft, Kultur, Literatur. Rezeption und Originalität im Wachsen einer europäischen Literatur und Geistigkeit. Beiträge Leopold Wallach gewidmet* (Stuttgart 1975), pp. 129-152; Collins, *Visigothic Spain 409-711*, pp. 226-227; I. Wood, ‘Roman law in the barbarian kingdoms’ in A. Ellegård and G. Åkerström-Hougen (eds) *Rome and the north* (Göteborg, 1996), pp. 5-14.

²⁶² For Lombards and Franks see K. Modzelewski, *Barbarzyńska Europa* (Warszawa, 2004), pp. 66-88; For Visigoths in Gaul and Ostrogoths in Italy see J. H. W. G. Liebeschuetz, ‘Citizen status and law in the Roman Empire and the Visigothic Kingdom’ in Pohl and Reimitz (eds), *Strategies of distinction*, pp. 131-152, particularly pp. 142-145; For Burgundians see Heather, ‘Law and society in the Burgundian kingdom’, pp. 130-136; Wood, ‘The legislation of *magistri militum*’, pp. 12-16.

In contrast to the *Liber Constitutionum*, the earliest of the known law codes of the successor states, the *Codex Euricianus*, issued during the rule of Visigothic king Euric (466-484), is preserved only in a fragmentary form. Out of 350 laws, only 47 (276-336) survive.²⁶³ The surviving evidence does not contain any projection of the image of the ruler. Unlike in the case of the Gibichungs, it is impossible to know what kind of ideas about the nature of his power Euric propagated. He certainly used the title ‘rex’, as a passage of the codex on the Gothic allotment shows.²⁶⁴ What remains of the code gives rather an impression of a provincial law, modified to fit in with the new realities, by introducing the legal category of a Goth and regulating relations with Romans. It is not any sort of ambitious attempt to wholly reshape legal reality. The codification even retained a law abolishing marriage unions between Romans and barbarians. One imagines the label ‘barbarian’ in this case was understood as applicable to foreigners, rather than to Goths.²⁶⁵ Although collecting laws into a code, and the issuing of it by someone other than a Roman emperor, could have been seen as quite a new development, barbarian rulers seem to have exercised authority in establishing legal norms even earlier. In the aforementioned law, Euric speaks of keeping the ancient boundaries, as they were kept by a law of his father.²⁶⁶ Sidonius Apollinaris informs us of laws issued most likely by Theodoric II, when he is reporting on the misdeeds of Seronatus, a probable *vicarius*

²⁶³ H. Nehlsen, ‘Lex Visigothorum’ *Handwörterbuch zur deutschen Rechtsgeschichte* 16 (1978), pp. 1966-1979; H. Nehlsen, *Sklavenrecht zwischen Antike und Mittelalter* (Göttingen, 1972), pp. 153-5 suggests that the actual codification of Euric’s laws took place during the reign of Alaric II (484-507).

²⁶⁴ *Codex Euricianus*, fr. 277: *Et si quis post hunc XXX annorum numerum causam movere temptaverit, iste numerus ei resistat, et libram auri cui rex iusserit coactus exsolvat*. For an analysis and interpretation of the contents of this passage, see: Goffart, *Barbarians and Romans*, pp. 118-123.

²⁶⁵ Sivan ‘Why Not Marry a Barbarian?’, pp. 136-145.

²⁶⁶ *Codex Euricianus*, fr. 277 3: *Antiquos vero terminos sic stare iubemus sicut et bonae memoriae pater noster in alia lege praecepit*.; The Burgundian *Liber Constitutionum* III also contains a reference to the legal state during the time of the ruler’s predecessors: *Si quos apud regiae memoriae auctores nostros, id est: Gibicam, Gundomarem, Gislaharium, Gundaharium, patrem quoque nostrum et patrum liberos liberasve fuisse constiterit, in eadem libertate permaneant; quicumque sub eisdem fuerunt obnoxii servituti, in nostro dominio perseverent*.

Septem Provinciarum in 469.²⁶⁷ One of the accusations against him is of enforcing laws of Theodoric:

He brags to the Goths and insults the Romans, mocks the magistrates and plays tricks along with the public cashiers; he tramples on the laws of Theodosius and issues laws of Theodoric, searching out ancient offences and brand-new taxes.²⁶⁸ (trans. W. B. Anderson)

Seronatus was part of the imperial administration and yet he adhered to the laws established by a ‘barbarian’ ruler, who died three years earlier. Sidonius attacks Seronatus on that basis, contrasting the laws of Theodoric to those of Theodosius, implying that the ones of the former are illegitimate. Although this view could be held by a member of a provincial senatorial aristocracy, grounded in the cultural sense of Roman superiority, it was not necessarily shared by imperial officials to whom, from the legal point of view, the Visigothic king was a recognised administrator of Roman territory under a *foedus* and therefore had a right to issue laws, albeit it certainly did not mean recognition of Theodoric II as an independent ruler.

The substance of laws of sub-Roman kingdoms depended in great degree on the provincial law. Unlike the classicizing Justinianic Code, it in fact reflected the evolution of the Later Roman legal system, the so-called vulgar law.²⁶⁹ To the point when discerning ‘barbarian’ elements is difficult, and documents of vulgar law were misinterpreted as stemming from sub-Roman kingdoms.²⁷⁰ Did this influence of provincial or to be more precise vulgar law in any way shape the legal authority assumed

²⁶⁷ *PLRE* vol. 2, pp. 995-996; Theodoric I could be also possible, but the second Visigothic ruler of that name seems more likely given other references to him enacting laws and the recent memory of him both for Sidonius and his addressee.

²⁶⁸ Sidonius Apollinaris, Ep. II 1 3.

²⁶⁹ E. Levy, *West Roman vulgar law: the law of property* (Philadelphia, 1951), *passim*, particularly pp. 10-17.

²⁷⁰ Wood, ‘Roman law in the barbarian kingdoms’, p. 9.

by 'barbarian' rulers? Did they perceive their legal activity as more akin to that of a provincial official or the emperor himself?

Collins argued that the codification should be understood within the legal competences of a Roman pretorian prefect.²⁷¹ However there is a significant difference between the legislation of provincial officials and the development of sub-Roman legal codes. Codification was an imperial prerogative.²⁷² Its emergence in the 5th century most likely resulted from the final disappearance of the imperial administration in Roman Gaul. Euric made the first steps in claiming this imperial prerogative, where there was no emperor to keep on using it, by making his own codification. We cannot be sure if this shift was marked by bringing up the royal title in the official documents as a substitute for the imperial one, or if it was already used by Theodoric II in his legal acts. Other rulers soon followed in his footsteps. His immediate successor, Alaric II, collected laws otherwise found in earlier legal sources into the *Lex Romana Visigothorum* shortly before the battle of Vouillé in 507. The sources for this collection were the *Codex Theodosianus*, Gaius' *Epitome Institutarum*, Papinianus' *Responsa*, Paulus' *Sententiae*, the *Codex Gregorianus* and *Codex Hermogenianus*.²⁷³ Alaric added his name and regal authority to the collected laws.²⁷⁴ The important break with legal practices of provincial officials was the fact that rulers such as Alaric II, Gundobad and Sigismund did not issue edicts, as prefects would do, they claimed authority to make *leges*, a prerogative reserved previously only to the emperor.²⁷⁵ These acts were aiming to fill the void left by the disappearance of the imperial legal authority by taking a step further from simply the

²⁷¹ Collins 'Law and ethnic', pp. 1-23, particularly pp. 5-6; Collins, *Visigothic Spain 409-711*, p. 227.

²⁷² Wood, 'Roman law in the barbarian kingdoms', p. 19.

²⁷³ A. Berger, *Encyclopedic dictionary of Roman law* (Philadelphia, 1991), pp. 559.

²⁷⁴ As can be found in the subscription of the *Lex Romana Visigothorum*: *Anianus vir spectabilis ex praeceptione D. N. gloriosissimi Alarici regis hunc codicem de Theodosiani legibus atque sententiis iuris vel diversis libris electum Aduris, anno XXII eo regnante, edidi atque subscripsi. Recognovimus. Dat. sub die IV. Non. Feb. anno XXII Alarici regis, Tolosae*

²⁷⁵ A. Watson, *The evolution of western private law* (Baltimore, 2003), p. 204

authority of a provincial official. The ‘barbarian’ ruler positioned himself in the framework of the Roman state as an independent ruler.

A possible example of a different path of keeping pretence of the subordination of a ‘barbarian’ ruler to the Roman emperor in the legal capacity is to be found, according to Mommsen, in the *Edictum Theodorici*, a collection of normative acts.²⁷⁶ This legal document was ascribed by Pierre Pithou, the publisher of the first edition in 1579, to Theodoric the Amal. This was contested by Vismara who suggested that the ruler behind the collection was the Visigothic king Theodoric II.²⁷⁷ Lafferty argued quite convincingly that Pithou’s identification was in fact correct.²⁷⁸ So did Ożóg and Pietras, who demonstrated edict’s regulations on the right of asylum as relevant for the Laurentian Schism in Rome.²⁷⁹ Mommsen believed that in the absence of *leges* issued by Theodoric the Amal promulgating only edicts may have reflected a recognition of imperial authority over law. Theodoric legal authority was to equal that of a praetorian prefect, who also had power to issue edicts. However, Theodoric’s edicts shared characteristics of imperial ones – they were general regulations – unlike prefect’s edicts, which pertained only to matters handled by his office.²⁸⁰ In the later period Franks and Lombards did not keep a strict distinction between *lex* and *edictum* and it is possible this development started earlier.²⁸¹ There is no indication that contemporary imperial legislation of emperors in

²⁷⁶ T. Mommsen “Ostgotische Studien”, *Gesammelte Schriften* (Berlin, 1910), vol 6, pp. 362-484, particularly 461-463.

²⁷⁷ G. Vismara ‘Romani e Goti di fronte al diritto nel regno ostrogoto’, *Settimane di studio del Centro italiano di studi sull'alto medioevo* 3 (1956), pp. 407-63 and “Edictum Theoderici” *Ius Romanum Medii Aevi I* (Milan, 1967), 2b; Watson, *The evolution of western private law*, p. 204 follows this hypothesis.

²⁷⁸ S. D. W. Lafferty, *Law and society in the age of Theodoric the Great: a study of the Edictum Theoderici* (Cambridge, 2013), pp. 22-46.

²⁷⁹ M. Ożóg, H. Pietras “Edykt Teoderyka, przepisy synodalne a prawo azylu”, *Polonia sacra* 29 (2011), pp. 85-96.

²⁸⁰ J. Prostko-Prostyński, *Utræque res publicæ: the emperor Anastasius' Gothic policy (491-518)*, (Poznań, 1994), pp. 185-188.

²⁸¹ T. M. Charles-Edwards ‘Law in the western kingdoms between the fifth and the seventh century’ in A. Cameron, B. Ward-Perkins (eds) *Cambridge ancient history – Late antiquity: empire and successors, A. D. 425-600* (Cambridge, 2000), vol. 14, pp. 260-286, particularly pp. 283-284

Constantinople applied in any way to the territory under Theodoric's rule.²⁸² Ostrogothic envoys to Belisarius may have claimed that their kings did not issue any new laws and respected the Roman ones, but this is contradicted by other evidence, which specifically referred to Theodoric's *leges*.²⁸³ Prostko-Prostyński proposed a solution to this contradiction – envoys alluded to terms of agreement between Theodoric and emperor Zeno, which were eventually replaced by a new pact negotiated with Zeno's successor, Anastasius, allowing for greater prerogatives for the Amal.²⁸⁴ It would seem then that legal authority claimed by Theodoric did not differ substantially from that of his counterparts in Gaul.

Another example of barbarian warlords turning kings may be seen in Vandal Africa. Not much is known about the Vandals' kingship before their coming to Africa. What little can be inferred are short notices from later sources. Gregory of Tours mentions Gaiseric's father Godigisel, whom he called a king.²⁸⁵ Gregory's passage is dependent on Renatus Profuturus Frigeridus' account, in which he searched for mention of Frankish kings and expressed his confusion with the lack of such, in contrast to mentions of Vandal and Alan kings. Gregory also brought up the kingly title of Gunderic, Gaiseric's brother; in this case, it is also mentioned by Hydatius' chronicle.²⁸⁶ Albeit closer in time, these sources are still quite late and by their very nature do not delve into detail. Godigisel and Gunderic seem to have been simply warlords leading armies and their royal title is difficult to attest with certainty. Any sources regarding the character of Vandal kingship on a substantial level are limited to the time of the African kingdom; even Gaiseric

²⁸² Prostko-Prostyński, *Utræque res publicæ*, pp. 187-188.

²⁸³ Prokopios, *History of the wars* VI 6 17; Ennodius, *Vita Epiphani* p. 99; *Epistulae Theodoricianae* *Variae* IX Incipit.

²⁸⁴ Prostko-Prostyński, *Utræque res publicæ*, pp.185-188.

²⁸⁵ Gregory of Tours, *LH* II 9.

²⁸⁶ Gregory of Tours, *LH* II 2; Hydatius 68.

himself dated his ascension to the royal rank by the date of his capture of Carthage.²⁸⁷ In chapter 3.2 (“Barbarian upper clergy in the 5th century successor states”) the Vandal kings’ religious policies are given a closer examination. It is essential to consider these policies here, as they are one of the unusual instances in which Vandal kings speak themselves of their royal authority and their understanding of it. Observation of king Huneric’s policies and conduct of diplomatic relations with the Roman Empire on religious matters reveals a continuity with the imperial approach to these. During the council of Carthage in 484, the basis for upholding the orthodoxy of the ‘Arian’ creed, and persecution of the adherents of the ‘Nicene’ one, are the acts of the councils convened by Constantius II in Ariminum and Seleucia in 358.²⁸⁸ The arguments of both sides and measures taken by Huneric reveals also inspiration with the conference of Carthage in 411, convened on the order of the emperor Honorius and aimed against Donatists.²⁸⁹ The very idea of a ruler calling a council and establishing orthodoxy is extremely imperial. In his dealings with the eastern court, Huneric put himself in the position of a protector of ‘Arians’ in the entire Empire, in response to the Constantinopolitan emperor acting in such a capacity towards ‘Nicones’ under Huneric’s rule. When Romans took up the role of patron of the Nicene Church in Africa, by appealing for a right for the Africans to elect and consecrate the bishop of Carthage, the Vandal king in turn demanded protection and liberties for the ‘Arian’ communities in the Roman Empire.²⁹⁰ By all these actions Huneric made himself a champion of Arian ‘orthodoxy’, continuing the kind of relations between state and Church as established by Constantine and Constantius II. This way he set himself as, if not equal, to the emperor, then at the very least, like the emperor,

²⁸⁷ Conant, *Staying Roman*, pp. 20-21.

²⁸⁸ Victor of Vita, *Historia persecutionis* III 5.

²⁸⁹ E. Fournier ‘Victor of Vita and the conference of 484: a pastiche of 411?’, *Studia Patristica* 52 (2013) pp. 395-408, particularly pp. 406-408.

²⁹⁰ Victor of Vita, *Historia persecutionis* II 4.

showing interest and authority in the same range of matters. Huneric's policy is that of a Roman ruler rather than that of a barbarian king.²⁹¹ Unlike their counterparts in other parts of the Empire Vandal kings showed little interest in bearing Roman ranks, deeming their title of king as sufficient legitimation for their rule.

The evidence of titulature indicates that 'barbarian' kings of the 5th century avoided ethnicising it. In his survey of titles used by 'barbarian' rulers from the 5th to the 8th century, Gillett showed that the ethnic part of the titulature is not employed in chancellery sources and is rather a domain of literary sources.²⁹² There are three exceptions: the kings of Africa with their official use of title the *rex Wandalarum et Alanorum*, later Merovingian kings, and Lombard ones. The first case, which is relevant for this chapter, Gillett speculated to be an effect of Vandal conflict with the Moors.²⁹³ The second and third was attributed to the need for articulation of a political unity within regnum, despite the divisions of authority between different kings in Merovingian Gaul and Lombard Italy.²⁹⁴ According to Gillett and contra Wolfram, the title of *rex* adopted by sub-Roman kings could be wholly explained on the grounds of the Roman discourse of power, as a term often used towards allied rulers, appropriated to the new reality where such kings reigned over nominally Roman territory, rather than a reflection of previous 'barbarian' kingship.²⁹⁵

²⁹¹ For how these policies were shaped by diplomatic exchange see chapter 2.3.

²⁹² Gillett, 'Was ethnicity Politicized in the Earliest Medieval Kingdoms?', pp. 85-121.

²⁹³ He follows here H. Wolfram, *Intitulatio: Lateinische Königs- und Fürstentitel bis zum Ende des 8. Jahrhunderts* (Graz-Wien-Koln, 1967), vol 1 pp. 82-86; Steinacher 'Who is the barbarian? Considerations on the Vandal royal title', pp. 469-474 proposes an alternative. He attributes the ethnicised royal title to a power struggle in the Vandal ruling family and Huneric's need to appeal to the Vandal and Alan military and land owners, who due to changes in land tenure became more important than the traditional elites. He also shows that most of Huneric's successors, with the exception of his son Hilderic, did not use the ethnicised title, being satisfied with 'rex,' as other rulers of sub-Roman kingdoms.

²⁹⁴ Gillett, 'Was ethnicity politicized in the Earliest Medieval Kingdoms?' pp. 106-115.

²⁹⁵ Wolfram, *Intitulatio*, pp. 341-43 saw the linguistic influence of Gothic 'reiks' on the titulature of the Visigothic and Ostrogothic kings, manifested in the title of "rix" rather than "rex" as a proof of the 'barbarian' origin of the kingship Gillett, 'Was Ethnicity Politicized in the Earliest Medieval Kingdoms?', pp. 115-120 points out that this way of writing the title can be explained on the ground of Latin phonetics, as a by-form of "rex".

The nature of the rule of ‘barbarian’ kings can also be inferred from minting practices. Chronologically the first attempt at using coins as a medium to convey power by a ‘barbarian’ ruler was conducted by a Sueve, Rechiarius, in Spain. There are a couple of *siliquae* with the portrait of Theodosius I and bearing the legend ‘iussu rechiari reges’.²⁹⁶ This rather underwhelming effort does not seem to have had a lasting effect. However, even the most ostentatiously independent Vandal Hasdingi still issued coins with the imperial image, refraining from dropping this link to the Empire. It was only in the reign of Gunthamund (484-496) that they started issuing coins with their names and royal title or *dominus noster*.²⁹⁷ Nevertheless the iconographical repertoire remained the same and a Vandal king looked very much like a Roman emperor. This is one of many new developments that can be observed to be taking place, when there was no emperor in the West. But even then the Vandal kings did not start to mint golden coins, recognising that as an imperial prerogative, as attested by Byzantine *solidi* found in Vandal Africa of the time.²⁹⁸ Vandals were probably under the influence of an example set by Odoacer in Italy, who minted coins first in the name of Julius Nepos and then Zeno, but added monograms of his own name and eventually his portrait.²⁹⁹ Gundobad and Sigismund followed by minting *solidi* with their monograms.³⁰⁰ The Visigoths, surprisingly, seem not to have done so.³⁰¹

The rulers of the late 5th century slowly moved away from being just military leaders, be that warlords or military officials recognised by imperial authorities. New

²⁹⁶ E. A. Thompson, *Romans and barbarians: the decline of the Western Empire* (Madison, 2001), p. 165.

²⁹⁷ M. Blackburn and P. Grierson, *Medieval European coinage: the early Middle Ages (5th-10th centuries)* (Cambridge, 1986), pp. 17-23 and 418-419; G. M. Berndt and R. Steinacher ‘Minting in Vandal Africa: coins of the Vandal period in the Coin Cabinet of Vienna’s Kunsthistorisches Museum’, *Early medieval Europe*, 16/3 (2008), pp. 252-298; R. Steinacher, *Die Vandalen: Aufstieg und Fall eines Barbarenreichs* (Stuttgart, 2016), pp. 181-183; at the end of the 5th century there were stable and continuous emissions of bronze and silver coins in Vandal Africa.

²⁹⁸ Berndt and Steinacher ‘Minting in Vandal Africa’ *Early medieval Europe* 16/3 (2008), pp. 252-298.

²⁹⁹ Blackburn and Grierson, *Medieval European coinage*, p. 28.

³⁰⁰ Blackburn and Grierson, *Medieval European coinage*, pp. 75-75.

³⁰¹ Blackburn and Grierson, *Medieval European coinage*, p. 44.

prerogatives such as codifying law and shaping religious policies meant they were entering the territory of imperial power. Yet the caution with which they treated their own presence in the representation of power, for example in coins, was apparent. Nevertheless, the process of substituting the emperor both in practice and symbolic reality continued and gained a momentum amongst the next generation of rulers, after the disappearance of the western Roman emperors. Odoacer's successor, Theodoric, could be praised as Augustus by at least one supporter, but otherwise he settled for carefully implying his semi-imperial power.³⁰² In similar fashion, the conqueror of Alaric II, Clovis, after his victory and receiving the rank of a consul and a patrician, used the occasion to send a message to his subjects rich with overtones of a quasi-imperial nature of his rule over Gaul.³⁰³ The power of kings became more important as it gained an imperial character.

Conclusions

The development of sub-Roman royalty could be seen as a process of barbarian kingship becoming increasingly romanised and assuming the substantive prerogatives of the Roman emperor such as codifying laws, issuing coins and providing subjects with a local ruler to actually interact with, as opposed to the distant and increasingly immobile Roman rulers of the 5th century. However, it is also plausible to argue that in some cases an old pattern, of a Roman military official ascending to the rank of an emperor, can be seen, albeit never fully complete. Local powerbrokers aimed to fill the role of central government, which was no longer able to extend even an illusionary dominion over the provinces. Did the Gibichungs express their barbarian royal rank and its competence

³⁰² ILS 827; Arnold, *Theodoric and the Roman imperial restoration*, pp. 69-92.

³⁰³ Gregory of Tours, *LH* II 38; For different views on what was the character of Clovis' celebrations in Tours see: Wallace-Hadrill, *The long-haired kings*, pp. 175-176; McCormick, *Eternal victory*, pp. 335-337; R. W. Mathisen 'Clovis, Anastasius, and political status in 508 C.E.: the Frankish aftermath of the battle of Vouillé' in R. W. Mathisen and D. Shanzer (eds), *The battle of Vouillé: where France began* (Berlin, 2012), pp. 79-110.

through Roman terms; or, perhaps after achieving the highest Roman offices and honours on a local level, but unable to claim the rank of emperor, they chose the next best thing – kingship understood in a very imperial sense? Vandal Hasdingi certainly did not shy away from giving their kingship an imperial flavour, but this seemed to be an act that did not require either a barbarian background for the title or earlier Roman ranks. The Visigoths were more distanced from, and seemingly less interested in, Roman ranks than the Burgundians. They were satisfied with pushing their agenda through renegotiations of a *foedus*, yet even they saw a need to safeguard their rule by taking up imperial legal prerogatives to appeal to their subjects.

Barbarian kings were not the only ones interested in giving their right to rule a more Roman and imperial feeling. The local elites, be they Italian senators or Gallic bishops, were equally invested in that process. It gave them a semblance of continuity of the Empire's political system, but also allowed them to retain the way of conducting relations between them and their rulers. After all, if little difference could be recognised between the new kings and the emperors of old, then the way of addressing them and seeking their patronage could remain the same. Members of the Roman elites could find comfort in the fact that with all the changes around them, their world remained in principle the same.

Chapter 2.2 Romano-barbarian *amicitia*: Shaping the discourse and sustaining political and social networks

While 'barbarian' rulers sought to facilitate their power with tools and attributes of Roman officials to appeal to their new subjects, Roman officials of 'barbarian' background needed to navigate the uncertain waters of the elite 'friendship' to sustain their networks of power. Links of *amicitia* were an essential element of the Roman elite's

inner relations and a mark of belonging to it. These political alliances were performed and sustained by the exchange of gifts and letters revolving around participation in literary culture, recommendations of friends, and seeking favours, be they of a political or other nature. A stylised language of friendship was developed to convey messages regarding these matters. Forms established in the late Roman republic, exemplified in the letters of Cicero and theoretically framed in his treaty *De amicitia*, continued into the late Roman Empire as seen in the epistolography of such individuals as Symmachus, Sidonius Apollinaris, Ausonius, Jerome or Augustine. The Greek-speaking world had its parallel in the term *φιλία*, philosophically set out in Plato's work *Lysis*.

Contrary to the norms established in elite culture by Cicero, the term *amicitia* could cover many types of relationships. Individuals of differing social stations or gender could consider each other *amici* and often expressed this in honorary and funerary inscriptions.³⁰⁴ However, in its idealised literary form, described in the epistolography of the elite, *amicitia* was to be exclusively a cordial relationship between men of higher social standing, who could hold offices, lands and slaves. *Amici* were not necessarily of equal position, as the term could cover relations akin to that of a patron – client. But even in such cases usage of the language of *amicitia* was expected, at best differentiating between *amici superiores* and *inferiores*.³⁰⁵ *Amicitia* was performed as a signifier of the Roman identity of the elites, an activity of a true Roman gentleman. With the increasing numbers of military officials of foreign, 'barbarian', background in the 4th and 5th century, a new group of potential *amici* emerged. Achieving such high honours as the consulate and exercising considerable power, these 'immigrants' were expected to take part in the very same set of conventions, which had integrated the imperial elites for centuries.

³⁰⁴ C. A. Williams, *Reading Roman friendship* (Cambridge, 2012), passim and particularly pp. 23-26 and 286-289.

³⁰⁵ Cicero, *De Amicitia*, 69-70; Plato, *Lysis*, 214c-d.

Inclusion of Roman military officers of non-Roman origin or background within networks of *amicitia* meant that they were powerful or Roman enough, or both, to be considered worthy *amici*. However, it did not necessarily mean they were wholly accepted as Romans by their counterparts. A certain cultural bias, serving to prove the superiority of the old elites, is traceable even in the highly conventionalised language of *amicitia* and *φιλία*.

This chapter discusses several cases of individuals of non-Roman background, either first generation ‘immigrants’ or people already established within the Roman society, whose only trait differentiating them from the rest of the society was their non-Roman descent. Among these cases are Stilicho, Richomeres, Bauto, Ellebichos, Modares and Arbogastes, examined through the perspective of letters addressed to them by Symmachus, Libanios, Gregory of Nazianzus, Basil of Caesarea, Sidonius Apollinaris and Auspicius of Toul.

The first three of these ‘barbarians’, Stilicho, Richomeres and Bauto, can be found as addressees of letters written by Quintus Aurelius Symmachus. Salzman proposed that the correspondence of Symmachus to these three reveals his strategy of implying his addressees’ lack of manners and culture, due to their origin, in order to establish his own superiority.³⁰⁶ The epistolography of this member of the Roman senatorial aristocracy, urban prefect of 384/5 and consul of 391, was collected in ten books, seven of which were selected, compiled and edited by Symmachus himself.³⁰⁷ The choice of addressees and letters served to illustrate Symmachus’ prominence by association with powerful friends, but also his mastery of the art of letter-writing and conducting *amicitia*. The very fact that an addressee could be found in Symmachus’ collection was an affirmation of his position

³⁰⁶ M. R. Salzman, ‘Symmachus and the “barbarian” generals’, *Historia, Zeitschrift für Alte Geschichte*, 55/3 (2006), pp. 352-367.

³⁰⁷ C. Sogno, *Q. Aurelius Symmachus: a political biography* (Ann Arbor, 2006), p. 61.

within the Roman elite. The fourth book begins with letters to Stilicho, a *magister militum*, guardian of the young emperor Honorius and the de facto regent of the western part of the Roman Empire in the years 394 – 408. At the same time, though it was rarely mentioned before his downfall, he was the son of a Vandal.³⁰⁸ The location and number of letters, 14 of 74 in the entire book, marks Stilicho as an important addressee of Symmachus. A friendship with the most powerful individual in the western part of the Empire of the time was a mark of honour and significance for Symmachus. Both the tone and subject of the letters leave little doubt about the balance of power between the two *amici*.

Symmachus sought Stilicho's help in rehabilitating his son-in-law, Nicomachus Flavianus the Younger, who was disgraced because of his late father's involvement with the losing side of the civil war between Theodosius and Eugenius.³⁰⁹ With Stilicho's support, Nicomachus was able to attend the inauguration of a consulship of Theodorus and thereby shook off the stigma of his father's involvement with the usurpation. Symmachus dutifully thanked and praised the *magister militum* for that favour.³¹⁰ Stilicho was not the only recipient of letters on the matter of restoring Nicomachus Flavianus' prominence, so carefully tended to by Symmachus.³¹¹ He convinced Florentinus, the urban prefect of the time, to make use of Nicomachus in a delegation to the imperial court.³¹² Symmachus also used his network to save Nicomachus Flavianus from paying back the salary his father received for his service as praetorian prefect of Italy under the emperor Eugenius.³¹³ Stilicho and others received letters with thanks on facilitating

³⁰⁸ *PLRE* I, pp. 853-858.

³⁰⁹ Symmachus, *Ep.* IV 2 and 4.

³¹⁰ Symmachus, *Ep.* IV 6.

³¹¹ Sogno, *Symmachus: a political biography*, pp. 80-83

³¹² Symmachus states so in *Epistula* VI 52 to Nicomachus. Nicomachus does not seem to find this idea appealing as Symmachus sent several letters (*Ep.* VI 56, 59, 63) in an attempt to convince him to take part in the delegation.

³¹³ A letter to Protadius IV 19 and to Florentinus IV 51.

Nicomachus Flavianus' attendance to celebrations of Theodorus' consulship. Besides Stilicho these were Minervius, *comes sacrarum largitionum*, Macrobius Longinianus, possibly *comes privatarum largitionum* at the time, brothers Petronius, a former vicar of Spain, and Patroinus, who were both influential figures at the imperial court, and the consul Theodorus himself.³¹⁴ Restoring Nicomachus Flavianus' position within the elite was a process that required a number of important contacts and favours. Stilicho was one of them, but their relationship was not limited to matters pertaining to Nichomachus Flavianus.

On another occasion Symmachus asked for Stilicho's assistance in obtaining Spanish horses for his son's praetorian games.³¹⁵ He also presented the *magister militum* with pleas from other senators.³¹⁶ But the relationship was not entirely one-sided, and Symmachus made sure the readers of his collection were aware of that. A case of reciprocation can be found in a letter informing Stilicho of the senate's support for the campaign against Gildo.³¹⁷ The war against an African warlord, incited to rebellion against the court of Ravenna by its Constantinopolitan counterpart, was a political project dear to Stilicho.³¹⁸ One can imagine the 'friendship' between the two facilitated Symmachus' involvement in obtaining the favourable result in the Curia.

Political business is not the only subject of Symmachus' correspondence to Stilicho. Letters are also full of customary pleas for attention and epistolary responses from the powerful *magister militum*.³¹⁹ Symmachus tried to maintain the friendship by providing news about his life and that of his family. He invited Stilicho for a visit and

³¹⁴ A letter to Minervius IV 39; to Theodorus V 6; to Longinianus VII 95; to Petronius and Patroinus VII 102. For Longinianus' office see Jones, *The later Roman empire*, vol I, p. 412.

³¹⁵ Symmachus, *Ep.* IV 7.

³¹⁶ Symmachus, *Ep.* IV 9.

³¹⁷ Symmachus, *Ep.* IV 5.

³¹⁸ For more details on the political conflict between Ravenna and Constantinople that led to this development, see chapter 1.1 and Oost, 'Count Gildo and Theodosius the Great' pp. 27-30.

³¹⁹ Symmachus, *Ep.* IV 10 and 11.

informed him of his son's marriage.³²⁰ Stilicho is consistently praised throughout the letters: "I would continue even for longer, if **your noble modesty, equal to all your other virtues**, was not stopping me from the weighty praise [*Longius pergerem, nisi tuus nobilis pudor par virtutibus ceteris laudis onera vitaret*]",³²¹ "I leave it to your **lofty eminence**, always most revered by me [*sed eminentissimae et semper mihi reverendae sublimitati tuae expendendum relinquo*]",³²² In all of this, there is no hint of Stilicho's ancestry being recognised as a factor in his capability to be Symmachus' *amicus*. Perhaps his letters would have painted a different picture if Symmachus had lived to see Stilicho's downfall in 408 and the anti-barbarian propaganda employed to justify his removal and execution, which resonated throughout the works of Jerome, Orosius and Philostorgios.³²³ It appears Symmachus was ready to erase the names of his correspondents that fell out of grace, though he still included the letters he exchanged with them in his collection.³²⁴ But at this point in time Stilicho was still a powerful Roman statesman, not a traitor whose 'barbarian' origin should be deemed a source of his infidelity.

A different power dynamic and attitude emerges from Symmachus' letters to two other Roman commanders of 'barbarian' background. Richomeres and Bauto, both Franks, and like Stilicho *magistri militum* in Roman service, were recipients of letters that strongly implied their cultural inferiority.³²⁵ They were chastised for failing to send Symmachus customary gifts to celebrate their consulships (384 and 385). The urban prefect "praised" Richomeres for the "affection" shown to him by Richomeres' singling

³²⁰ Symmachus, *Ep.* IV 13 and 14.

³²¹ Symmachus, *Ep.* IV 12.

³²² Symmachus, *Ep.* IV 8.

³²³ Orosius, VII 38 1-6; Jerome, *Ep.* 123 16; Philostorgios, *HE* XII 1-2.

³²⁴ R. Bonney, 'A new friend for Symmachus?', *Historia, Zeitschrift für Alte Geschichte*, 24/2 (1975), pp. 357-374; Q. Aurelii Symmachi, *quae supersunt*, ed. O. Seeck, Berlin 1883, MGH vol. VI part 1, XXIII no. 43.

³²⁵ Salzman, 'Symmachus and the "barbarian" generals' pp. 352-367.

him out from all others by sending him a delayed gift, thereby proving that it was an expression of their friendship rather than duty:

One may possibly reckon that the gift, which the last year's consul delivered, was late: I see that for me and others, who live afar, it was delayed until this moment in time because of trust in friendship [*amicitiae fiducia*], in fact, those who you were unable to remember for that long, were satisfied straightaway. [...] Consequently I will see, if anyone believes that he was put after the others in order or in honour; I judge that I was placed before others because of pure affection [*pura adfectione*]. Nor is one enough of a friend [*amicus*] to whom some customary practice is granted at once; of greater honour is such composure, which reckons it not a disgraceful thing, if it is withheld from close friends for some time. On that account I wish you would believe that even the delay itself was sweet to me. Thus I judge, thus I understand, these things, which were according to custom sent to the others a short time ago, were saved for me out of love [*nobis amore servata*].³²⁶

In the same manner he excused Bauto, blaming the gaffe on unnamed enemies who attempted to spoil their friendship:

No suspicion falls on you that you could be thought to deliberately neglect the friendship [*amicitiae neglegens*]. [...] On that account I did not think earlier that I was excluded from the number of those upon whom you bestowed consular gift at the beginning of the year, and currently I believe I was given more than the others. For what a general offering gave to them, a special care restored to us. In this regard I should not to be indignant at those

³²⁶ Symmachus, *Ep.* III 59.

who wanted to deprive me of previous honours. In fact it may have not happened to me otherwise that I received twice what another's deceit had taken away. [...] Whether it had been done by mistake or evil intent, you made it known to all not to make cunning plans for the destruction of friendships [*ad destruendas amicitias*] any more, which they see growing because of their plots.³²⁷

In both cases, it is apparent that Symmachus is establishing his cultural superiority on two levels: firstly, by pointing out the *faux pas* and secondly by 'graciously' turning the errors of his *amici* into expressions of consideration and friendship. As Michele Renee Salzman pointed out, Symmachus established himself as an *arbiter amicitiae*.³²⁸ By educating his less civilised friends on manners, he was effectively romanising them and elevating them, though not to an equal status. Perhaps the reason Richomeres and Bauto are treated differently than Stilicho, besides their lesser positions in the Roman hierarchy, is because unlike him they are 'immigrants'. Richomeres was a recipient of no fewer letters than Stilicho (16), and like him was asked for favours, namely to intervene in the removal of Nicomachus Flavianus the Younger from his post of proconsul in the province of Asia, after he unjustly ordered the flogging of a decurion.³²⁹ Symmachus facilitated the *amicitia* of Richomeres and Nicomachus Flavianus the Elder, recommended a former subordinate from the time of his urban prefecture, and demanded more of Richomeres' letters.³³⁰ Pellizzari took this and the sheer number of letters to Richomeres as an indication of Symmachus' acceptance of him as a member of same elite, based also in

³²⁷ Symmachus, *Ep.* IV 15.

³²⁸ Salzman, 'Symmachus and the "barbarian" generals', pp. 352-367.

³²⁹ Symmachus, *Ep.* III 69.

³³⁰ For the friendship of Richomeres and Flavianus see Symmachus, *Ep.* III 66; for the recommendation, see III 67; for requests for letters, see III 54; 56; 60; 61; 64; 68.

shared religious views, much like in Richomerēs' relationship with Libanios.³³¹ However, the common religious identity is not a subject of Symmachus' letters in the manner we are going to observe in Libanios' correspondence. More importantly, most of the correspondence to Richomerēs is dated as later than 385 (11).³³² The balance of power in *amicitia* between Richomerēs and Symmachus at this point in time is visibly shaped differently than that in the case of Stilicho, tilted in Symmachus' favour.

Was the ethnicity a factor? Perhaps Richomerēs is to be identified with the father of a Frankish king, Theodemer. According to Gregory of Tours, Theodemer was murdered with his mother, Ascyla, whose name suggests a Roman origin, at the beginning of the 5th century.³³³ The bishop of Tours had little to say on Theodemer besides this, but, if that familial connection is correctly identified, it would signify that Richomerēs, even though achieving high ranks in the Empire, still retained close links to the frontier zone, which allowed his son to rise to prominence and military leadership, later perceived as Frankish kingship. Perhaps these links singled him out as more 'barbarian', and thereby justified Symmachus' sense of superiority. On the other hand, Bauto seems to have integrated well within the imperial elites, to the point where his daughter Eudoxia became a wife of the emperor Arcadius and an empress.³³⁴

What the two had in common was the year of receiving chastising letters (385) and the fact that at the time they both served in the East, having little influence in the West, where Symmachus' interests lied. The attitude towards them may have also been a function of Symmachus' dissatisfaction with the imperial elite that led him to resign from his position of *praefectus urbi*. Unlike in later case of Stilicho, Symmachus could afford

³³¹ A. Pellizzari 'Le armi e i logoi i generali di Teodosio nelle lettere di Libanio', *Historia: Zeitschrift für alte Geschichte*, 60 (2011), pp. 191-218, particularly pp. 205-206.

³³² Symmachus, *Ep.* III 54; 55; 56; 57; 60; 62; 63; 64; 67; 68.

³³³ Gregory of Tours, *LH* II 9.

³³⁴ For more details on the empress see chapter 1.1.

to chastise both. Richomerus and Bauto were subjected to Symmachus' allusions about their lack of manners and barbarism. Even if worthy of *amicitia* due to their rank, they were not to be treated as equals. In case of Richomerus this changed later, when he first campaigned in Italy against the emperor Magnus Maximus, supported by Symmachus, and stayed there after Theodosius' victory. It is no coincidence that majority of Symmachus' letters to Richomerus are dated to that period. The senator remembered about his *amicus* in the Theodosius' service, when he needed to secure his relationship with the victorious side.

Elite members of the Roman military of barbarian background were not the only ones Symmachus was capable of chastising on the grounds of breaks of etiquette.³³⁵ Other addressees of his letters suffered similar treatment. In a letter to Ambrose he pointed out bishop's break of protocol – sending two men to Symmachus with just a single letter of recommendation rather than two separate ones.³³⁶ An anonymous senator was threatened by Symmachus with the cessation of their friendship with the “subtlety of the Godfather”, as Matthews put it, for considering ending a betrothal between senator's daughter and Herculus, another of Symmachus' friends.³³⁷ Yet another of our author's friends and a recipient of 7 other letters – Eusignius, a proconsul of Africa (383) and praetorian prefect of Italy and Illyria (386-387) – was challenged on claims he made in regards to a land dispute involving Nicomachus Flavianus sometime before 397. Although Symmachus claimed that he kept himself from sending letters which were against the *ius amicitiae*, he nevertheless castigated Eusignius on the shortcomings of his letters and approach to

³³⁵ J. Matthews 'Symmachus and his enemies' in F. Paschoud (ed.), *Colloque genevois sur Symmaque à l'occasion du mille six centième anniversaire du conflit de l'autel de la Victoire: douze exposés suivis de discussions* (Paris, 1986), pp. 163-175.

³³⁶ Symmachus, *Ep.* III 32; Matthews 'Symmachus...' pp. 173-174.

³³⁷ Symmachus, *Ep.* IX 43; Matthews 'Symmachus...' p. 168.

friendship.³³⁸ It seems then that Bauto and Richomeres, were subject to the same tactic of establishing superiority by seizing the position of *arbiter amicitiae* as other Symmachus' *amici*, who had Roman background. This does not exclude a possibility that the 'barbarians' discussed here were treated this way because their origin made them an easy target for chastisement on etiquette. Symmachus used a tool established within the conventions of the epistolary *amicitia* regardless of his addressees' origin, but reasons for employing it in the first place varied depending on the case. It may very well be that a barbarian origin was one of the factors in it, but the more significant matter here is that they were subject to the same conventional treatment as other members of the elite. Even by subtly chastising Bauto and Richomeres, Symmachus was still recognising them as members of the same elite, though not necessary of the same status.

Stressing the lack of manners and inferiority of the new members of the elites ensured a sense of control and power for the old elite, a universal mechanism throughout history. Yet its impact on the political and social standing of the victims is rather doubtful. Symmachus could appear as a superior to the readers of his letters, but without Richomeres' and Bauto's responses, there is little evidence for their concern in the entire matter. If the number of letters sent by Symmachus as requests for contact and attention are any indication, one can imagine that the subtle literary games of a senatorial aristocrat spending time at his landed estates were of negligible interest to military commanders occupied with their state duties, though as the relationships of Richomeres and Ellebichos with Libanios show, military men could make use even of contacts with local municipal elites. It is also clear from the evidence that Symmachus dared to establish himself as a superior *arbiter amicitiae*, when his correspondent was either of an inferior station or too far away to be of an immediate use to him.

³³⁸ Symmachus, *Ep.* IV 71: *itaque litteras contra ius amicitiae ad eum missas repressi, ne amantem tui dolor iustus offenderet*. Matthews 'Symmachus...' p. 168-169.

The correspondence of a member of the Antiochene civic elite illuminates further the dynamic between the representatives of the old elite and the rising stars of the military one. Richomerēs' service in the eastern Mediterranean earned him *amici* among the Greek-speaking elite. The Roman commander became a *φίλος* of Libanios, the head rhetorician of Antioch.³³⁹ Being an addressee of merely four letters out of a staggering number of 1544 (though it should be noted that only 273 of these belong to the period 388-393, in which the letters to Richomerēs were written) does not make him the most prominent in the corpus documenting Libanios' vast network, but it certainly attests him belonging to it.³⁴⁰ Besides letters, the rhetorician mentioned Richomerēs in one of his orations, describing him as a pious man, an adherent of the traditional religion, who invited Libanios to celebrate his consulship.³⁴¹ The themes of Libanios' letters are akin to those in Symmachus' correspondence, with the exception of the Antiochene making no attempts to establish his cultural superiority. The courtesies opening the first letter concentrate on the first meeting that led to the friendship and honours Libanios enjoyed from Richomerēs from then on:

I remember that day when I first met you, and the brief but elevating conversation we enjoyed, and I shall remember it all my life and after. And I remember also the honours [τιμῶν] in your time of service here, when I came to enjoy more prestige [λαμπρότερος] from you on both counts.³⁴² (trans. A. F. Norman)

³³⁹ P. Janiszewski, K. Stebnicka, E. Szabat, *Prosopography of Greek rhetors and sophists of the Roman Empire* (Oxford, 2015), p. 214-216.

³⁴⁰ Libanios, *Ep.* 866, 972, 1007 and 1024. Janiszewski, Stebnicka, Szabat *Prosopography of Greek rhetors*, p. 215.

³⁴¹ Libanios, *Oratio* I 219-220.

³⁴² Libanios, *Ep.* 866.

This and flatteries about Richomeres' victories serve as a pretext to recommend to him envoys sent by the city and a request for a favourable hearing of their pleas.³⁴³ The letter does not mention which matter the Antiochenes brought to Richomeres' attention, but it seems probable that it had to do with his station as the *magister militum per Orientem*. The city was under Richomeres' military authority. It could be speculated that Antiochene *curiales* appealed to the *magister militum* about the billeting and recruitment of soldiers, or on matters concerning veterans. The other possibility is that it was for the sake of seeking his patronage at court in other affairs.³⁴⁴

The themes of the first meeting, Richomeres' military achievements and Antioch, are again repeated in another letter.³⁴⁵ Its main aim seems to be to praise Richomeres and the emperor Theodosius for quelling the usurpation of Maximus in the West, but at the same time it reminded the *magister militum* of the continued loyalty of Antioch, especially after Rome's betrayal. Another letter follows the same set of conventions, mentioning Libanios' and Antioch's fondness for Richomeres and loyalty to the emperor.³⁴⁶ But this time the rhetorician aimed to promote Palladius, a *comes Orientis* and Richomeres' subordinate, for his service in the city. Libanios' letters have a standard set of topics: friendship, news, asking for favours, and bringing up matters of other 'friends'. There is no trace of treating Richomeres any differently from the other addressees of Libanios. He is an influential military man; his origin is of no interest to his correspondent. The only contrast Libanios set between himself and Richomeres is that of their professions:

³⁴³ Libanios, *Ep.* 866.

³⁴⁴ H. Cancik and H. Schneider (eds), *Brill's encyclopaedia of the ancient world, New Pauly* (Brill-Leiden-Boston, 2006), pp. 152-153.

³⁴⁵ Libanios, *Ep.* 972.

³⁴⁶ Libanios, *Ep.* 1024.

Well, rumour used to bring you some items of news about me, that I deliver and compose my orations, that I sit surrounded by pupils who are either persuaded or forced to learn something of my art. But yours is a career of fame, renown, and greatness, of military commands, battles, victories, the suppression of tyranny, and the rescue of free men from slavery, as our emperor and yourself hasten to all deeds of high endeavour, and by wisdom or by main force win the day. Such conduct has received its meed of praise, and does and will do more; and the reward for your successes is this, just as Homer bestowed it on the deeds of those who went with Agamemnon.³⁴⁷

(trans. A. F. Norman)

Yet this contrast serves to glorify Richomeres and his deeds, rather than set a division between him and Libanios. Compared to other commander, but of Roman background, and Libanios' correspondent, Promotus, Richomeres is treated with much more affection.³⁴⁸

The other identity that is brought up in their correspondence and in the abovementioned oration is a religious one, which unifies the two. The Antiochene made several references to their common religion. In his oration it is Richomeres' defining characteristic, when he is introduced: "*magister militum* Richomer, a man devoted both to sanctity and gods [Ῥιχομήρης στρατηγός, ἱεροῖς τε καὶ θεοῖς προσκείμενος ἄνθρωπος]".³⁴⁹ In the first of the letters to the mighty commander, Libanios is offering his powerful ancient prayers [εὐχαὶ τὴν ἀπὸ τοῦ γήρωος ἰσχὺν ἔχουσai] in exchange for Richomeres granting him his friendship.³⁵⁰ In another letter Libanios described

³⁴⁷ Libanios, *Ep.* 972 and 172.

³⁴⁸ Pellizzari, 'Le armi e i logoi' pp. 209-210.

³⁴⁹ Libanios, *Oratio* I 219.

³⁵⁰ Libanios, *Ep.* 866 2.

Richomerēs' friendship as the greatest blessing bestowed by the gods.³⁵¹ In the last of the letters written to his friend, inviting him for a visit to Daphne, Libanios praised the city as one beloved by Apollo and famous for its temples devoted to the gods.³⁵² For Libanios, shared religious identity is another element connecting him to Richomerēs and one of the reasons for their *φιλία*. It is significant that even though Symmachus also shared it with Richomerēs, he did not use it in any capacity in his discourse of *amicitia*. Aiming to create distance and to imply Richomerēs' cultural inferiority, he ignored this similarity.

There were other 'northern barbarians' amongst Libanios' φίλοι. The Antiochian rhetor kept in contact with Victor, a Sarmatian and *magister equitum*, Teutomerēs, a *protector domesticus*, and *magister militum* Ellebichos.³⁵³ Relation with the last one is particularly interesting and have been subject to a thorough study by McLaughlin.³⁵⁴ The correspondence to Victor and Teutomerēs falls to what is considered to be the first and most influential period of Libanios' epistolary activity in 50s and 60s of the fourth century, while that to Ellebichos and Richomerēs is firmly set at the time when Libanios' network and activity waned in the 80s and 90s.³⁵⁵ Yet correspondence with Ellebichos and Richomerēs marks them as the more significant for Libanios, not just because it constitutes a greater share of letters from the second period (over 3%) than the percentage of letters sent to any 'barbarian' military officials, including those of Persian and other eastern origins, in the first period (a meagre 0.5%) or to military officials in general in the entire corpus (less than 2%), but also because of its contents³⁵⁶ Assuming surviving letters reflect Libanios' network and its usage more or less adequately, this rise in the later period

³⁵¹ Libanios, *Ep.* 972 1.

³⁵² Libanios, *Ep.* 1024 3-4.

³⁵³ *PLRE*, vol. 1, for Victor see pp. 957-958; for Teutomerēs possibly to be identified with Tautomedes see pp. 886 and 880; for Ellebichos see pp. 277-278.

³⁵⁴ J. J. McLaughlin 'Bridging the cultural divide: Libanios, Ellebichos, and letters to 'barbarian' generals', *Journal of Late Antiquity* 7.2 (2014), pp. 253-279.

³⁵⁵ S. Bradbury, 'Libanios' networks' in L. van Hoof (ed.), *Libanios: a critical introduction* (Cambridge 2014), pp. 220-240, particularly p. 220.

³⁵⁶ For that last percentage see McLaughlin 'Bridging the cultural divide', p. 260.

might have to do either with personal change in Libanios' attitude towards his 'barbarian' φίλοι or mark rise in prominence and recognition of military officers of 'barbarian' origin in the post-Adrianople empire. However, it is necessary to bear in mind that numbers of letters in question are relatively small and the variation may be coincidental.

Before we delve into the correspondence with Ellebichos, it is worthwhile to consider who he was. The very first time he is attested, Ellebichos is a *comes* and *magister utriusque militiae* in an imperial instruction on how to treat traducers addressed to him in 383.³⁵⁷ He held command in the east, at that time constructing a mansion and baths in Antioch. He was appointed to investigate the riots in Antioch and eventually recalled to Constantinople in 388 and remained a powerful member of the elite.³⁵⁸ He probably owned major property in Constantinople since a district of the city was named seemingly after him – τὰ Ἐλεβίχου.³⁵⁹

But is this all to be gathered about Ellebichos? According to Schönfeld this peculiar name was a Germanic one, Gothic to be precise.³⁶⁰ 'Ἐλλέβιχος' is another variant of the name recorded in Greek as 'Ἀλάβιχος', which can be written in Latin as 'Alavivus'. There is incidentally an individual of that name, who disappears in our sources a couple years before Ellebichos appears as a high ranking military commander in Roman service. That Alavivus was one of two Tervingi leaders in 376. Together with Fritigern, he obtained a permission to cross the Danube into the Roman territory. At the beginning of 377, Alavivus and Fritigern were invited by the Roman commander Lupicinus to dinner. After a fight broke out between Romans and Gothic troops, Lupicinus ordered the murder

³⁵⁷ Codex Theodosianus 9.39.1 as Hellebicus.

³⁵⁸ PLRE vol. 1, pp. 277-278

³⁵⁹ R. Janin, *Constantinople Byzantine: développement urbain et répertoire topographique* (Paris, 1950), pp. 323-324; Libanios, *Oratio* 42.45 criticised Ellebichos for using his wealth to build golden houses. Given context of the speech pertaining to the matter of Thalassios' candidacy for the senate in Constantinople it is likely Libanios meant Ellebichos' properties in that city.

³⁶⁰ Schönfeld, *Wörterbuch*, pp. 11-12.

of their bodyguard and captured both, only to release Fritigern. Alavivus is never mentioned again by Ammianus, who narrated the story.³⁶¹

Is it possible that a Tervingi chief captured in 377 by Romans became *magister militum per Orientem* in 383? A case of an Alamanni king Vadamarius is instructive here. He was taken prisoner by emperor Julian and sent to Spain in 361, effectively losing his position to his son. However, sometime after that he became *dux Phoenices*, held command in Valens' war against the usurper Procopius and continued to serve as Roman military commander at the Persian border, even after his son's death.³⁶² A similar career may have been Alavivus' lot, after a period of imprisonment, in the aftermath of the battle of Adrianople and the peace agreement between the emperor Theodosius and Goths in 382. Like Vadamarius, Alavivus would have lost his position amongst the Tervingi, but remained an asset due to his military skills. Like Vadamarius he would be posted far away, in a region where his old loyalties did not interfere with his new one – the Persian border certainly suited such requirement and it is in this region that Ellebichos operated in.

Regardless whether *magister militum* Ellebichos is to be identified with the Tervingi chief Alavivus, his barbarian origin and his relationship with Libanios is undisputed. Surprisingly for such relations it was initiated by Ellebichos in 385 or so claims Libanios, whose response survives as the second letter in his epistolary corpus.³⁶³ Libanios rejoiced at Ellebichos' offer of friendship, which he had not expected after just a brief meeting with the *magister militum*. As McLaughlin pointed out it is a rare case where we see a Roman military official of 'barbarian' origin not only participating in the

³⁶¹ Ammianus Marcellinus, XXXI 4 1 and 8; XXXI 5 5-7; P. Heather, *Goths and Romans, 332-489*, Oxford 1991, pp. 132-133 and 137; A. D. Lee "Abduction and Assassination: The Clandestine Face of Roman Diplomacy in Late Antiquity" *The International History Review* 31/1 (2009), pp. 1-23, particularly p. 8.

³⁶² *PLRE* vol. 1, pp. 928-929 and see chapter 2.3.

³⁶³ Libanios, *Ep.* 2.

forms of Graeco-Roman high culture but also initiating a relationship within its convention.³⁶⁴ Ellebichos was not the first ‘barbarian’ military man to seek out and actively engage in epistolary form of friendship with Libanios. Teutomeres wrote to Libanios asking for letters from him.³⁶⁵ Yet unlike in this case where only one letter written in 363/364 survived to attest the friendship, the *φιλία* of Libanios and Ellebichos continued for years with at least four other letters, an oration dedicated to Ellebichos in thanks for what Libanios presented as lenient treatment of Antioch and its curial council during the investigation into the riot of 387, as well as a panegyric that did not survive.³⁶⁶

Contents of remaining letters show no extraordinary elements of this relationship. In one of the three letters sent in 388 Libanios asked Ellebichos to assist one of his former students, Eusebios, in his bid for a membership in the Constantinopolitan senate.³⁶⁷ In another Libanios congratulated Ellebichos on the success and honours he received at the imperial court and recommended to him envoys from Antioch referring to them in an emotional manner – as Libanios’ own children [*τῶν πρέσβεων παίδων ὄντων ἐμῶν*].³⁶⁸ Usage of such emotional phrases presupposes Libanios’ conviction that the relationship with Ellebichos is intimate enough for them to work. Yet another letter attests shared networks of Ellebichos and Libanios by mentioning a military man stationed in Thrace, Annanios, who carried letters from Ellebichos and Saturninus on his visit to Antioch, as well as Ellebichos’ projects in the city, such as baths.³⁶⁹

The final letter seems to mark the end to the cordial relationship between Ellebichos and Libanios, as the latter held against the former his lack of intervention in

³⁶⁴ McLaughlin, ‘Bridging the cultural divide’, pp. 254, 256 and 266.

³⁶⁵ Libanios, *Ep.* 1117.

³⁶⁶ Libanios, *Ep.* 868, 884, 898, 925 and *Oratio* 22; Panegyric is mentioned in *Oratio* 1.232; For insight into the riot and its representation in literary sources see D. R. French ‘Rhetoric and the rebellion of A.D. 387 in Antioch’ *Historia Zeitschrift für Alte Geschichte* 47/4 (1998), pp. 468-484.

³⁶⁷ Libanios, *Ep.* 884.

³⁶⁸ Libanios, *Ep.* 868.

³⁶⁹ Libanios, *Ep.* 898 to Ellebichos and 899 to Saturninus.

the matter of accepting Libanios' acquaintance, Thalassios, to the Senate of Constantinople. In the letter Libanios accused Ellebichos of staying silent when others opposed Thalassios' bid.³⁷⁰ What the rhetorician had not formulated in the letter, he expressed in an oration for Thalassios to emperor Theodosius. He did not mention Ellebichos by name, but he seems to be the only individual involved in the matter, who could be described as 'Gaison's son'.³⁷¹ By affiliating Ellebichos with a Roman soldier of barbarian origin, who killed emperor Constans, Libanios made Ellebichos' ethnic background salient, implying that like his 'father' he is a threat to the emperor. McLaughlin pointed it out as symptomatic that this ethnic prejudice did not make into letters addressed by Libanios to Ellebichos.³⁷² Outwardly attacking a friend was not permitted by conventions of epistolary *φιλία*, even in a critical letter. But orations had no such limits and seemingly Libanios was ready to smear his former friend within that set of conventions for the sake of Thalassios. Libanios' and Ellebichos' relationship demonstrates constraints of studying the saliency of ethnicity within the discourse of *amicitia* and *φιλία*. Yet, as the next instance shows, there were ways in which ethnic identity could be brought up within this discourse.

Such a case of *φιλία* between a Roman and a 'barbarian' can be found in the letters of Gregory of Nazianzus. The bishop of Constantinople (380-381) wrote two letters to Modares, a *magister militum* and a member of a Gothic royal family, who entered Roman service and quickly proved his worth to the emperor Theodosius, by inflicting a crushing defeat on a Gothic warband in Thrace.³⁷³ Gregory forged links of *φιλία* with Modares and employed them to commend a military man Theodor to the commander:

³⁷⁰ Libanios, *Ep.* 925: οὐ συνεπέθου μὲν οὖν, οὐκ ἐβόησας δέ, τῇ σιγῇ δὲ ἡδίκηεις. εἰ γάρ, ὡς ἐπίστασαι καλῶς, ἐμέ τε καὶ Θαλάσσιον ἐβόησας, ἀπείχοντ' ἂν ἡμῶν οἱ νῦν βάλλοντες· νῦν δὲ οὐδὲν ἦν τὸ κωλύον.

³⁷¹ Libanios, *Oratio* 42.45; McLaughlin, 'Bridging the cultural divide', pp. 274

³⁷² McLaughlin, 'Bridging the cultural divide', pp. 274-275.

³⁷³ Zosimos, IV 25.2.

For long have I yearned to speak with your dignity [σου τὴν τιμιότητα], and thanks be given to God for the opportunity to do it. Thinking on how to repay the one entrusted with the letter for you, I found it best to commend him to your authority. Honour him pleasantly partly for my sake, he is mine and yours, my householder, your soldier, (I speak now about Theodor who makes his way from me to you), let him feel the reverence [τῆς τιμῆς], that you always honoured me with and still honour me now.³⁷⁴

But as a *magister militum* operating in the region neighbouring the capital, Modares' value as a friend went beyond facilitating the careers of Gregory's protégés. He also had significant influence over non-military matters in Constantinople, and it is in this capacity that Gregory encouraged Modares to act:

To us at least you are a kinsman [συγγενῆς] and a relative [οἰκεῖος] and I could say you are everything. For piety joined us together and virtue of glory, we saw well you are showing clearly that Hellenism and barbarism is a difference of bodies, not souls [ὅτι τὸ ἐλληνικὸν καὶ τὸ βάρβαρον σωμαίων, οὐ ψυχῶν ἐστὶ διαφορά], a separation of places, but not customs and choices [καὶ τόπων διάστασις, ἀλλ' οὐ τρόπων οὐδὲ προαιρέσεων]. May there be many among our race [γένος] to imitate your conduct, and everything would go splendidly for us indeed, in both public and private matters. I call upon you, as you put down a war abroad by your right hand and wit, nobly making a stand for us; in this way resolve our matter, as much as is up to you; exert yourself so that the now assembled bishops achieve a peaceful solution. For indeed coming together often, not even finding the end of the evil, but always

³⁷⁴ Gregory of Nazianzus, *Ep.* 137.

adding to disorders [more] disorders is a greater dishonour, and you know it yourself.³⁷⁵

The Gothic *magister militum* was to intervene and try to reconcile the warring bishops at the council convened in 382 in Constantinople by the emperor Theodosius as a continuation of his efforts to forge a new theological consensus in the trinitarian controversy. By alluding to Modares' military experience in ending conflicts as the only way that could bring peace between bishops, Gregory stressed the dramatic character of the council. However, what is of interest to the topic of this chapter, is that in his letter to the *magister militum* we find the discourse of *φιλία* and the relevance of Modares' ethnicity. The praises for his virtues are made even more meaningful, precisely because of his 'barbarian' ethnicity. Gregory's and Modares' souls are unified thanks to the piety and virtue of Modares, even if there is an innate difference between a barbarian and a Hellene. The very usage of an opposition of 'barbarian' – 'Hellene', synonymous with the dichotomy between uncivilised and civilised, confirms the relevance of Modares' non-Roman ethnic identity, even if it is expressed in affirmative terms towards the *magister militum* himself. Modares is a powerful commander in the Roman military and an influential friend to Gregory, but he remains a 'barbarian' and outsider on some level. It is a model of limited integration in which an individual achieves a high position in the hierarchy, participates in the social networks and cultural activities expressing them, but nevertheless remains labelled as an outsider. For Gregory it does not seem to be a matter of establishing his superiority, as in the case of Symmachus, but simply a rhetorical point that he believed is going to convince his addressee, who would be made to feel appreciated as "one of the good barbarians".

³⁷⁵ Gregory of Nazianzus, *Ep.* 136.

Gregory's rhetorical point of presenting Modares as "one of the good barbarians" is even more visible when set against two other cases of military commanders of barbarian background, who were addressees of the bishop's letters: Victor and Ellebichos. The relations between Gregory and the former official seem to particularly mirror those with Modares. Victor is asked to intervene in the same church council as Modares and to inspire others to do so.³⁷⁶ It is part of Gregory's concentrated effort, as another military commander, Saturninus, also receives a letter on the matter.³⁷⁷ Like Modares, Victor is asked to favour an individual recommended by Gregory – Hyperechios.³⁷⁸ Yet there is no indication of a difference or an ethnic boundary between the two in either of letters, even if it was to symbolically make their relation stronger. On the contrary, the letter opens with conventional excuses for not writing letters often enough and a request for letters from the recipient.³⁷⁹ The second letter containing the recommendation praises the victories of Victor, both in battle and in kindness, but besides the reference to Victor's military background there is nothing to set a boundary between them.³⁸⁰

Gregory's letter from 383 to Ellebichos, a correspondent of the abovementioned Libanios, deals in similar matters. In a letter addressed to then *magister militum per Orientem*, Gregory asked for a favour.³⁸¹ After the conventional opening in which Gregory mourns the loss which he inferred due to his illness – being unable to meet his friend in person – the bishop cleverly played on another convention characteristic of

³⁷⁶ Gregory of Nazianzus, *Ep.* 133: Ἐπειδὴ δὲ πάλιν σύνοδος, ἀγὼν πάλιν, καὶ τοῦτο ἐν μέσοις ἐχθροῖς πάντα τηροῦσιν ἐπιμελῶς τὰ ἡμέτερα, δὸς χεῖρα τῇ κοινῇ καταστάσει, ὡς μέρος ὢν τῆς Ἐκκλησίας οὐ τὸ φαυλότατον, καὶ μὴ περιύδης πάντα καταναλωθέντα τῷ ἐμπρησμῷ τῷ νῦν περιέχοντι τὴν Ἐκκλησίαν.

³⁷⁷ Gregory of Nazianzus, *Ep.* 132.

³⁷⁸ Gregory of Nazianzus, *Ep.* 134.

³⁷⁹ Gregory of Nazianzus, *Ep.* 133: Οὐχ ὅτι νῦν γράφομεν, τολμηροί, ἀλλ' ὅτι μὴ τάχιον, ὀκνηροί, μᾶλλον δὲ οὐδὲ τοῦτο· οὐ γὰρ εὐποροῦμεν δι' ὧν ἐπιστελοῦμεν, καίτοι γε πῶς οἶε τοῦτο ποθοῦντες, ἐν ἀγρῷ πόρρω που τῆς μονῆς διατρίβοντες κάκεῖ τοῦ σώματος ἡμῶν ἐπιμελούμενοι. (2) Νῦν δέ, ἡνίκα καιρὸς, καὶ προσφθεγγόμεθά σε καὶ ἀξιοῦμεν ἥν παροῦσιν ἡμῖν τιμὴν ἐχαρίζου, ταύτην καὶ ἀποῦσι χαρίζεσθαι, καὶ μὴ διὰ γραμμάτων ὀκνεῖν παραμυθεῖσθαι ἡμᾶς σφόδρα τῷ χωρισμῷ κάμνοντας.

³⁸⁰ Gregory of Nazianzus, *Ep.* 134: Νικῶν γὰρ τοῖς ὅπλοις τοὺς πολεμίους, ἕως ἐξῆν, καὶ νῦν πάντα νικᾷς χρηστότητι.

³⁸¹ Gregory of Nazianzus, *Ep.* 225.

discourse of *amicitia* and *φιλία*. The author mentioned how a gift accompanying the letter would be in place and in fact he sends one – the lector Mamant. As it happens this “gift’s” father was a soldier and because of that Mamant is liable for military service.³⁸² The purpose of the letter is clearly stated – Ellebichos should grant Mamant an exemption from military service, allowim to continue his service to God, which would certainly gain *magister militum* divine favour in war matters.³⁸³

The playful reference to the gift-giving – a standard convention of epistolography and *φιλία* – inferred familiarity of it by Ellebichos. Gregory recognised military commander not just as a member of the same elite, but one that is learned enough to appreciate a creative use of the convention. Judging by the relationship between Libanios and Ellebichos, discussed above, it was not an unfounded presumption. Modares’ case seems to be a clear exception, an experiment at crossing the boundaries of convention to stress the boundary of ethnicity.

The peculiarity of Gregory’s letter to Modares is even more visible when compared to letters of Gregory’s friend, Basil of Caesarea, a bishop, who shared his education as well as the social position of a member of a local elite. Just like Gregory he engaged in *φιλία* with Roman commanders of barbarian background. Three letters to two such addressees are preserved. One of these addressees, Victor, was also a recipient of letters from Gregory. The two letters he received from Basil in 373 bear little information besides courtesies.³⁸⁴ Victor was thanked for his involvement in the church matters and

³⁸² For this legal requirement of military service see H. Elton, *Warfare in Roman Europe*, pp. 128-129.

³⁸³ Gregory of Nazianzus, *Ep.* 225: Ἐπεὶ δὲ καὶ δωροφορεῖν ἔδει τι, τοῦτο προσφέρομεν, Μάμαντα τὸν ἀναγνώστην, ὄντα μὲν ἀπὸ στρατιώτου πατρός, καθιερωθέντα δὲ τῷ Θεῷ διὰ τὸν τρόπον. Ἄφες τῷ Θεῷ καὶ ἡμῖν, ἀλλὰ μὴ συναριθμήσης τοῖς πλάνησι, καὶ δὸς ἔγγραφον τὴν ἐλευθερίαν ἵνα μηδὲ ὑπ’ ἄλλων ἐπηρεάζεται. Δώσεις γὰρ σεαυτῷ δεξιὰς τὰς τοῦ πολέμου καὶ τῆς στρατηγίας ἐλπίδας.

³⁸⁴ Basil of Caesarea, *Ep.* 152 and 153.

anticipation of Basil's request in this regard.³⁸⁵ There is hardly any indication of a differing treatment based on Victor's Sarmatian ethnicity.

Similarly, the letter sent to Arinthaëus, a *magister peditum* 366-378 and consul of 372, whose name is Gothic, in 374 bears no evidence of any ethnic bias.³⁸⁶ Arinthaëus was asked by Basil to intervene on behalf of an unnamed letter holder accused of an unspecified charge.³⁸⁷ Only this letter to Arinthaëus survives, but judging by the fact that Basil was also in contact with this Roman commander's wife after his death in 378, we may infer that their relationship continued throughout these years. In a letter of consolation to Arinthaëus' wife Basil described him as an excellent man whose strength of body rivalled the virtue of his soul.³⁸⁸ The praise of Arinthaëus' military prowess is one of the themes of the letter, but there is no mention of his non-Roman ancestry.

Do patterns of *amicitia* between members of local elites and Roman commanders of barbarian background change in the 5th century with the disappearance of the hierarchies of power of the Roman Empire that made these relationships with the latter so valuable to the former? In the letters of Sidonius Apollinaris, bishop of Clermont, we can see the world of the local elites in Roman Gaul, caught between the weakening imperial power and increasingly aggressive and assertive warlords, who until recently had been established Roman commanders of both Roman and non-Roman origin. It is within such local networks that another 'barbarian' is found. In a letter from 477, Sidonius

³⁸⁵ Basil of Caesarea, *Ep.* 152: ὑπὲρ δὲ τῆς Ἐκκλησίας προέλαβες ἡμῶν τὰς παρακλήσεις, πάντα ποιήσας ὅσα ἂν ἡμεῖς ἐπεζητήσαμεν.

³⁸⁶ Basil of Caesarea, *Ep.* 179; For Arinthaëus' name see Schönfeld, *Wörterbuch*, p. 26; For his career see *PLRE* vol. 1, pp. 102-103.

³⁸⁷ Basil of Caesarea, *Ep.* 179: διὸ θαρρύντως πρεσβεύομεν ὑπὲρ ἀνδρὸς λαμπροῦ μὲν ἄνωθεν καὶ ἐκ προγόνων, πλείονος δὲ δι' ἐαυτὸν τιμῆς καὶ αἰδοῦς ἀξίου διὰ τὴν ἐνυπάρχουσαν αὐτῷ τῶν τρόπων ἡμερότητα· ὥστε σε παρακληθέντα ὑφ' ἡμῶν παραστήναι αὐτῷ ἀγωνιζομένῳ δίκην, τῆς μὲν ἀληθείας ἔνεκεν εὐκαταφρόνητον, ἐναγώνιον δὲ ἄλλως διὰ τὸ τῆς συκοφαντίας βαρὺ.

³⁸⁸ Basil of Caesarea, *Ep.* 269: Καλὸς μὲν οὖν καὶ μέγας ὁ θαυμαστὸς ἐκεῖνος, καὶ ἐφάμιλλος τῇ ρώμῃ τοῦ σώματος τὴν τῆς ψυχῆς ἀρετήν;

replied to a request for exegetic advice that he politely refused to give, counselling his addressee to seek out bishops closer to his seat of Trier:

[...] in the third place comes your urbanity [*urbanitas*] which leads you to make a most amusing profession of clumsiness when as a matter of fact you have drunk deep from the spring of Roman eloquence and, dwelling by the Moselle, you speak the true Latin of the Tiber: you are intimate with the barbarians but are innocent of barbarisms [*sic barbarorum familiaris, quod tamen nescius barbarismorum*], and are equal in tongue, as also in strength of arm, to the leaders of old, I mean those who were wont to handle the pen no less than the sword. Thus, the splendour of the Roman speech, if it still exists anywhere, has survived in you, though it has long been wiped out from the Belgian and Rhenic lands: with you and your eloquence surviving, even though Roman law has ceased at our border, the Roman speech does not falter. For this reason, as I reciprocate your greeting, I rejoice greatly that at any rate in your illustrious breast there have remained traces of our vanishing culture. If you extend these by constant reading you will discover for yourself as each day passes that the educated are no less superior to the unlettered than men are to beasts.³⁸⁹ (trans. W. B. Anderson)

At the same time, the bishop of Clermont praised the qualities shown by the letter: esteem, modesty and city manners. Especially the last of the mentioned traits attracts attention, as it is not just any city that the addressee lives according to the manner of. It is the city – Rome. Although acquainted with barbarians, he is not tainted by their ways, retaining qualities of an ideal Roman military man and cultural prowess, therefore

³⁸⁹ Sidonius Apollinaris, *Ep.* IV 17.

embodying all that remains of the glory of Rome in the regions no longer under the imperial rule. This last beacon of *romanitas* in the sea of barbarism is Arbogastes, *comes* of Trier and the descendant of a *magister peditum* of the same name, a Frank who died fighting in a civil war against the emperor Theodosius, at the end of the 4th century.³⁹⁰

The younger Arbogastes seemingly came to control the city of Trier and the neighbouring area as a *comes*, a title that may have been bestowed by a Roman authority or simply taken up by himself.³⁹¹ He is possibly to be identified as a later bishop of Chartres, of the same name, attested during the 80s of the 5th century.³⁹² Whether that is the case or not, as *comes* of Trier, Arbogastes forged links of *amicitia*, not only with Sidonius, but also with Auspicius, the bishop of Toul. The bishop of Clermont suggested to Arbogastes his colleague from Toul as the better choice for exegetical advice.³⁹³

Perhaps Toul was within the territory controlled by Arbogastes, which would make him a quite powerful warlord at the time, ruling a significant portion of a territory along the Moselle. (Toul is 130 km away from Trier and, if this was the range of Arbogastes' power, it would bring into his domain other cities along the river such as Metz). Another possibility is that the *comes*' zone of authority did not exceed the city itself.³⁹⁴ Whether that was the case or not, the bishop of Toul still considered it beneficial to compose a letter in a very panegyric tone. In a letter dated to 471 that survived as part of the collection known as the *Epistolae Austrasicae*, Auspicius praised *comes* of Trier, assuring him that his merits justify a higher rank, that of a *vir clarissimus*:³⁹⁵

³⁹⁰ PLRE I, pp. 95-95.

³⁹¹ MacGeorge, *Late Roman warlords*, p. 75.

³⁹² Ibidem; L. Duchesne, *Fastes épiscopaux de l'ancienne Gaule: L'Aquitaine et les Lyonnaises* (Paris, 1899), vol. 2, pp. 419 and 421. Although it is equally possible that it is yet another Arbogastes, like the bishop of Strasbourg, see below.

³⁹³ Sidonius Apollinaris, *Ep.* IV 17.

³⁹⁴ D. Zoloteńki, *Galia u schyłku panowania rzymskiego: Administracja cywilna i wojskowa oraz jej reprezentanci w latach 455-486* (Kraków, 2011), pp. 284-289 considers it a possible case of a *comitiva civitatis*, a temporary provision for small isolated territories that remained to some extent under Roman authority.

³⁹⁵ Zoloteńki, *Galia u schyłku panowania rzymskiego*, p. 286.

In fact, you have customarily seemed to me to be greater than everyone, with the result that your illustrious intellect surpasses the degree of your authority: This title thus is owed to you by us with a greater joy; not yet granted in name, it has been conferred already through your merits.³⁹⁶

(trans. R. Mathisen)

The praise of Arbogastes simultaneously contains advice on how to rule, to avoid cupidity and avarice, honour his bishop Iamblychus and be a good judge. His piety is contrasted with that of his ‘pagan’ progenitor, respected for his military prowess, but nevertheless an unbeliever:

You must be congratulated, O city of Trier, you who are ruled by such a man, the equal of the ancients. He has descended, I do believe, from a great family of your people [*De magno, credo, semine Descendit sui nominis*:]. Undoubtedly his is that virtue which one reads was that of Arbogastes. His triumphs likewise are inscribed in the annals, just as also are written those of him whom I mentioned above. [*Certe virtutis eius est, ut Arbogastes legitur. Scribantur in annalibus huius triumpho pariter, sicut et eius scripti sunt, quem supra memoravimus.*] But let me add this distinction to the one who is truly greater, because he, dedicated to religion, invokes the name of Christ. That ancestor of his, it is true, was energetic in warfare, but he died an unbeliever, and in death he lost everything [*Fuit in armis alacer ille antiquus, verum est, sed infidelis moritur et morte cuncta perdidit*]. This man of ours, however, is

³⁹⁶ *Epistula Auspici episcopi ecclesiae tullensis ad Arbogastem comitem treverorum* 4-5.

vigorous, bellicose, acclaimed, and, what is greater than all of these, a devotee of the divine name.³⁹⁷ (trans. R. Mathisen)

For Ralph Mathisen, this passage is enough to consider Sidonius' and Auspicius' letters to be illustrating a case of a cultured barbarian, who, although accepted in the elite literary circle, was not allowed to forget his barbarian background.³⁹⁸ However, there is nothing to suggest that, either in Sidonius' or Auspicius' letter. Nor is there any implication that Arbogastes could be perceived as a 'romanised Frank' as some claim.³⁹⁹ In fact, it is the religious identity of his ancestor, 'paganism', that becomes the point of focus, not the ethnic one. We would not be aware of any 'barbarian' descent if not for the names, as it is simply not stated in the texts.

Similarly, it is impossible to tell if the younger Arbogastes' name is a homage to his famous ancestor or a case of a familial practice functioning as an expression of a differing identity. The only other name of a member of the family we know of is that of Arbogastes' father: Arigius⁴⁰⁰, which does not have anything particularly Germanic or non-Roman about it. Furthermore, according to Auspicius, the family of Arbogastes stemmed from Trier, clearly belonging to the local elite, probably by this time of both military men and landowners. This regional identity is the only one mentioned next to the religious one. There is possibly yet another relative of *comes* of Trier, a bishop of Strasbourg from the 4th or 5th century of the same name.⁴⁰¹ If he indeed belonged to the same family, his existence would provide more proof of their local connections and

³⁹⁷ *Epistula Auspici episcopi* 13-18.

³⁹⁸ R. Mathisen, *People, personal expression, and social relations in late antiquity* (Ann Arbor, 2003) vol. 1, pp. 34-38.

³⁹⁹ Zoloteńki, *Galia u schyłku panowania rzymskiego*, p. 219.

⁴⁰⁰ *Epistula Auspici episcopi ecclesiae tullensis ad Arbogastem comitem treverorum* 9.

⁴⁰¹ For the episcopal *fasti* mentioning Arbogastes as bishop of Strasbourg see L. Duchesne, *Fastes épiscopaux de L'ancienne Gaule : Les provinces du Nord et de l'Est*, vol. 3, (1915), p. 166. Besides the list of bishops, there is another attestation of bishop Arbogastes – bricks found in Strasbourg with the stamp: ARBOASTIS EPS FICET (*Arboastis episcopus fecit*) see Ibidem, p. 171; MacGeorge, *Late Roman warlords*, p. 75.

importance in eastern Gaul, placing them firmly amongst the Gallic elite. There can be little doubt that the younger Arbogastes was a Roman to his contemporaries, at a time when effective imperial rule in Gaul had all but disappeared. He was not just any Roman, in fact, but a member of the elite, participating in its literary culture.

To conclude, the epistolography of the time and the proceedings of *amicitia* and *φιλία* reveal to us a diverse set of attitudes towards including ‘barbarians’ within the elite. There is a limited and conditional acceptance of Richomeres and Bauto by Symmachus, and somehow questionable of Modares by Gregory. But at the same time Gregory and his friend Basil recognised other φίλοι of barbarian backgrounds such as Victor, Arinthaëus or Ellebichos, without any indications of a different treatment. Richomeres was recognised by Libanios as his co-believer and pillar of the Roman order. A similar full recognition as members of the Roman elite was applied towards Stilicho by Symmachus, and Arbogastes by Sidonius and Auspicius.

The ethnicity of the addressee could be present and relevant within the discourse, but functioned more as a tool of control of the social advancement of the ‘immigrants’. It served as an instrument of establishing a boundary and sustaining the balance of power between the old and the new members of the elite, the same way as other identities, such as religious ones, or social background, would be used to keep in check *homines novi* whose *romanitas* could not be questioned, but whose ancestors did not belong to imperial and civic elites. Using ethnic identity in such capacity had seemingly little applicability to Stilicho and Arbogastes, who already belonged to the ‘self’/‘our’ rather than the ‘other’ category in the perception of their networks of *amici* within these elites. However, the boundary between being perceived, or to be more precise, presented as ‘self’/‘our’ rather than ‘other’ was a flexible one. It is particularly visible in the case of Richomeres, who could be at the same time a regular member of Libanios’ network of friends, a co-believer,

who shared interest in the tradition and monuments of the old religion, and a target of Symmachus' attempts at establishing cultural superiority, even if still treated according to the tenets of *amicitia*. With the lack of 'barbarian' responses, or the reception of these attitudes amongst the rest of the elite, it can only be speculated what kind of an impact such instrumentalisation of ethnic identity had on the individuals concerned and on their social position. One can imagine it was of a limited influence.

The primary source material allows us to discern only situational instances of the exclusion of 'barbarian' *amici*. However, even the cases we can observe are not attempts at full exclusion, the very language of *amicitia* and *φιλία* did not allow for it. The very purpose of these letters is to sustain relationships of members of the same elite group and exchange favours and customary gifts. Symmachus could imply his correspondents lacked manners and were therefore inferior, but he did it within forms of cultural exchange characteristic for the upper strata of the Roman society, diminishing them, but still acknowledging them as members of the same group. Openly considering an addressee as an inferior due to their ethnic background did not suit the epistolary discourse of friendship. Ethnic identity could be either brought up as an experiment in making the boundary salient to add exceptionality to the friendship, as a relationship so powerful that it transgressed ethnic differences, in case of Gregory or Modares, or outside of letters as a final nail to the coffin of friendship as in case of Libanios' speech accusing Ellebichos of treacherous nature due to his ethnic background. Any indications of attempts at a more lasting and complete exclusion in letters are not visible, because these forms served the very opposite purpose. In the context of *amicitia* a feigned exclusion by indicating someone's imperfect *romanitas* was just an element of the subtle game of establishing hierarchies within the group, at least in its discourse. This does not mean

exclusion did not take place by other means, as is apparent in other chapters, merely that within forms of the Roman friendship it was limited to be a tool rather than aim.

Chapter 2.3 Emperors and kings: diplomatic relations between the Empire and sub-Roman kingdoms

Diplomatic* relations between Rome and the northern barbarians were always characterised by a certain dualism. On the one hand, the Roman Empire was dealing with external powers, be they tribal confederacies and barbarian kings or warlords in charge of their warbands, on the other, in the official ideology of the late Empire, the emperor was presented as the ruler of the whole *oikumene*, holding authority over other peoples, not just the Romans. The Roman claims to universalism evolved together with the changes in terminology applied. In Late Antiquity authors were more prone to differentiate between the Roman and other parts of the world, with the Roman one being the most prominent. However, the claim to Roman supremacy over the whole *oikumene* did not disappear.⁴⁰² Such ideological framing proved to be easily transferable to the political reality of the late 5th century. In practical terms, by the end of the century, barbarian kings were already independent rulers, not just with their own military force, but also with courts, administrative apparatus, revenues, local networks and supervision over religious authorities. However, on an ideological level, they were still considered by the Roman authorities as subjects of the emperor and often presented themselves as such in order to legitimize their power.⁴⁰³ These developments forced gradual change in the approach. The earlier Empire hardly developed any continuous global strategy, having

* A word of explanation is in place as to the usage of the term ‘diplomacy’ and its derivatives such as ‘diplomatic’ etc. I am not using it in any way to signify the existence of a system of foreign relations with established protocol, legal terms and a highly-professionalised corps of diplomats, as developed from the Vienna Congress until today, but rather as a useful umbrella term for negotiation practices and aims between separate political entities and communities.

⁴⁰² J. Vogt, *Orbis romanus zur Terminologie des römischen Imperialismus*, (Tübingen 1929), pp. 25-28.

⁴⁰³ Prostko-Prostyński, *Utraeque res publicae*, p. 128 in his comparison of relationship between Theodoric the Amal and the emperor Anastasius and that of eastern satellite states, such as Lazica, and imperial court at Constantinople, noted that no ruler in the sub-Roman West received royal insignia from Constantinople. He argued that posed an ideologocial and legal problem, because the emperor would in this way sanction their right to rule Romans rather than ‘administer’ them. A consideration that was not applicable for places such as Lazica. Regardless of whether this constitutional explanation is correct or not, it is true that there are no *reges dati* among the sub-Roman kings.

comfortable supremacy over their partners and rivals, and operated according to the view of individual emperors and their entourage.⁴⁰⁴ However, the later Empire, its strength greatly diminished, faced threats such as the Hunnic Empire of Attila, the Vandal kingdom in Africa under the more than capable Gaiseric or the expansionist Visigoths under Euric. Already in the 4th century its influence over the neighbouring parts of *Barbaricum*, which effectively became part of the Roman world, contributed to the emergence political units that were better organised, more populated and stronger than in previous centuries, but still ephemeral.⁴⁰⁵ The Empire was, therefore, forced to adapt a strategy based more on diplomatic actions rather than military ones.⁴⁰⁶

Diplomatic patterns employed in the relations between the Ravennate and Constantinopolitan courts, and the emerging sub-Roman kingdoms in the West had two main sources. First there were traditions of dealing with the northern barbarians' leaders of the 4th century. Tacitus' description of the Roman involvement in supporting the Quadi and Marcomani is perhaps the best illustration of Rome's relations with the favoured political units in the *Barbaricum*:

Down to our own day the Marcomani and Quadi have had kings from their own tribe, the noble line of Maroboduus and Tudrus; now they also allow foreigners. But the kings derive their power and influence from the authority of Rome: they are occasionally aided by our armies, more often by our money, yet their strength is none the less.⁴⁰⁷ (trans. J. B. Rives)

⁴⁰⁴ F. Millar, 'Emperors, frontiers and foreign relations, 31 B.C. to A.D. 378' *Britannia* 13 (1982), pp. 1-23.

⁴⁰⁵ P. Heather 'The barbarian in late antiquity, image, reality, and transformation' in: R. Miles (ed.) *Constructing identities in late antiquity*, (London-New York 2002), pp. 234-258, particularly pp. 238-240.

⁴⁰⁶ E. N. Luttwak, *The grand strategy of the Byzantine Empire*, (Cambridge-Massachusetts-London 2009), p. 55.

⁴⁰⁷ Tacitus, *Germania*, 42.2.

The Roman Empire had a broad array of tools to employ in shaping its relations with the *Barbaricum* and some of the tribes, such as the Marcomani and the Quadi, who depended on Roman military and financial support and the legitimacy that Roman authority could grant. The Empire intervened in the choice of rulers or the political life of the tribes by controlling their assemblies.⁴⁰⁸ It exploited the political system of the *Barbaricum*, which was based on the prestige of the ruler, and influenced the power balance in the frontier regions with gifts and subsidies to be distributed among his followers, and ranks to elevate him.

The emperor himself could exact diplomatic pressure by his very position as the highest authority known to the inhabitants of the *Barbaricum*, with a certain degree of divine undertones.⁴⁰⁹ Just the image of the emperor could invoke a sense of authority. Roman medallions and coins found in the *Barbaricum*, issued during the reign of the Constantinian and early Valentinian emperors, a period of increased diplomatic exchange between the emperors and barbarians, show the importance of the imperial image in local societies. They are often reworked by local smiths, so they could be additionally adorned and worn as jewellery, and in these cases the imperial image is always on the displayed side. There are also cases of local imitations, which added ideological messages of their own, by modifying or adding a new inscription to the original design.⁴¹⁰

⁴⁰⁸ L. F. Pitts 'Relations between Rome and the German 'kings' on the Middle Danube in the first to fourth centuries A.D.' *The journal of Roman studies*, 79 (1989), pp. 45-58.

⁴⁰⁹ The continuing Roman projection of the emperor as divine to the barbarians, according to the imperial ideology of power even in its Christian context, can be found in Priskos, Fr. 11.2. In the relation of his embassy to the Huns, Priskos speculated that the reason behind Attila not granting them an audience may have been their discussion with his subjects at an earlier feast, during which Vigillas, one of the envoys, called the emperor a god and Attila just a man. Ὁ Βιγίλας ἔφη ὡς οὐκ εἶη θεὸν καὶ ἄνθρωπον δίκαια συνκρίνειν, ἄνθρωπον μὲν τὸν Ἀττίλαν, θεὸν δὲ τὸν Θεοδόσιον λέγων. [...] ἔλεγον, μήποτε τινες τῶν βαρβάρων τῶν ἐν Σερδικῇ ἐστιαθέντων σὺν ἡμῖν δυσμενῇ αὐτῷ τὸν Ἀττίλαν παρεσκεύασαν ἀπαγγεῖλαντες, ὡς θεὸν μὲν τὸν Ῥωμαίων ἐκάλει βασιλέα, ἄνθρωπον δὲ τὸν Ἀττίλαν.

⁴¹⁰ A. Bursche, 'Roman gold medallions as power symbols of the Germanic élite' in: B. Magnus, *Roman gold and the development of the early Germanic kingdoms: aspects of technical, socio-political, socio-economic, artistic and intellectual development, A.D. 1-550 – Symposium in Stockholm 14-16 November 1997*, (Stockholm 2001), pp. 83-101; amongst many cases mentioned, (p. 89) there is an imitation of a *multiplum* of Valens and Valentinian I from the Zagórzyn hoard with an inscription "REGIS ROMANORUM", which does not make sense in the Roman ideological context, as the emperor would

The pattern of the distribution of original medallions shows a Roman practice of sending them to barbarian allies. The spread of these medallions and their contexts suggest they were emblems of the rulers' and elites' power, the charisma that the imperial image was a symbol or a source of.⁴¹¹ They were cherished as the inheritance of familial legacy bestowed originally by the emperor, but also as objects bearing his power that needed to be properly controlled with magical action.⁴¹² Distribution of these objects surely served Roman aims as a way to strengthen certain rulers over others, to the point that those who did not have access to original medallions found possession of such symbols of power a necessity that justified the manufacture of imitations.

The image of *multiplum* from Zagórzyn originally presented here cannot be made freely available via ORA because of copyright reasons. The image was sourced at A. Bursche, *Złote medaliony rzymskie w Barbaricum: Symbolika prestiżu i władzy społeczeństw barbarzyńskich u schyłku starożytności*, Warszawa 1998 fig. 33 II.

Fig. 2 multiplum from Zagórzyn (from A. Bursche, Złote medaliony rzymskie w Barbaricum: Symbolika prestiżu i władzy społeczeństw barbarzyńskich u schyłku starożytności, Warszawa 1998 fig. 33 II)

In case the pressure of imperial prestige did not work, a more mundane display of imperial military force could suffice. Often just the threat of using the massive military

never be called a king, but rather seems to be a local reinterpretation of the character of imperial power. In Scandinavia, the local craftsmen went as far as to inscribe their imitations of *multipla* and bracteates with runes.

⁴¹¹ Bursche, 'Roman gold medallions as power symbols of the Germanic élite', p. 96 mentions the parallel of "peace medals" with images of rulers sent by French, British or American authorities to allied indigenous peoples' chiefs in North America, and worn by them as a symbol of power and prestige, always displaying the side with the image of foreign ruler. For more details on the significance of the imperial image and objects bearing it in the *Barbaricum* see A. Bursche, *Złote medaliony rzymskie w Barbaricum: Symbolika prestiżu i władzy społeczeństw barbarzyńskich u schyłku starożytności*, (Warszawa 1998), particularly pp. 218-220.

⁴¹² Bursche, *Złote medaliony rzymskie w Barbaricum*, pp. 218-223.

strength at the Empire's disposal was enough to coerce the rulers of frontier tribes into submission. Such was the case when in 287 the emperor Maximian forced the Frankish king Gennobaudes to be his supplicant and subjugated other barbarian groups by the sheer show of force.⁴¹³

But, besides the influence of visual representations of power, or military demonstrations, there were also other ways of applying diplomatic pressure, such as removing obstructive leaders of the barbarian political entities. It seems that abductions and assassinations became a standard tool of shaping the foreign relations of the Roman Empire with its neighbours, with the exception of Sassanid Persia, which had a political structure comparable in its stability to the Roman one.⁴¹⁴ Abduction was a relatively commonplace method. A troublesome chief of the Alammani, Vadamarius, was captured during a feast and moved to Spain; soon after he began a career in the Roman military, achieving the rank of *dux Phoenices* in 361.⁴¹⁵ He took part in the civil war between Valens and Procopius in 365/366 and fought against the Persians in 371.⁴¹⁶ Vadamarius was in fact a victim of the conflict between Julian and Constantius II. As a client of Constantius, he was encouraged to invade Roman territory under Julian's control to hinder him after the rebellion of the young Caesar began.⁴¹⁷ Another Alammanic chief, Macrianus, was a target of a failed abduction organized by the emperor Valentinian.⁴¹⁸

Another tool of Roman foreign relations was assassination. A number of cases of attempted or successful assassinations of troublesome rulers, both in the *Barbaricum* and amongst the eastern neighbours of the Roman Empire in the 4th and 5th century, suggests

⁴¹³ Drinkwater, *The Alamanni and Rome*, p. 182.

⁴¹⁴ A. D. Lee, 'Abduction and assassination: the clandestine face of Roman diplomacy in late antiquity' *The international history review*, 31/1 (2009), pp. 1-23.

⁴¹⁵ For abduction see: Ammianus Marcellinus XXI 4 1-6, for the military rank see XXI 3 5.

⁴¹⁶ Ammianus Marcellinus XXVI 8 2 and XXIX 1 2.

⁴¹⁷ Ammianus Marcellinus XXI 3 4-5; Drinkwater, *The Alamanni and Rome*, pp. 149-150 and 155-6 goes as far as to call Vadamarius a 'corresponding member' of the sacred consistory, due to his close involvement with Constantius' politics, and the employment of secretarial staff.

⁴¹⁸ Ammianus Marcellinus XXIX 4 2-6.

it became a standard instrument of Roman foreign policy.⁴¹⁹ Vadamarius' son and successor, Vithicabius, was murdered by the Romans.⁴²⁰ Gabinius, king of the Quadi, met a similar fate, assassinated after a feast with Romans on the orders of *dux* Marcellinus, after the Quadi protested the establishment of Roman fortifications in their territory.⁴²¹ In this particular case removing Gabinius only served to incite the Quadi into waging war upon the Romans. A similar result was achieved in an attempt to capture or assassinate leaders of the Tervingi, Fritigern and Alavivus, by *comes* Lupicinus in 367; although, if we are to believe Ammianus, it was a plan the *comes* improvised in response to a brawl erupting at the feast he invited the barbarian chiefs to.⁴²² The practice continued into the 5th century. An assassination is mentioned by Olympiodoros, who described his embassy to the Huns in 412/413.⁴²³ In this case, the position of the victim or even the exact destination of the embassy, and therefore the political centre of the Huns at the time, is a disputed matter, as the surviving report of the embassy is in a *précis* provided by Photios.⁴²⁴ Some believe Donatus to be a Hunnic king; others deem him to be a Roman subject of Charaton, the first among the Hunnic kings.⁴²⁵ Whatever the reality was, his

⁴¹⁹ Lee, 'Abduction and Assassination', pp. 1-23.

⁴²⁰ Ammianus Marcellinus XXVII 10 3-4/ XXX 7 7.

⁴²¹ Ammianus Marcellinus XXIX 6 5 12, XXX 1 1 and 5 3; Zosimos IV 16 4.

⁴²² Ammianus Marcellinus XXXI 5 5-7; For Alavivus' possible fate as a Roman military official see chapter *Romano-barbarian amicitia: Shaping the discourse and sustaining political and social networks*.

⁴²³ O. J Maenchen-Helfen, *The world of the Huns: studies in their history and culture*, (Los Angeles-London 1973), p. 73.

⁴²⁴ Olympiodoros, *Fr.* 19.

⁴²⁵ E. A. Thompson, *The Huns*, rev. P. Heather, (Oxford 1996), pp. 38-40 considered Donatus to be Charaton's predecessor and placed his realm on the northern shore of the Black Sea; J. Matthews 'Olympiodorus of Thebes and the history of the West (A.D. 407-425)' *The journal of Roman studies*, 60 (1970), pp. 79-97, particularly pp. 79-80, similarly identified Donatus as king and followed A. Cameron 'Wandering poets: a literary movement in Byzantine Egypt' *Historia Zeitschrift für Alte Geschichte*, 14/4 (1965), pp. 470-509, particularly p. 497, in asserting that Olympiodoros led the embassy and engineered Donatus' assassination; H. J. Kim, *The Huns, Rome and the birth of Europe*, (Cambridge 2015), p. 55 asserts that Donatus was a lesser king, a vassal to Charaton; Maenchen-Helfen, *The World of the Huns*, pp. 73-74 rejects any possibility of Donatus' Hunnic kingship and places Charaton's domain in Hungary, rather than on the northern shores of the Black Sea; Olympiodoros was sent by the western, rather than eastern, court. As we shall see later on, the Hunnic employment of Romans as court officials became an established practice during Attila's era; however, Donatus would arguably be the earliest attested case. R. C. Blockley, *The Fragmentary Classicising Historians of the Later Roman Empire: Eunapius, Olympiodorus, Priscus and Malchus*, (Liverpool 1983), vol. 2, p. 216 f. 49 also rejected the possibility of Donatus being a Hunnic king and put in doubt Olympiodoros' involvement in his death. D. Sinor, *The Hun Period* in: D. Sinor (ed.)

position in the Hunnic politics was sufficiently important for him to be targeted by the Empire. His death at the hands of an assassin led to negotiations with Charaton, whom the Romans needed to placate with gifts to avoid war.⁴²⁶ Perhaps the most famous assassination attempt in the relations between Romans and barbarians is the one that proved to be an utter failure, immortalised in the detailed report of Priskos, who took part in the embassy, which served as a pretext for the court official Vigilas to see the entire matter through. Chrysaphios, a *παθάριος* of Theodosius II, most likely with the imperial approval, offered Edeco, Attila's subject and an envoy to Constantinople, riches and a position in exchange for organising a plot on his overlord's life.⁴²⁷ The embassy that followed is going to be mentioned further on, at this point it is sufficient to say that the plan failed, with Edeco revealing it to Attila, who in turn used it to extort more riches and refugees from the eastern imperial court.

Abductions and assassinations were a useful tool of Roman foreign policy, as they allowed, at least in the imperial court's perception, for the easy destabilisation of political entities in the *Barbaricum* or for shifts in attitudes towards the Empire, both of which depended on the personal capabilities, prestige and strategy of individual ruler over confederacies, tribes or warbands. Even if the ruler was not eliminated physically, but forced out of his territory from fear, the Empire could try to establish a more favourable king. Valentinian made such an attempt by establishing Fraomarius in the place of Macrinus.⁴²⁸ The Empire seemingly recognised the structural weakness of its neighbours and planned its strategy for dealing with them accordingly. The abductions of Alamannic chiefs or the assassination of such a powerful ruler as Attila, were to serve the same aim

The Cambridge history of early Inner Asia, (Cambridge 1990), p. 186 speculated that Donatus might have been a Donatist seeking refuge from the imperial government, which deemed him troublesome enough to risk Charaton's anger at assassinating his guest. This is not improbable.

⁴²⁶ Olympiodoros, *Fr.* 19.

⁴²⁷ Priskos, *Fr.* 11 1-2.

⁴²⁸ Ammianus Marcellinus XXIX 4.2-7.

of rendering the political entity in question incapable of any aggressive action, or even of leading to its fracturing into smaller kingdoms and warbands that could be dealt with individually and played against each other.⁴²⁹

Yet as the sub-Roman kingdoms started to emerge, the practice seems to disappear, with Attila the last of such high-profile cases. The next one could possibly have been Amalasuntha in the 6th century, if Prokopios is to be believed.⁴³⁰ But even if Amalasuntha was eliminated on an imperial order, her assassination would have different aims than that of Attila or others, since she was no longer in power, and her death only served to give the Empire a pretext for war. Why were there no other attempts at removing rulers of barbarian groups that were turning into kingdoms? It may be that no attestations survive, but another possibility is that there was a difference between the barbarian ‘kingdoms’ of the 4th and earlier centuries beyond the *limes*, the Hunnic confederacy of the 5th, and the political entities of the 5th century from which the sub-Roman kingdoms emerged. The royal court at Toulouse certainly did not lack bloodshed of its own. Even before the settlement, Athaulf was murdered and replaced by Singeric, who soon met an equally bloody end.⁴³¹ King Thorismund, successor of Theodoric I, suffered a similar fate

⁴²⁹ M. Meier, ‘Dealing with non-state societies, the failed assassination attempt against Attila (449) and eastern Roman Hunnic policy’ in: J. Bemmman, M. Schmauder (eds) *Complexity of interaction along the Eurasian steppe zone in the first millennium CE*, (Bonn 2015), pp. 635-658 considers the plan to assassinate Attila to be based on a Roman view of the structural weakness of the Hunnic confederacy. An opposing view about the nature of the Hunnic rule can be found in Kim, *The Huns, Rome and the birth of Europe*, passim, particularly pp. 43-69 and 137-143, who sees the Hunnic Empire as a highly-sophisticated nomad state, with a feudal-like hierarchy of kings and rulers, a continuation of the Xiongnu empire, which, according to him, outlasted Attila’s death. Meier’s and Kim’s views are not mutually exclusive. Romans could have had the wrong idea about the coherence of Hunnic domain. However, later events seem to prove Chrysaphios and the emperor Theodosius II right in their assertion of Attila’s role as a binder for the confederation of Huns. There is little space here to discuss Kim’s reinterpretation of the events following Attila’s death and the conflicts erupting between his successors and subjects, but it is sufficient to say that it reflects more the remarkable passion of the author for the Huns, than the source evidence.

⁴³⁰ Prokopios, *History of the wars*, V 4 17-32 and *Secret history*, 16.1-7. According to Prokopios’ second work, Amalasuntha died on the orders of the empress Theodora, who was jealous of the wise and beautiful Gothic queen. Lee, ‘Abduction and Assassination’, pp. 10-11, based on letters between Theodahad and Theodora in Cassiodorus, *Variae* X.20.4 and X.23.1, reinterpreted it as a conscious plan of the imperial court to get rid of a problematic claimant, while gaining a *casus belli* for invading Italy.

⁴³¹ For Athaulf’s murder, see Olympiodoros, Fr. 26.1; Orosius, VII 43.2.8 and Philostorgios XII 4. For Singeric’s, see Olympiodoros, Fr. 26.1 and Orosius VII 43.2.9.

at the hands of his brothers Theodoric II and Frederic in 453.⁴³² Theodoric II was supposedly also a victim of fratricide, with his successor Euric being the main suspect behind the death.⁴³³ Yet none of these deaths led to the dissolution of the Visigoths as a political power. There certainly was no shortage of ambitious barbarians, or Roman officials in barbarian service that could be susceptible to bribery, as Edeco appeared to Chrysaphios. However, the imperial court did not attempt to remove any of the Visigothic kings, or Gaiseric, who was a thorn in its side for decades. Gaiseric claimed that his daughter-in-law and daughter of Visigothic king Theodoric I planned to assassinate him.⁴³⁴ The accusation The loss of their king led to the dissolution of the Suevi into several groups, but this was preceded by a crushing defeat.⁴³⁵ It is entirely plausible that the Roman Empire deemed barbarian groups that settled in the west to be politically too coherent in comparison to the 'kingdoms' beyond the *limes*, and not as dependant on personal leadership as the Hunnic confederacy. In such a case, the relinquishing of assassination and abduction as diplomatic tools was tied to a recognition of the fledgling successor kingdoms as something different from partners in the *Barbaricum*.

What else changed in the diplomatic approach between the 4th and 5th century? In the context of the Empire from the times of the principate until the 4th century, an interaction between the emperor, the source of power and prestige *par excellence*, and any barbarian ruler or warlord meant the emperor held the stronger position. Barbarian rulers or candidates for the role usually came to the emperor, either in order to receive the insignia of power to become *reges dati* and for political support to reclaim their position

⁴³² Prosper, s.a. 453; Hydatius, 148; *Chronica Gallica 511*, 621.

⁴³³ Hydatius, 233; *Chronica Gallica 511*, 643.

⁴³⁴ Jordanes, *Getica* 184.

⁴³⁵ Hydatius, 166-168 and 181.

(see chapter 2.1), or as defeated supplicants.⁴³⁶ If it was possible to avoid being shamed in front of the ruler of the *oikumene*, yet the peace could only be achieved through personal meeting, the barbarian leaders attempted to force the emperor to meet them on neutral ground. It often required careful manoeuvring on both sides, the emperor cautiously protecting his superiority from any potential belittlement, while his barbarian counterparts tried to avoid being put in an inferior position. It led to arrangements, such as ‘river diplomacy’.⁴³⁷ In many cases the imperial concession to such an arrangement was caused by necessity, such as the need to end a campaign and deploy military force elsewhere.⁴³⁸ The emperor Julian negotiated off a boat with the leader of the Chamavi on the river Meuse.⁴³⁹ Valens had to meet Athanaric in the middle of the river on boats, since the chief of the Tervingi claimed that an oath precluded him from stepping onto Roman soil, and it was considered unfitting for the emperor to cross into Athanaric’s territory.⁴⁴⁰ Valentinian’s summit with Macrianus, the king of the Alamanni, was conducted on the Rhine.⁴⁴¹ The personal character of these relations was also reflected in how treaties and agreements were seen by barbarian organisations to the north as made with individuals or dynasties, rather than with the state entity. The Goths considered they had made an alliance with Constantine and his family, hence, when they intervened in the Roman civil war on the side of the usurper Procopius against the emperor Valens, they claimed it was

⁴³⁶ For a case of pretenders seeking Roman support, see: Priskos, *Fr.* 20.3 a Frankish pretender was adopted by Aetius and received the emperor Valentinian’s support; For a case of barbarian rulers approaching the emperor to obtain peace, see Ammianus Marcellinus XVII 10 9.

⁴³⁷ Using rivers, marking borders, as the convenient middle-ground for diplomatic exchange had a precedent in the Early Empire, with the proconsul of Syria, Vitellius, meeting the Parthian king Artabanus in a pavilion constructed by Herod Antipater in the middle of a bridge over the Euphrates for that very purpose in the 1st century Josephus, *Antiquitates Judaicae*, XVIII 101-104.

⁴³⁸ Heather ‘The barbarian in late antiquity, image, reality, and transformation’ pp. 238-239.

⁴³⁹ Eunapios, *Fr.* 18.6; Ammianus Marcellinus XVII 8 5 mentioned the Chamavi embassy and peace agreement, but did not describe the meeting between Julian and their king.

⁴⁴⁰ Ammianus Marcellinus XXVII 5.6.9; Heather, *Goths and Romans 332-489*, pp. 115-121.

⁴⁴¹ Ammianus Marcellinus XXX 3.3.

due to the alliance they owed to the legitimate emperor.⁴⁴² Kinship with Constantine appeared, at least nominally, to be the reason for Gothic recognition.

In the 5th century there are very few meetings between emperors and barbarian rulers. Goths and Burgundians established their own emperors, but these usually did not last for long and their presence at the side of barbarian leaders came from their dependency on their support.⁴⁴³ The emperor was a distant figure that communicated only through legations he sent or received. This bore resemblance of the approach adopted earlier for the relations between the Roman Empire and Sassanian Persia, a similarity that is a matter of discussion below.

The only element of personal interaction between the emperor and a potential barbarian ruler that remained was the practice of taking hostages. This way of engineering foreign relations was to take in members of the elite, in many cases the children of rulers, whose presence would initially guarantee a truce or treaty. Eventually they would return to their homeland, usually with greater affinity for Rome and its culture, which would in turn strengthen Roman influence on a certain tribe or group. The practice had a long tradition reaching back to republican times, at first used for members of the city elites or children of Hellenistic kings, but later applied also to other peoples outside of the Roman world.⁴⁴⁴ A frequently discussed example of a successful ‘romanisation’ of a hostage from the 4th century is that of an Alamannic chief, Medericus, who was held in Roman

⁴⁴² Ammianus Marcellinus XXVII 5.1; Zosimos IV 7 2 and 10 1-2; N. E. Lenski, *Failure of Empire: Valens and the Roman state in the fourth century A.D.*, (Berkeley 2002), p. 111.

⁴⁴³ The Goths established first Attalus, see Zosimos, VI.7.1, Olympiodoros, fr. 6, Orosius, II 3.3, Philostorgios XII.3; and then supported Jovinus, who was elevated by Burgundians and Alans, see Olympiodoros, fr. 18. Avitus was the Gothic final attempt. He was made emperor at a time of his embassy to the Goths in 455, see Sidonius Apollinaris, *Carmen VII*, 506-583 and A. Gillett, *Envoys and political communication in the late antique West, 411-533*, (Cambridge 2003), p. 105 showing that Sidonius tried to hide in his panegyric the fact that Avitus visited Toulouse most likely knowing of the emperor Petronius Maximus’ death and possibly sought Gothic support for his own elevation.

⁴⁴⁴ D. C. Braund, *Rome and the friendly king*, (London 1984), pp. 12-16; A. D. Lee ‘The role of hostages in Roman diplomacy with Sasanian Persia’ *Historia: Zeitschrift für Alte Geschichte*, 40/3 (1991), pp. 366-374. Notable examples of hostages in the republican era are the historian Polybios of Megalopolis or Demetrios, son of Philip V of Macedonia.

Gaul long enough to be introduced into mysteries, most likely these of Serapis, and decided to change his son's name to Serapio after his return.⁴⁴⁵ Taking hostages continued successfully into the 5th century, this time in regard to groups within the Roman territory. Gaiseric was said to have given his son Huneric as a hostage in 442, guaranteeing his treaty with the emperor Valentinian III.⁴⁴⁶ Theodoric and his sister, members of a Gothic ruling family of Amals, were sent as hostages to the imperial court at Constantinople.⁴⁴⁷ Theodoric's sister was later used as an imperial envoy to Theodoric himself, proving that the practice still served to forge links between the imperial authority and barbarian ruling families.⁴⁴⁸

What changed in the use of this diplomatic tool, and became a new development, was that Rome was increasingly expected to provide long-term hostages of its own. Alaric asked for hostages in 408, namely Aetius and Jason, and offered hostages of his own in exchange.⁴⁴⁹ Although he was not given them, Aetius is said to have been a Gothic hostage at some point.⁴⁵⁰ The Huns demanded hostages on a number of occasions. During a legation of Cassiodorus, the grandfather of the famous author of the *Variae*, and Carpilio, son of Aetius, to Attila, it was decided that Carpilio, much like his father before him, would stay at the Hunnic court as a hostage guaranteeing the Empire would keep the terms of the agreement.⁴⁵¹ The later emperor Avitus forged the links to the Visigothic court that would eventually elevate him to the throne on a visit he paid to Toulouse in order to meet with his kinsman Theodorus, who was a hostage of Theodoric I.⁴⁵² Barbarian rulers were employing the exchange of hostages as a way not just to make sure

⁴⁴⁵ Ammianus Marcellinus, XVI.12.25.

⁴⁴⁶ Prokopios, *History of the wars*, III.4.13-14. For dating see *PLRE* vol. 2, p. 573.

⁴⁴⁷ Jordanes, *Getica* 269; Theophanes, *AM* 5977.

⁴⁴⁸ See chapter 3.3.

⁴⁴⁹ Zosimos, V 36.1.

⁴⁵⁰ Merobaudes, *Carmen* IV 42-46.

⁴⁵¹ Cassiodorus, *Variae* I 4 68-70; Priskos, *Fr.* 11.2.191-195. For Aetius as a Hunnic hostage, see Gregory of Tours, *LH*, II 8.

⁴⁵² Sidonius Apollinaris, *Carmen VII*, 215-222.

the Empire would keep the terms of the agreement or truce, but, as the case of Aetius and Jason shows, to forge links with the imperial and senatorial elites in a longer perspective. In this way barbarian courts were mimicking Roman strategy.

All these changes meant that the Roman Empire's manner of conducting diplomatic exchange with barbarian rulers became increasingly similar to the second of the main sources of the practice of foreign relations – treating with the only other super power in the region at the time – Sassanian Persia. The conventions established in the relations between Romans and Persians were developing in a very different way from the ones with the *Barbaricum*. Increasingly formalised, they were the basis for the development of later Byzantine diplomacy, with a set of conventions and rules concerning types of delegations, hierarchy of envoys, conduct of embassies and types of gifts.⁴⁵³ It was a result of the emperors' and kings of kings' recognition of equality, that meant any interpersonal negotiations risked either side losing their standing by having to accept the other side's demands.⁴⁵⁴ Initially the imperial court was unwilling to apply the same sort of rules and recognition towards both the barbarian political entities to the north of its borders and the ones developing within the Roman provinces. However, the immobility of the emperors of the 5th century in comparison to their 3rd and 4th century predecessors, and a push towards less personal involvement in the diplomatic negotiations, led to an increasing dependence on delegations that in turn became more formalised.⁴⁵⁵ In terms of

⁴⁵³ E. Nechaeva, *Embassies – negotiations – gifts: systems of East Roman diplomacy in late antiquity*, (Stuttgart 2014), pp. 66, 118-123 and 237-241; one marker of the sophistication of the diplomatic exchange were 'block' embassies, series of legations preparing and carrying out negotiations (see pp. 81-83), that later became a standard in relations with Attila's Huns (pp. 83-84); for gifts, see pp. 195-198.

⁴⁵⁴ Nechaeva, *Embassies – negotiations – gifts*, pp. 237-241.

⁴⁵⁵ For a comprehensive list of legations from the period see: R. Helm, 'Untersuchungen über den auswärtigen diplomatischen Verkehr des römischen Reiches im Zeitalter der Spätantike' *Archiv für Urkundenforschung* vol. 12/3 (1932), pp. 375-437, specifically pp. 426-32. According to Nechaeva, *Embassies – negotiations – gifts*, pp. 116 the tendency for the emperor was not to directly interact with other rulers and meet them. This became the dominant imperial paradigm, especially in later developments. There was a push for stressing imperial grandeur and ceremonial, for which meeting with other rulers would be detrimental. Direct involvement would be an exception, due to the emperor taking part in the military campaigns himself. But it is worth remembering that the image of the warlike emperor, campaigning on the frontier to protect Rome from outside threats and subjugating foreign rulers coming as supplicants, was for

the ideological framework, the barbarian rulers within the Roman Empire were still presented as either hostile warlords or the emperor's servants and allies. A way to keep the pretence of their subordination and their place within the Roman order was to send as envoys officials of lower rank.⁴⁵⁶ When the position of the ruler could no longer be ignored, the response was to send envoys of high rank, such as consuls or patricians.⁴⁵⁷ Distinct diplomatic practices adopted over centuries towards Persia and towards other "barbarians" started to converge, as the Empire was ready to raise the status of envoys accordingly to new diplomatic demands, as long as it offered better chances of achieving its aims.⁴⁵⁸

To a certain extent this convergence emerged organically from the dynamics of relations between barbarian warlords established within the Roman Empire and the central authorities. At times, leaders of barbarian warbands were recognised with Roman military ranks, money and supplies for their men, only to turn again into an enemy on other occasions, whether because of their own choice or forced by the changing political landscape.

There was also a local aspect of negotiations between Romans and barbarians. A case of local networks and diplomacy on the city-warlord level can be found in Paulinus of Pella, *Eucharisticus*. On the occasion of a Gothic siege of the city of Bazas in

a long time, especially during the era of the tetrarchy and Constantinian dynasty, the default one. Perhaps then the ideological representation was more a result than a cause of diplomatic practices, which reflected the limitations of the child emperors in the first decades of 5th century.

⁴⁵⁶ A. Löhren, *Beiträge zur Geschichte des gesandtschaftlichen Verkehrs im Mittelalter. Die Zeit vom vierten bis zum Ende des 9. Jh.*, (Heidelberg 1894), pp. 27-28; Nechaeva, *Embassies – negotiations – gifts*, pp. 118-120.

⁴⁵⁷ Examples are found in Malchos, fr. 20.43-54: the emperor Zeno granted consular rank to Adamantius before sending him on an embassy to Theodoric; and fr. 5, Zeno granted senator Severus a patrician rank for the purpose of an embassy to the Vandals in 474. T. Lounghis, 'Ambassadors, embassies and administrative changes in the Eastern Roman Empire prior to the reconquista' in: E. K. Chrysos, A. Schwarcz (eds) *Das Reich und die Barbaren*, (Vienna 1989), pp. 143-153, particularly p. 145, interprets this particular move as establishing equality between the barbarian rulers in the West and the envoy sent to them. Still considered to be part of the Empire, their position was to equate with that of a patrician. For a list of known patricians who served as envoys see R. Mathisen 'Patricians as diplomats in late antiquity', *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 79.1 (1986), pp. 35-49.

⁴⁵⁸ Nechaeva, *Embassies – negotiations – gifts*, pp. 120-121.

Aquitaine, Paulinus attempted to use his contact in the enemy's camp, an Alan king that he had dealt with earlier, in order to leave the city unharmed. Unexpectedly to Paulinus, the leader of the Alans offered to switch sides instead. The city authorities were given his wife and son as hostages as a guarantee. This change of alliances, achieved solely thanks to local personal networks, was enough for the balance of power to change in favour of the Romans and for the Goths to give up on the siege.⁴⁵⁹ These low-level diplomatic exchanges were less formalised than the kind that attended the imperial and royal courts, lacking the theatrical aspects, such as the acceptance of the delegation and the speeches accompanying it, which had the important role of presenting the visiting officials to the wider elites, rather than just to the closest of ruler's associates. However, the actual negotiations conducted away from the court pomp probably did not differ so much.

In the following sections I am going to examine the relations between the Roman Empire and four different 'barbarian' entities: the Huns of Attila, the Visigoths in Aquitaine, the Vandals in Africa and the Suevi in Spain. A full history of these relationships is beyond the scope of this thesis, but setting chronological framework is necessary to observe shifts in diplomatic practices and dynamics.

The Huns and the court in Constantinople

Although the pretence of imperial subordination of 'barbarian' rulers still existed in the 5th century appeared a major challenger to it. The changing external conditions did not hinder the convergence of diplomatic practice, but rather amplified it. The Hunnic Empire of Attila posed a significant threat to both parts of the Roman Empire and its ruler was more than aware of that. According to Luttwak, tactical military weakness in the face of the Huns led to a new development of focusing the imperial efforts on diplomacy.⁴⁶⁰

⁴⁵⁹ Paulinus of Pella, *Eucharisticus*, 343-402

⁴⁶⁰ Luttwak, *The grand strategy of the Byzantine Empire*, p. 55.

Attila, together with his predecessors, extorted 41 850 pounds of gold in various tributes over the span of 52 years. Along with various gifts and other attested donations, the Huns received about 53 950 pounds of gold.⁴⁶¹ In comparison, the eastern part of the Empire transferred about 13 261 pounds of gold to various Gothic groups in the Balkans in the years 450-491.⁴⁶² The sum was substantial, but perhaps not as crippling as Priskos claims, especially given the scale of the Hunnic threat and its persistence for the Balkan cities.⁴⁶³ Selecting Huns for a study of diplomatic relations between the Roman Empire and emerging sub-Roman powers may seem controversial. Attila's confederacy cannot be considered a sub-Roman kingdom. However, besides being an important factor in the political puzzle of the 5th century, it is evident that aspects of its diplomatic relations with the Roman Empire, particularly the eastern court in Constantinople, are alike to the developments in the diplomatic exchange with emerging 'barbarian' political entities in the West.

Initial contacts with the Empire began at the very latest in 400. Uldin, leader of the Huns, defeated Gainas, a rebel Roman commander turned barbarian warlord, and sent his head to the emperor Arcadius receiving in turn gifts and forming an alliance with Romans (see chapter 1.1).⁴⁶⁴ Uldin aided Romans yet again joining their defence of Italy against Radagais in 406.⁴⁶⁵ However, the Hunnic leader soon turned into an enemy of Rome. In 408 he invaded the Roman territory, captured Castra Martis in Moesia and raided Thrace.⁴⁶⁶ He was approached by *magister militum per Thraciam* with an offer of peace, but refused boasting that he could conquer every corner of the world under the sun.

⁴⁶¹ J. Iluk, *Aspects économiques et politiques de la circulation de l'or au bas-empire*, (Wetteren 2007), p. 83.

⁴⁶² Iluk, *Aspects économiques et politiques*, p. 83.

⁴⁶³ Priskos, fr. 9.3; Luttwak, *The grand strategy of the Byzantine Empire*, p. 54 points out that the annual tribute of 2100 pounds of gold negotiated by Anatolius in 447 matched the costs of six high officials of the rank of Egyptian governors (*praefecti augustales*).

⁴⁶⁴ Zosimos V 22 3.

⁴⁶⁵ Orosius VII 37 12

⁴⁶⁶ Sozomenons, *HE* IX 5; Heather, *The fall of the Roman Empire*, p. 196.

Uldin's threats proved vain as members of his warband switched sides and he needed to retreat beyond the Danube. He is not heard of again. But the ephemeral relations between Uldin and Rome share characteristics with the diplomatic relationship between Romans and Attila. The conduct of peace negotiations by the military officer operating in the zone of conflict is a custom Attila sought to overturn, seeing it at one point as a belittlement of his status.

The next in line of Hunnic leaders to engage in a diplomatic exchange with the imperial court was already mentioned Charaton. He appeared only in Olympiodoros' description of the embassy sent to him in 412/413.⁴⁶⁷ Controversies regarding this embassy, its aims and destination were elaborated on earlier. Olympiodoros' remark on how Charaton was the first of Hunnic kings reveals a greater awareness of Hunnic political system and Roman readiness to focus diplomatic efforts accordingly. The earlier diplomatic contacts with Uldin appear to have been dictated more by his proximity to Roman borders and proactive attitude than any considerations for his rank in the hierarchy of Hunnic rulers.⁴⁶⁸

Relations intensified further in the reign of Rua. He was likely behind the Hunnic invasion of Thrace in 422.⁴⁶⁹ Presumably it is treaty brokered in the aftermath of this invasion that was referenced by Rua over ten years later. Hunnic king threatened the eastern court with breaking the peace agreement, which provided him with an annual tribute of 350 pounds of gold. The cause for enmity was Roman recruitment of refugees coming from the tribes of Amilzuri, Itimari, Tounsoures and Boisci beyond the Danube

⁴⁶⁷ Olympiodoros, Fr. 19.

⁴⁶⁸ This can also be explained by the lack of a hierarchy of kings among the Huns in the first decade of the 5th century, but it is unlikely that it would only emerge over the span of a couple of years.

⁴⁶⁹ Theodoret, *HE* V 37 4-10; Marcellinus comes, 422; B. Croke 'Evidence for the Hun invasion of Thrace in A.D. 422' *Greek, Roman and Byzantine Studies* 18.4 (1977), pp. 347-367. I remain unconvinced by his argument of tying the evidence of Olympiodoros to this invasion.

that Rua waged war upon.⁴⁷⁰ The treaty assured safety of borders of the eastern part of the Roman Empire but did not fully guarantee lack of hostilities between the two sides. Rua aided usurper John after the embassy of the then *cura palatii*, former hostage of the Huns and later *generalissimo* in the West – Aetius – in 424/425.⁴⁷¹ Hunnic forces battled the eastern Roman army under Aspar's command even after John was dead. After peace was brokered, Aetius gained a place in the new regime, Huns were rewarded with gold and received hostages.⁴⁷² The conditions of the agreement between Constantinople and Ravenna – transferring Pannonia under Theodosius' rule – meant the expulsion of the Huns settled there.⁴⁷³ There is no evidence for this causing any sort of response from Rua, possibly indicating that these Huns were ruled by one of the lesser Hunnic kings. (Although perhaps this dispossession caused the later internal troubles with Amilzuri, Itimari, Tounsoures and Boisci.) Until final years of his reign Rua refrained from any hostile actions against Constantinople, though he did not shy away from intervening in the West in the interest of Aetius in 433.⁴⁷⁴

The diplomatic crisis turned out to be an opportunity for some. After Eslas, who according to Priskos specialised in negotiations with the Empire, delivered his king's demands for the return of political refugees, a competition of sorts began among Roman officials. A *magister militum* of Gothic descent, Plinta was eventually chosen as an envoy to the Hunnic king.⁴⁷⁵ Initially Plinta was competing for this honour with a colleague of his, Dionysius, also a *magister militum* and a former consul. The first of these *magistri*

⁴⁷⁰ Priskos, Fr. 2.

⁴⁷¹ Sokrates Scholastikos, *HE* VII 43 3.

⁴⁷² Philostorgios, *HE* XII 14.

⁴⁷³ Marcellinus comes, 427; Croke 'Evidence for the Hun invasion of Thrace in A.D. 422', p. 361.

⁴⁷⁴ *Chronica Gallica ad annum 452* no. 116 (s.a. 434).

⁴⁷⁵ Priskos, fr. 2 the ethnic labelling in this passage is rather interesting, with Plinta and Dionysius first described as a Scythian and a Thracian. However, in relation to the Huns, Plinta is counted as one of the Romans. This framing bears resemblance to Ammianus' way of describing some Roman officials and soldiers by their ethnic and regional backgrounds, while still labelling them as Romans when dealing with an outside threat; see Bjornlie 'Romans, barbarians and provincials'.

militum clearly perceived the embassy as a way to improve his own position, as he went as far as to send one of his companions (ἐπιτήδειος), Sengilach, after the Hunnic envoy. He was to convince his king to demand Plinta as ambassador. There must have been a potential benefit for both the king and the imperial official in such an arrangement, with Plinta proving his value to the imperial court and Rua possibly expecting greater willingness for cooperation and understanding of his ‘point of view’ from an envoy, selected based on his wish.⁴⁷⁶ Plinta’s case shows that imperial officials saw taking part in embassies as a chance to develop their own networks.

Rua died soon after Eslas’ mission and his successors inherited the unresolved conflict. Senate voted for Plinta as an ambassador to Bleda and Attila and the emperor ratified its decision. Accompanied by *quaestor sacri palatii*, Epigenes, Plinta travelled in 435 to Margus, a Roman city on the Danube, to meet with Bleda and Attila.⁴⁷⁷ The new peace agreement involved doubling the annual tribute (to 700 pounds), return of all fugitives, including children of the royal family Mama and Atakam, payment of ransom of 8 *solidi* for each Roman prisoner of war, who managed to run back to the Empire, safe markets for Huns and Romans and a ban on accepting any fugitives from the Huns in the future.⁴⁷⁸ That last provision in particular may have been creating particular difficulties for the Empire. Priskos made it clear these ‘refugees’ were being recruited into the Roman military. Limiting recruitment from the Danubian region may explain the rise in prominence of ‘internal barbarians’, Isaurians, in the next decade as imperial authorities sought new sources of soldiers.⁴⁷⁹ Regulating trading was not atypical condition for

⁴⁷⁶ Maenchen-Helfen, *The World of the Huns*, p. 91 surmised that Plinta might have hoped to build a similar position to that of Aetius later on, as a Roman official monopolising relations between the Empire and the Huns, essential for achieving an agreement. I would not go as far, but Plinta certainly sought to develop his own personal relations with the Hunnic court to improve his position within the Roman hierarchy of power.

⁴⁷⁷ Priskos, fr. 2.

⁴⁷⁸ Priskos, fr. 2.

⁴⁷⁹ Zeno, the namesake of the later emperor, became *magister militum* in 447, see *PLRE* vol. 2, p. 1199 and led a contingent of Isaurians in defence of Constantinople Priskos, fr. 13.

treaties in the period.⁴⁸⁰ In some cases the reason behind designating specific places for markets had to do with preventing spying and betrayal under the guise of trade.⁴⁸¹

The treaty of Margus, as it is called by some scholars, lasted for six years before new hostilities erupted.⁴⁸² The renewal of conflict between Rome and the Huns began with raids on the market place near Margus, conducted under the pretext of desecration of Hunnic royal graves by local bishop.⁴⁸³ Given how he later found safe haven among the Huns it seems Attila and Bleda simply seized the opportunity of attacking the Eastern Empire launching a campaign against the Vandals from Sicily.⁴⁸⁴ Strategically positioned Viminacium fell to the Huns, so did Margus, Sirmium and eventually Naissus.⁴⁸⁵ As earlier in the case of negotiations with Uldin, seeking a diplomatic solution lied within the competence of the commanding officer in charge of the particular campaign. Aspar managed to broker a one-year truce, which allowed Constantinople to recall its force under the command of Areobindus back from Sicily.⁴⁸⁶ The next year Attila demanded return of fugitives and tribute that were withheld from him due to hostilities. After imperial court refused to give up Hunnic fugitives, he took Ratiaria and advanced further into Thrace defeating Roman army under the command of Aspar and Areobindus.⁴⁸⁷ In the aftermath of this defeat a truce and consequently a peace treaty were agreed on. The truce was likely negotiated by Areobindus, the military commander involved in this campaign, as was the case with Aspar in 441. The treaty was then arranged by *magister*

⁴⁸⁰ See for example the Romano-Persian treaty of 298 and its provision of limiting trade to Nisibis as described by Peter the Patrician, pp. 188-189.

⁴⁸¹ Ammianus Marcellinus XVIII 5.

⁴⁸² Thompson, *The Huns*, p. 83.

⁴⁸³ Priskos, fr. 6.

⁴⁸⁴ Priskos, fr. 6; for the expedition see Prosper, 441; Theophanes, AM 5942.

⁴⁸⁵ Priskos, fr. 6 and 11.2; Marcellinus comes, 441; B. Croke 'Anatolius and Nomus: envoys to Attila' *Byzantinoslavica*, 42 (1981) pp. 159-170.

⁴⁸⁶ I follow here the chronology of conflicts, treaties and embassies between Constantinople and the Huns as established by Croke 'Anatolius and Nomus: envoys to Attila'. Alternative one associates battle at Chersonese with war of 442, places the first embassy of Anatolius in 443 and argues for territorial losses of the Empire: Thompson, *The Huns*, pp. 93-95; W. N. Bayless, 'The treaty with the Huns of 443' *The American Journal of Philology* 97.2 (1976), pp. 176-179.

⁴⁸⁷ Priskos, fr. 9; Marcellinus comes, 442; *Chronicon paschale* 442; Theophanes, AM 5942.

officiorum Nomus. Both Areobindus and Nomus were named by Attila as acceptable ambassadors in 449, indicating that he had already dealt with them earlier.⁴⁸⁸ The exact details of this treaty are not known, but there is evidence that it contained some territorial provisions on the border of Thrace.⁴⁸⁹

Once again peace lasted couple years before a new Hunnic invasion in 447.⁴⁹⁰ Conflict proved much more disastrous to Romans, with Attila going as far as Chersonese and Thermopylae.⁴⁹¹ During this war an embassy of patrician Senator travelled through Odessa to meet Attila.⁴⁹² Initial agreement was negotiated by Anatolius, *magister militum* and patrician, who was called upon from the Persian border. Once again, any fugitives were to be returned to the Huns. Romans were to pay 6000 pounds of gold of arrears and 2100 pounds of gold in tribute annually, as well as 12 *solidi* for each Roman who escaped Hunnic captivity without paying a ransom. Ban on accepting any refugees by Romans from the Hunnic-held territories was again enforced.⁴⁹³ This was just one of many embassies that followed in that year and the next, with envoys from both sides moving between Constantinople and Attila's domain. It is thanks to Priskos' detailed description of one of these embassies, the one led by Maximinus and Vigilas in 449, that we learn the many aspects of negotiating with the Huns.⁴⁹⁴

Besides the financial demands, Attila pressed the Empire on matters of prestige. He expected to be sent envoys of consular rank and expressed his dissatisfaction with

⁴⁸⁸ Priskos, fr. 11.2; Croke 'Anatolius and Nomus: envoys to Attila', pp. 166-169.

⁴⁸⁹ Given that Nomus in his capacity as *magister officiorum* is tasked with handling matters of limitanei outside of competence of this office *Novellae Theodosiani* XXIV; Croke 'Anatolius and Nomus: envoys to Attila', pp. 168-169.

⁴⁹⁰ Marcellinus comes, 447.

⁴⁹¹ Ibidem; Priskos, fr. 9.3.

⁴⁹² Priskos, fr. 9.2; Croke 'Anatolius and Nomus: envoys to Attila' p. 167; Mathisen 'Patricians as diplomats in late antiquity' p. 41 does not include Senator and Anatolius in his list of patricians sent as ambassador, but that is because he dates his embassy to early 440s, not taking into account that Senator's mission took place when Theodulus was *magister utriusque militiae per Thraciam*, **after** the death of his predecessor Arnegisclus in war of 447.

⁴⁹³ Priskos, fr. 9.3 and 10.

⁴⁹⁴ Priskos, fr. 11.1-2.

Maximinus' embassy.⁴⁹⁵ In the face of Maximinus' failure, partly caused by the reveal of Roman assassination plot, the Constantinopolitan establishment consented, taking greater care in the selection of envoys. According to wishes of the Hunnic king Anatolius and Nomus were sent to conclude negotiations and resolve the crisis caused by a failed assassination plot against Attila.⁴⁹⁶ The aspect of personal relation clearly played a significant role in the diplomatic exchange. Roman envoys managed to convince Attila to drop his demand of surrendering Chrysappios to him and cessation of lands from Singidunum to Novae. They also achieved release of Roman captives and promise of no more demands concerning the return of fugitives, in the end receiving gifts from content Attila.⁴⁹⁷ Although both the emperor and barbarian rulers operated within the range of the same practices, already established personal relations had particular value. They had a great impact on the way diplomatic exchange proceeded. Barbarian rulers seemingly put trust in envoys they had already dealt with, concluding that they could achieve their aims with an already known partner with whom the previous encounter turned out to be beneficial. This can be deduced both from the fact that the imperial court took into consideration which official had previous dealings with the particular ruler and his entourage, but also from explicit demands on the part of barbarian kings, such as Attila,

⁴⁹⁵ Priskos, fr. 11.1 and 11.2 one of the official aims of Maximinus' and Priskos' embassy to Attila was to stress that his demands for envoys of consular rank were against the tradition of embassies to 'Scythian rulers', which were handled by soldiers and messengers. In a way both sides were right. Majority of known Roman negotiators such as Aspar, Plinta, Anatolius and Areobindus were in fact commanders and Nomus was *magister officiorum* at the time of his first embassy. Another commander, Dionysius, was considered as an envoy to Rua Priskos, fr. 2. However, although in case of Aspar, Anatolius and Areobindus their consular rank at the time of negotiations may have been coincidental, their mandate to seek a diplomatic solution stemming from their authority over military actions against the Huns, in case of Plinta and Dionysius their earlier consulships are explicitly mentioned as condition of eligibility. Senator was also an ex-consul as of the time of his embassy to Attila (see *PLRE* vol. 2, pp. 990-991).

⁴⁹⁶ Priskos, fr. 13.1 Attila was to demand as envoy: Nomus, Anatolius or Senator. He negotiated with all three at a different point of 447; see Croke 'Anatolius and Nomus: envoys to Attila', pp. 159-170; The imperial court consented to Attila's demands, sending Anatolius and Nomus, but had considerations of their own. Envoys were to placate Attila after the failed attempt on his life. It was expected that Nomus, as Chrysaphios' friend, would make the most effort, also financially, at convincing the Hunnic king to drop his demands for Chrysaphios' death as a punishment for orchestrating the assassination.

⁴⁹⁷ Priskos, fr. 15.

who made it clear to Maximinus that he would not accept an embassy from Constantinople unless it included specific individuals he had had a chance to conduct negotiations with previously. This is not unexpected, given the limited number of ‘professional diplomats’ in the imperial apparatus. But at the same time there was an expectation of envoys of adequate rank or even certain ranks deemed to be suitable for specific partners.⁴⁹⁸

Proper rank of envoys was not the only matter of prestige the Hunnic king was concerned with. The imperial court tried to keep the fiction of Attila being a Roman *magister militum*, who received payments rather than tribute. Granting the Hunnic ruler the Roman military rank was certainly an element of placing him within the order of the Roman universe, as simply another imperial subject. Priskos noted that Attila was increasingly frustrated with these attempts at keeping him symbolically subservient.⁴⁹⁹ Who Attila received the rank from has been differently interpreted. Maenchen-Helfen argued for the *magister militum* office being granted as part of a treaty between the Hun and Aetius, which ceded to Attila’s rule parts of Pannonia, connected to the embassy of Cassiodorus, the grandfather of the later official in Theodoric’s service. Thompson also stated that the rank was conferred on Attila by the western court as part of his cordial

⁴⁹⁸ Nechaeva, *Embassies – negotiations – gifts*, pp. 118-123.

⁴⁹⁹ Priskos, fr. 11: ἔλεγεν οὖν μετὰ Μήδους καὶ Πάρθους καὶ Πέρσας τοῦτο τὸ ὄνομα, ὅπερ αὐτὸν βούλονται Ῥωμαῖοι καλεῖν, καὶ τὴν ἀξίαν, ἣ αὐτὸν τετιμηκέναι νομίζουσιν, ἀποσεισάμενον ἀναγκάσειν σφᾶς ἀντὶ στρατηγοῦ βασιλέα προσαγορεύειν. ἤδη γὰρ καὶ χαλεπαίνοντα εἰπεῖν ὡς ἐκεῖνός μὲν οἱ αὐτοῦ θεράποντες εἰσι στρατηγοί, αὐτῷ δὲ οἱ τοῖς βασιλεύουσι Ῥωμαίων ὁμότιμοι. trans. Blockley: *[Constantiolus] said that after the Medes, Parthians and Persians, Attila would reject the title by which the Romans wished to call him and the rank with which they thought they had honoured him and would force them to address him as king instead of general. Already when angry he would say that his own subjects were generals of [Theodosius] and that his own generals were of equal worth to the Emperors of the Romans;* A similar example of Attila’s contestation of Roman pretence of superiority and attempts at reversing the ideological hierarchy of power is given in *Suda*, M 405 Μεδιόλανον: πολυάνθρωπος πόλις, ἣν καταλαβὼν Ἀττίλας ἡνδραποδίσατο. ὥς δὲ εἶδεν ἐν γραφῇ τοὺς μὲν Ῥωμαίων βασιλεῖς ἐπὶ χρυσῶν θρόνων καθημένους, Σκύθας δὲ ἀνήρημένους καὶ πρὸ τῶν σφῶν ποδῶν κειμένους, ζητήσας ζωγράφον ἐκέλευσεν αὐτὸν μὲν γράφειν ἐπὶ θάκου, τοὺς δὲ Ῥωμαίων βασιλεῖς κορυκοὺς φέρειν ἐπὶ τῶν ὤμων καὶ χρυσὸν πρὸ τῶν αὐτοῦ χεῖρ ποδῶν. *Milan: a populous city, seized and enslaved by Attila. When he saw a depiction of Roman emperors sitting on golden thrones, Scythians destroyed and lying dead at their feet, he demanded a painter and ordered him to paint him on a chair, with Roman emperors carrying leather sacks on their shoulders and pouring out gold at his feet.*

relations with Aetius and in order to supply the Huns with grain. Stickler largely follows Maenchen-Helfen, but builds on his argument further, seeing it as an attempt to institutionalise Attila's and his successors' position at the top of the Hunnic confederation through the Roman rank. However, Meier rightly points out that Priskos made no indication whether the rank came from the emperor in the West or the one in the East. Theodosius II was the more likely candidate, given how he was Priskos' βασιλεύς by default and there is no mention of the court in Ravenna paying any tribute.⁵⁰⁰ After his military success Attila did not want to tolerate this ideological device of Theodosius' court any longer.

There might have been yet another factor in play here. The expectation of proper diplomatic treatment of barbarian rulers reigning over former Roman territories, like the Vandal kingdom (see below), or the ones at the frontier zone, like the Hunnic Empire, resulted not only from the increase of their prestige, but also from the romanisation of their entourages. While 4th century imperial officials dealt with barbarian political entities with power hierarchies of non-Roman character, 5th century ones often faced rulers surrounded by Romans of similar social background to the envoys, serving the same roles as they would at the imperial court. Furthermore, these barbarian rulers engaged in diplomatic exchange between themselves, conducted in accordance with Roman norms and forms and with the help of their Roman subjects.

In some of these respects Attila's court was no different to its Vandal and Visigothic counterparts. Priskos' report of the embassy offers glimpses of role played by Romans in the functioning of the Hunnic court. *Notarii*, most likely of Roman

⁵⁰⁰ Maenchen-Helfen, *The World of the Huns*, p. 107; Cassiodorus *Var.* I 4 68-82; Thompson, *The Huns*, p. 140; T. Stickler, *Aëtius: Gestaltungsspielräume eines Heermeisters im ausgehenden Weströmischen Reich*, (München 2002), pp. 116-122; Meier, *Dealing with non-state societies*, pp. 649-650; Priskos, Fr. 11.2 627-631: "ἦν δὲ <ῆ> ἄξια, ἥς ὁ Κωνσταντίος ἐπεμνήσθη, στρατηγοῦ Ῥωμαίων, ἥς χάριν ὁ Ἀττίλας παρὰ βασιλέως ἐδέδεκτο τὸ τοῦ φόρου ἐπικαλύπτοντος ὄνομα, ὥστε αὐτῷ σιτηρεσίου προφάσει τοῦ τοῖς στρατηγοῖς χορηγουμένου τὰς συντάξεις ἐκπέμπεσθαι."

background, kept records of the fugitives who fled to the Empire.⁵⁰¹ Some of them, such as two consecutive secretaries of Attila, both named Constantius, are explicitly said to have been sent by Aetius at the Hunnic king's request.⁵⁰² The first Constantius, who originated from Gaul, retained his Roman connections. He handed over golden vessels, given to him by the bishop of Sirmium for the purpose of ransoming him in case he was captured by the Huns, in exchange for credit to Silvanus, an official in charge of bullion at Rome. Constantius was crucified on Attila's orders under suspicion of treachery, and when his appropriation of the vessels came to light, the Hunnic king used it as a pretext to pressure the western imperial court. Ravenna responded with an embassy to placate Attila, which was met at his court by the eastern legation led by Maximinus and accompanied by Priskos.⁵⁰³ But there were other Roman officials, whom Attila could have trusted more, since they had gone over to the Hunnic side willingly. Either seeking refuge from the Empire, as Eudoxius, a physician ensnared in a failed *bagaudae* revolt, or preferring the Hunnic court to a career in the imperial hierarchy, as in the case of Orestes.⁵⁰⁴ Roman political refugees were certainly also an occurrence in the sub-Roman kingdoms, as in the case of the *magister militum* and *comes* Sebastianus, Bonifatius' son-in-law and successor, who fled the western court controlled by Aetius and offered his service first at the eastern court, then to Theodoric I in Gaul, only to eventually become an advisor to Gaiseric in Africa and be murdered on his order.⁵⁰⁵ Sebastianus' frequent

⁵⁰¹ Priskos, fr. 11.2.188-191.

⁵⁰² Priskos, fr. 11.2.

⁵⁰³ Priskos, fr. 11.2.325-350.

⁵⁰⁴ For Eudoxius, see *Chronica Gallica* 452, s.a. 448: *Eudoxius arte medicus, pravi sed exercitati ingenii, in Bacauda id temporis mota delatus ad Chunos confugit*. Thompson, *The Huns*, pp. 139-140 considered the sheltering of Eudoxius an element of worsening relations between Attila and the West at the end of the forties and a tool of pressure on the Romans, by threatening to support the *bagaudae* and enact forceful social change. This is perhaps too farfetched, especially as we are lacking any more substantial evidence on Eudoxius' relevance amongst the *bagaudae* and these disorders are currently interpreted more as rebellions of local elites against the central government, than as social revolts. However, Eudoxius' flight certainly proves that Hunnic and other barbarian courts were a valid option for any Romans in conflict with the Empire.

⁵⁰⁵ Hydatius, 104, 129, 132, 144; Marcellinus comes, s.a. 435; Prosper, s.a. 440.

changes of masters imply fear of being given to his enemies.⁵⁰⁶ Political refugees could be subject to exchanges of ‘favours’ between the imperial court and its barbarian counterparts.

In case of most sub-Roman kingdoms the main source of court officials were groups of local senatorial and curial landowners. This had little applicability to Attila’s Hunnic confederacy as it did not make substantial territorial gains at the Empire’s expense. But there were exceptions. Orestes is a particularly interesting case, as his family connections, background and later fate are known, given that he is identified with the same Orestes that forced the emperor Julius Nepos out of Italy and established his son Romulus Augustulus, as the emperor, popularly described as the last emperor in the West.⁵⁰⁷ According to Gračanin, who builds on a suggestion by Enßlin, Orestes was sent to Attila in order to spy on him, and the western embassy encountered by Maximinus and Priskos, which was comprised among others of Orestes’ father and father-in-law, was to bring back to Ravenna information gathered by Attila’s secretary.⁵⁰⁸ In Gračanin’s interpretation of this particular case, the embassy was meant to find out whether Attila was planning to use the plea for rescue of sister of the emperor Valentinian III, Honoria, as a pretext to war, as happened in 450.⁵⁰⁹ Solving the matter of Attila’s demands for Silvanus’ head and the gold owed to him, as the envoys explained to Priskos, was to be a false pretence.

But contrary to what Gračanin suggests about Aetius surrounding Attila with his agents, Orestes being one of them, the Roman did not act in a manner that could imply

⁵⁰⁶ Steinacher, *Die Vandalen*, pp. 188-190 speculates that Sebastianus’ final demise at Gaiseric’s court may have been a result of the Vandal king considering the exile a potential rival. Having inherited the African networks of Bonifatius, Sebastianus could potentially muster support to replace Gaiseric. It seems barbarian kings were no less threatened by their officials and courtiers than the Roman emperors.

⁵⁰⁷ *PLRE* vol. 2, pp. 811-812.

⁵⁰⁸ W. Enßlin, *Orestes* in: *Paulys Real-Encyclopädie der Classischen Altertumwissenschaft* (Stuttgart 1942), p. 1012; H. Gračanin ‘The Western Roman embassy to the court of Attila in A.D. 449’ *Byzantinoslavica* 61 (2003), pp. 53-74, particularly p. 71.

⁵⁰⁹ Priskos, Fr. 17, 20.3 and 21.

he held loyalty to anyone but Attila himself. Priskos reports Orestes' remark about the mistake Chrysaphios made of inviting Edeco for a private meeting without him. Orestes probably already knew of the assassination plan and dropped such hints to find out who of the Roman embassy was involved.⁵¹⁰ He worked in Attila's interest rather than the Roman one. It is also worth noting that Aetius' son Carpilio was Attila's hostage at the time. Along with secretaries, who were said to be sent by Aetius, the western *generalissimo* certainly did not lack ears at the Hunnic king's court.⁵¹¹ The participation of Orestes' father and father-in-law in the embassy does seem to be a genuine attempt at gaining Orestes' help and using his influence on Attila to resolve the matter, rather than a covert extraction of intelligence data.⁵¹² It would suggest that Orestes' loyalty to Attila was strong enough to resist appeals by the imperial officials for intervention in the Empire's interest, and a personal connection was needed to facilitate Orestes' assistance. It seems more probable that Orestes chose service at Attila's side. He is said to have been a native of the part of Pannonia along the river Sava handed over to the Huns, and his and his father's contacts among the members of the imperial elite suggest that he was at the very least a member of the *curiales* class and a local landowner. Perhaps his service to the Huns, and his father's presence in the West, was a family strategy of retaining and furthering their social and material position by ensuring they have political standings in both regimes.

The service to Attila was not without its perks, as the case of the second of his secretaries, named Constantius, demonstrates. During one of the embassies to Constantinople, he was promised a wealthy and noble wife by the emperor Theodosius in exchange for convincing Attila to keep peace with the Empire.⁵¹³ Attila did not find

⁵¹⁰ Priskos, fr. 11.2.

⁵¹¹ Cassiodorus, *Variae* I 4 68-70; Priskos, fr. 11.2 191-195.

⁵¹² Priskos, fr. 11.2.317-323.

⁵¹³ Priskos, fr. 14.

Constantius' willingness to influence him disloyal. He even pressured the embassy of Maximinus, to keep the promise made to Constantius, albeit only after Constantius offered him a share in the dowry of the potential groom. Orestes' enlistment in the developing Hunnic administrative structure was not dissimilar to choices made by landowners in Gaul and Africa at the time, or in Italy in the following century.

Cities and towns could also be included in diplomatic exchange between Attila and the imperial court, not only as objects of negotiations but as a side in it. In his description of the first embassy of Anatolius to the Huns in 447, Priskos recounts Attila's demands, amongst them one concerning the town of Asemus, on the border of Illyria and Thrace.⁵¹⁴ The local garrison managed to withstand a Hunnic siege and then successfully raided the retreating enemy, liberating Roman captives and taking Hunnic ones of their own. The Hunnic ruler threatened not to accept the peace agreement with Constantinople, unless the freed Romans were either returned to him or ransomed and the captured Huns were set free. The imperial embassy, consisting of the *magister militum per Orientem*, Anatolius, and the *magister militum per Thracias*, Theodulus, was forced to concede to these demands. They sent a message to the town. Yet the Asimuntians, instead of simply complying with the request of the imperial officials, responded with claims and demands of their own. The freed Romans were said to have already left – an allegation that Priskos made clear was not true – and most of the Hunnic captives had been already killed, while the remaining ones would only be released if the Huns returned the children of the town, who were captured in an ambush.⁵¹⁵ After receiving that message from Asemus, Attila agreed with Anatolius to conduct a search of the children. The search proved fruitless. Agreement was reached, with the people of Asemus swearing an oath that there were no

⁵¹⁴ Priskos, fr 9.3 calls Asemus a *φρουρίον*, a fort, but the description of the Asimuntians acting as a community, and of its captured children and flocks make it seem as much a town as a military garrison.

⁵¹⁵ Priskos, fr. 9.3.

Roman captives in their town and returning the remaining Hunnic ones and Huns swearing there were no children of Asemus amongst them.

This case reveals how multi-layered the negotiations between barbarians, the imperial court and local communities could be. Even in a region of relatively stronger imperial presence than in the 5th century West, the different agendas of the imperial court, which aimed for a favourable peace agreement, a barbarian warlord, who sought to maximise the price and spoils he could obtain for concluding a treaty, and a town with its considerations for own citizens and freed captives all intertwined in a diplomatic game. The imperial officials, Anatolius and Theodulus, were ready to prioritise the imperial agenda at the expense of the local community, but at the same time gave the citizens of Asemus a chance to negotiate in their own interest, by adopting a more distant and passive approach. Priskos made it clear that the Roman side was aware of the Asimuntians' false oath about the captives but looked the other way. One could wonder if something similar did not happen on the Huns' side, where none of the captured children from Asemus were found. A similar question could be asked of the imperial embassy, which perhaps remained as quiet about the children from Asemus in Hunnic captivity as they were about the liberated captives present at Asemus.

After the final treaty negotiated by Anatolius in 449/450 Attila's focus shifted to the West. The eastern court did not involve itself in Attila's war on the western part of the Roman Empire until Marcian became the new emperor and attacked the Huns in 452.⁵¹⁶ In 453 Attila's death led to the eventual dissolution of his confederacy, removing it as a challenger and diplomatic partner for the eastern court.

⁵¹⁶ Hydatius, *Chronicon* 153.

The Visigoths

Alaric and Athaulf established a pattern for the negotiations of Visigothic leaders with Roman authorities, such as using military action as a tool to force a new agreement or establishing an emperor more sympathetic to them. Alaric placed Attalus on the imperial throne after his attempts to strike a treaty with the emperor Honorius were rejected time and time again.⁵¹⁷ Athaulf, dissatisfied with his arrangement with the Empire, backed the usurpation of Jovinus.⁵¹⁸ At the same time, they still recognised the imperial authority, which they desperately needed to achieve what they wanted: rank, subsidies and supplies that could be bestowed and sustained only by the imperial apparatus.

After the settlement of 418/419, conducted on the orders of the *magister militum* and later emperor – Constantius III – a more stable relationship between Visigoths and Romans developed.⁵¹⁹ It is assumed it did not mean disappearance of these tools of renegotiating arrangements to the Visigoths.⁵²⁰ But there is in fact very little evidence for actual renegotiations following Visigothic early post-settlement hostile actions against the Empire. In 426 Theodoric I besieged Arles but was repelled by Aetius, who defeated a Gothic ‘optimas’ Anaulf.⁵²¹ Whether Visigothic king achieved anything with this first major operation against Romans since the settlement is difficult to establish.⁵²² Probably

⁵¹⁷ Zosimos, VI 7.1; Sozomen, IX 8.1; Philostorgios XII.3; Orosius, II 3.3; Olympiodoros, fr. 6.

⁵¹⁸ Olympiodoros, fr. 18; Orosius, VII 42.6;

⁵¹⁹ Halsall, *Barbarian migrations*, pp. 228-232 discusses possible motivations of Constantius’ decision to settle Goths in Aquitania and evidence for the formal *foedus*.

⁵²⁰ Wolfram, *History of the Goths*, p. 175.

⁵²¹ Prosper s. a. 425; Hydatius, 92 and 93; These two testimonies are usually treated as proof of two different conflicts, see Wolfram, *History of the Goths*, p. 175-176; Heather, *The fall of the Roman Empire*, p. 286. The first attack was to be an attempt at exploiting chaos after Honorius’ death. In case of the second one Visigoths were to take advantage of Aetius’ involvement on other fronts. But Halsall, *Barbarian migrations*, pp. 237-238 argues that both Prosper’s and Hydatius’ evidence refer to the same campaign of 426 with second one using a different dating system and giving a distorted version of Visigothic commander’s name ‘Anaolsus’.

⁵²² Hydatius, 77 mentioned that Romans lost a battle in Spain to the Vandals, because of Gothic betrayal in 422, but there are not enough details to determine if Theodoric had anything to do with it.

at this point Avitus, a member of Gallic aristocracy, is said to travel to Toulouse to secure release of his captured kin.⁵²³ Once again nothing is mentioned about negotiating a new peace treaty. The only allusion to a diplomatic exchange involving Visigoths at the time is a remark on their ‘treacherous’ embassy to Gallaecia, which was most likely to the Suevi.⁵²⁴ One can infer Theodoric’s intention of using military threat as a way of extorting subsidies, gifts and lands from the imperial regime. But it is equally possible Visigothic attack against Arles was more of a raid than an expression of conscious policy of sustained pressure on the Empire. It is likely that as in the case of the earlier peace agreement with the Visigoths arranged by Constantius III or diplomatic practice of dealing with the Huns, Aetius was the one to negotiate in the aftermath of the conflict as the military commander, who operated in the relevant region.

The next Visigothic aggression in 436 met with a different response. A Visigothic push towards Rhône and siege of Narbonne designated to exploit Aetius’ weakened position after the conflict with Bonifatius and Ravenna, lead to a counteroffensive of Roman commander Litorius, who managed to reach Toulouse.⁵²⁵ Theodoric was to employ bishop of Ausciorum, Orientius, to negotiate on his behalf with Aetius and Litorius.⁵²⁶ Details of the legation, presenting Litorius as a bloodthirsty pagan and Aetius as respectful of the bishop stem from the hagiographic character of the source, but tasking Orientius with negotiations on Theodoric’s behalf seems probable enough.⁵²⁷ After Litorius’ defeat it was the Empire that sought peace. With Gaiseric capturing Carthage in 439, Visigoths became a lesser evil. Newly appointed praetorian prefect of Gaul – Avitus

⁵²³ Sidonius Apollinaris, *Carmen* VII 215-219.

⁵²⁴ Hydatius, 97.

⁵²⁵ Prosper, s.a. 436-439; Sidonius Appolinaris, *Carmen* VII 475-477 implies Visigothic retreat from Narbonne was negotiated by Avitus, who held a military office at the time. Wolfram, *History of the Goths*, p. 176.

⁵²⁶ *Vita Orientii* 3.

⁵²⁷ See below for cases of Suevi resorting to local bishops as their envoys. See also Gillett, *Envoys and Political Communication*, pp. 113-171.

– renewed *foedus* of 418.⁵²⁸ This arrangement seemingly satisfied both sides for a longer period of time.⁵²⁹ Except for a short stay of a political refugee Sebastianus at the Toulousan court in 444, there were little to no incidents.⁵³⁰ This peace treaty may have sanctioned Visigothic territorial gains and given them greater liberty in conducting their foreign affairs.⁵³¹ In 446 Visigoths accompanied Romans in an expedition against the Suevi in Spain.⁵³² *Foedus* withstood diplomatic machinations of Huns and Avitus was able to convince Theodoric to join forces with Aetius against Attila's invasion in 451.⁵³³

Theodoric's successor, Thorismund, returned to a more aggressive stance. He first attacked Alan *foederati* near Orleans and then turned his attention to Arles.⁵³⁴ Aetius supposedly failed to break the siege. Visigothic king only retreated after being invited to a banquet and receiving gifts from praetorian prefect Ferreolus.⁵³⁵ Thorismund evidently saw to exploit Rome's weakness and preoccupation with Attila's invasion in Italy. Three murders changed the dynamic of Romano-Visigothic relations once again. In 453 Thorismund was killed by his brothers Theodoric and Frederic.⁵³⁶ As the Visigothic king, Theodoric II, ostensibly supported Rome, sending an army against *bagaudae* in Spain.⁵³⁷ Murder of Aetius and subsequent assassination of Valentinian III led to even greater involvement of Theodoric in Roman affairs. He supported Avitus for the imperial throne

⁵²⁸ Sidonius Apollinaris, *Carmen* VII 295-311; Hydatius, 117; Prosper, s.a. 439.

⁵²⁹ Perhaps it is at this point that Visigoths were granted new territories such as Novempopulania, see Wolfram, *History of the Goths*, p. 176 n. 42 and Halsall, *Barbarian migrations*, pp. 246-247.

⁵³⁰ Hydatius, 129.

⁵³¹ Halsall, *Barbarian migrations*, p. 247 attributes intensification of relations with the Suevi in the following years to provisions of this treaty. However, relations between Visigothic and Suevi rulers existed earlier, see below for Valia's marriage alliance.

⁵³² Hydatius, 134.

⁵³³ Sidonius Apollinaris, *Carmen* VII 347-353; Jordanes, *Getica* 185; Prosper, s.a. 451;

⁵³⁴ Gregory of Tours, *LH* II 7; *Chronica Gallica ad annum 452 621* (s.a. 452); *Auctarium Hauniense* s.a. 451 and 453 (p. 302).

⁵³⁵ Sidonius Apollinaris, *Ep.* VII 12 3.

⁵³⁶ Prosper, s.a. 453; Hydatius, 156; Gregory of Tours, *LH* II 7. See above for indications that imperial acclamation was actually Avitus' initiative.

⁵³⁷ Hydatius, 158.

in 455 on the occasion of his 'legation' from the emperor Petronius Maximus.⁵³⁸ Close cooperation that followed this imperial elevation meant that embassies between these two partners are invisible in primary sources, it is also likely that they had little in common with more typical exchange.

As in the case of the Huns or Suevi (see below), a pattern of types of negotiators and envoys can be discerned in the period until Avitus' reign. During conflict military commanders such as Aetius, Litorius or even Avitus in 436/437 were the ones to handle brokering truces and initial agreement, which conditions, if needed, were later further negotiated by civilian officials, such as Avitus in his capacity as a praetorian prefect. One may note that we hear of civil officials sent on legations to deal with Visigoths and Huns either after Roman defeat or during times of peace. Ferreolus engaging Thorismund at Arles was dictated by circumstances. It seems military officials were trusted to handle arranging a diplomatic deal from the position of power, but when a need for concessions was expected civil officials were required. Unlike in case of the Huns, there is no indication that Visigoths had any preference for specific ranks of imperial envoys or negotiation partners. Although one must remember that they usually dealt with highest authorities in Gaul, be that military (Constantius, Aetius) or civil (Avitus, Ferreolus). On the other hand, a preference for sending envoys, who already dealt with specific diplomatic partner, is also observable. Particularly in the case of Avitus. However, contrary to the example of diplomatic exchange between Constantinople and Attila, it appears it had more to do with Roman strategy than openly stated requirement of Visigothic rulers. Choosing an envoy, who developed a relationship with Visigothic kings

⁵³⁸ Sidonius Apollinaris, *Carmen* VII 508-521; Hydatius, 163; H. Sivan 'Theodoric II, and Gothic-Roman politics from Avitus to Anthemius' *Hermes* 117.1, pp. 85-94, particularly pp. 87-88 remarks on how Sidonius' description of Avitus' arrival at Toulouse evoked images associated with the ceremony of imperial Adventus and included Theodoric and Frederic as prominent actors of it. See above for 'coincidental' character of Avitus' legation and proclamation.

and belonged to Gallic elites increased chances of success and ensured local elites accepted diplomatic arrangements.

Avitus' deposition and death in 456 once again put in flux the relationship between the Empire and Toulouse.⁵³⁹ Theodoric returned from Spain to face the new emperor. After Gallic opposition to Majorian was dealt with and initial hostilities were resolved in battle, Theodoric submitted to the emperor and they sent a joint legation to the Suevi.⁵⁴⁰ Cooperation, especially in Spain, continued throughout Majorian's short reign.⁵⁴¹ But after his death in 461 Roman officials in Gaul split into warring factions supporting different short-lived emperors. *Magister militum per Gallias* Agrippinus handed Narbonne over to Theodoric in exchange for assistance against Aegidius, Majorian's earlier nominee for the same military office.⁵⁴² Changing political situation of these years leaves little evidence for how diplomatic practices developed.⁵⁴³

With a modicum of stabilisation brought by the reign of the emperor Anthemius, dynamics of diplomatic exchange between the Empire and royal court at Toulouse become observable again. However, this time Visigothic 'partner' proved more hostile than his predecessors. Halsall plays down the innovative and assertive, if not aggressive, character of Euric's regime at least in first years of his reign, arguing against more traditional interpretations.⁵⁴⁴ Euric was to align his politics with the Gallic aristocracy, like his predecessors. It is true his expansion began later on. In 467/468 he received encouragements to conquer and divide Gaul with Burgundians from Gallic praetorian

⁵³⁹ Hydatius, 183; Gregory of Tours, *LHI* 11.

⁵⁴⁰ Hydatius 197. For general situation in Gaul, Burgundian aggression and local rebellions at the beginning of Majorian's reign see Halsall, *Barbarian migrations*, pp. 262-264.

⁵⁴¹ Hydatius, 201.

⁵⁴² Hydatius, 217.

⁵⁴³ Halsall, *Barbarian migrations*, pp. 267-269.

⁵⁴⁴ Halsall, *Barbarian migrations*, pp. 273-277; For traditional interpretation see Heather, *The fall of the Roman Empire*, pp. 415-417; Wolfram, *History of the Goths*, pp. 182-189.

prefect Arvandus, but it is uncertain what was Euric's attitude towards this offer.⁵⁴⁵ However, early diplomatic moves of Euric contradict Halsall's interpretation. After murdering his brother and taking over Visigothic kingship he sent envoys to Romans, Suevi and Vandals informing them of change in power.⁵⁴⁶ Roman West was clearly becoming a multipolar world of diplomatic exchange. Visigothic envoys to the Vandals left after hearing rumours of a Roman expedition to Africa, indicating that Euric sought some sort of an alliance with Gaiseric against Rome.⁵⁴⁷ Whatever his initial intentions were, eventually he took Auvergne, Arles and Marseilles, breaking *foedus* and effectively proclaiming himself as independent from the Empire.⁵⁴⁸ In 471 he defeated the last imperial army to cross the Alpes at Arles.⁵⁴⁹

In 475 Euric accepted what could be seen as the last embassy of the western emperor to Toulouse. Bishop Epiphanius of Ticinum approached Visigothic king in the name of Julian Nepos to seek peace.⁵⁵⁰ This legation is known from *Vita Epiphanii* penned by bishop's successor, Ennodius, himself a Gallic aristocrat.⁵⁵¹ Although elements of this narrative owe a lot to its genre, there are still pieces of significant information in it. Through Epiphanius the emperor forfeited any claim of supremacy over Euric. Visigothic king no longer needed to call the emperor his 'dominus' from now on they were each other 'amici'.⁵⁵² Technical terminology used by Ennodius could be hardly coincidental, this meant an official recognition of Euric's independence.⁵⁵³ Another mark

⁵⁴⁵ Sidonius Apollinaris, *Ep.* I 7 4-13; For dating, see Sivan 'Theodoric II, and Gothic-Roman politics from Avitus to Anthemius' pp. 92-93; Halsall, *Barbarian migrations*, p. 274.

⁵⁴⁶ Hydatius, 238.

⁵⁴⁷ Hydatius, 240.; Wolfram, *History of the Goths*, pp. 182-183.

⁵⁴⁸ Jordanes, *Getica* 238, 240 and 244; Sidonius Apollinaris, *Ep.* VI 6 1 and VII 6 4.

⁵⁴⁹ *Chronica Gallica ad annum 452* 649.

⁵⁵⁰ Ennodius, *Vita Epiphanii*, p. 351-355.

⁵⁵¹ *PLRE* II, pp. 393-394.

⁵⁵² Ennodius, *Vita Epiphanii*, p. 253: *Sufficiat, quod elegit aut certe patitur amicus dici qui meruit dominus appellari.*

⁵⁵³ Compare this to continuously addressing the emperor as 'dominus' by Burgundian king Sigismund (chapter 2.1).

of change was the treatment of envoy himself. Whereas Avitus is described by Sidonius as conferring with Visigothic kings in a friendly manner, Ennodius' Epiphanius operates within a set of protocol, interacting with court officials and speaking to Euric indirectly through an interpreter.⁵⁵⁴ Both images obviously owe their overtones to intentions of their authors. Sidonius tried to convey familiarity between Avitus and Theodoric II that was intended to stress the solid foundation of the Romano-Gothic alliance. Ennodius presented Euric as a powerful alien ruler to emphasize the remarkable achievement of his hero negotiating a peace treaty with him. However, the difference in themes may in fact reflect the development in diplomatic practice and character of Toulousian court.

Several Romans can be observed in the service of Visigothic kings in the first half of the 5th century. Paulinus of Pella's sons chose careers at the Visigothic court to retain some control over their father's landed estates in the region of Burdigalia. One of them must have even succeeded at reaching a relatively high station only to lose it together with his life and his father's property when he fell out of the king's favour. But, as Heather correctly points out, the real influx of Roman officials began in the second half of the 5th century, with Euric's expansion and the collapse of the imperial authority in Gaul and Spain.⁵⁵⁵ The presence of all these Romans, familiar with the workings of the imperial bureaucracy and socio-cultural conventions of diplomatic exchange, could not have been without influence on the royal courts' perspective and engagement with the Empire.

Ennodius described a Roman official in Gothic service involved in negotiations.⁵⁵⁶ Leo was the first amongst Euric's advisors, a *moderator* and an *arbiter*. He was the one to receive the legation and take care of it, leading it to the king. This does not differ from the way an embassy from Persia would be treated, with imperial officials delegated to

⁵⁵⁴ Sidonius Apollinaris, *Carmen* VII 458-571.

⁵⁵⁵ Paulinus of Pella, *Eucharisticus*, 498-515; P. Heather, *The Goths*, (Oxford 1996), pp. 191-194.

⁵⁵⁶ Ennodius, *Vita Epiphani*, p. 352.

take care of the foreign envoys and lead them in front of the ruler and the rest of the court.⁵⁵⁷ Epiphanius is said to have given a speech and convinced Euric to grant the embassy what they asked. However, the reader of Ennodius may in fact form the impression that the bishop's success was owed more to Leo's appreciation of the speech, rather than that of the Visigothic king. Euric is described grumbling in a foreign language (*gentile nescio quod murmur infringens*) and using an interpreter.⁵⁵⁸ As already mentioned the aim of Ennodius' hagiographical work was not to give a precise report of the negotiations between the Empire and the Visigoths, but rather praise his hero and predecessor. It is doubtful that Euric would not have at least some command of Latin, though it is possible it was not sufficient to use in an official court engagement. This picture is used to stress the difficulty of Epiphanius' task and therefore the significance of his success. But even if Ennodius' depiction is merely a literary invention, it is not without relevance, as it shows the expectations and perception of the 'barbarian' court from the perspective of the author and his audience. A Roman official in the king's service, and a code of conduct towards the embassy according to Roman standards, became part of the image of a Visigothic court at the time. The Visigothic king became an equal partner to the weakened emperor, instead of an occasionally insubordinate subject.

The Vandals

Another entity that aimed to be fully recognised and treated accordingly to its ambition was in Africa. Vandal kings had a better claim to be regarded as independent rulers than most due to their association with the Theodosian dynasty. They insisted on making use of diplomatic exchanges as one of the ways to frame themselves as rulers

⁵⁵⁷ Nechaeva, *Embassies – negotiations – gifts*, pp. 34-42.

⁵⁵⁸ Ennodius, *Vita Epiphani*, p. 353.

equal to the Roman emperor, but the road to this pretence, most visible during the reign of second Vandal king – Huneric – was a long one. In 429 Gaiseric crossed from Spain to Africa at the head of his Vandal host. He marched through Roman African provinces, capturing Hippo and clashing with Roman commanders Bonifatius and Aspar. Even though Romans eventually managed to stop Gaiseric's onslaught they sought out a diplomatic solution.⁵⁵⁹ In 435 peace was arranged, with the Empire ceding parts of Mauretania and Numidia to Gaiseric.⁵⁶⁰ It was negotiated by Trygetius, otherwise attested as *comes rei privatae* in 423.⁵⁶¹ As in cases of negotiations with Attila and Visigothic kings, civilian official was selected to arrange a peace deal that required concessions from Rome. Trygetius' experience in overseeing imperial land estates was probably seen as useful in securing a treaty that included settlement and division of existing provinces.

Gaiseric was not satisfied with his residence in Hippo and lands gained in 435. In 439 he captured Carthage. Combined efforts of western and eastern parts of the Empire to regain Africa Proconsularis and Byzacena failed in 441 and Valentinian III was forced to acknowledge Gaiseric's rule over these provinces, as well as eastern regions of Numidia: Gaetulia and Abaritana.⁵⁶² In exchange Gaiseric pledged to pay an annual tribute and send his son Huneric as a hostage to the emperor.⁵⁶³ This arrangement clearly was not a typical *foedus*, but from the imperial perspective Gaiseric remained Roman subject.⁵⁶⁴

⁵⁵⁹ Heather, *The fall of the Roman Empire*, pp. 269-271 and 290; J. P. Wijnendaele, *The last of the Romans: Bonifatius – warlord and comes Africae* (London, 2015), pp. 87-96.

⁵⁶⁰ Prosper s.a. 435; A. Merrills, R. Miles, *The Vandals* (Oxford, 2010), p. 60-61 envision it as a typical *foedus*, Steinacher, *Die Vandalen*, p. 145 doubts that Vandals ever became *forma foederati*. See chapter 3.2 for impact this division had on landscape of sectarian struggle between 'Nicenes' and 'Arians'.

⁵⁶¹ *PLRE* II, p. 1129.

⁵⁶² Prosper, s.a. 441 and 442; Victor of Vita, *Historia persecutionis* I 13; Steinacher, *Die Vandalen*, pp. 143-144.

⁵⁶³ Prokopios, *History of the wars*, III 4 12-15.

⁵⁶⁴ Steinacher, *Die Vandalen*, p. 145.

This peace treaty lasted for over a decade and Vandals gave a proof of their loyalty by raiding Suevic hold Gallaecia.⁵⁶⁵ It is believed in this period Gaiseric negotiated an engagement of his son Huneric to Valentinian's daughter Eudocia.⁵⁶⁶ The emperor on the other hand intervened successfully to obtain an ordination of new bishop of Carthage.⁵⁶⁷ The issue of 'Nicene' Church in Africa was to become one of the usual topics brought to the attention of Vandal kings by imperial envoys. Murder of Valentinian in 455 put an end to this period of moderately friendly relations. Chaos resulting from the emperor's death proved to be too big of an opportunity to pass for Gaiseric. He sailed with his fleet to Italy and captured Rome, pillaging the eternal city and taking with him Valentinian's family, including his intended daughter-in-law.⁵⁶⁸

The eastern emperor Marcian stepped in to bring about a diplomatic solution. He sent an embassy from Constantinople to dissuade Gaiseric from further raids on Italy and retrieve Valentinian's family.⁵⁶⁹ Rather unusually it was headed by an Arian bishop Bleda. The significance placed by the Vandals on the religious matters in their relations with the Empire was clearly recognised in the choice of the imperial envoy. In this particular case, Marcian's choice did not accrue much, with Gaiseric ignoring the envoy. Keeping imperial women captive was a diplomatic asset, which not only gave the Vandal king an edge in future exchanges of embassies, but also served to ensure the position of his dynasty. Gaiseric finally married Huneric to Eudocia, the daughter of Valentinian III and Eudoxia.⁵⁷⁰ The Vandal rulers thereby became part of the imperial family. Gaiseric's

⁵⁶⁵ Hydatius, 131; Halsall, *Barbarian migrations*, p. 249.

⁵⁶⁶ F. M. Clover, *Flavius Merobaudes: a translation and historical commentary* (Philadelphia 1971), pp. 20-27; Merrills, Miles, *The Vandals*, p. 63.

⁵⁶⁷ Victor of Vita, I 24.

⁵⁶⁸ For summary of these events, see Merrills, Miles, *The Vandals*, pp. 116-118. They make a point about the personal character of antique treaties. Gaiseric was no longer bound by agreement with Valentinian III, so he attacked. This resembles above mentioned case of Goths supporting the usurper Procopius against Valens, because the former was from the house of Constantine they made the treaty with. This of course should be treated more as an excuse for political action than its motivation.

⁵⁶⁹ Priskos, fr. 31.1

⁵⁷⁰ Priskos, fr. 38.1.

raids and expansion eventually met with decisive action from the new western emperor – Majorian – who planned a campaign against the Vandals. However, his attempts in 460 ended in an utter failure and the Empire needed to turn to diplomacy yet again. Gaiseric's envoys obtained peace from resigned Majorian.⁵⁷¹

In 462, most likely owing to efforts of Constantinopolitan court of the emperor Leo, Valentinian's remains were sent to Constantinople and senator Olybrius was allowed to marry late emperor's younger daughter Placidia.⁵⁷² This improvement in relations between Constantinople and Carthage did not escape the attention of the new western emperor, Libius Severus, desperate for relief from Vandal threat. His regime turned to Leo to seek a diplomatic solution to Gaiseric's continuous raids on Italy. In 465 an embassy headed by Tatianus, patrician and former urban prefect of Constantinople, reached Carthage.⁵⁷³ High rank of the envoy did not impress Vandal king, who chose not to grant him audience. He remained hostile to Libius Severus. Nevertheless, the power dynamic of Vandal-Roman relations clearly shifted from Carthage-Ravenna axis to Carthage-Constantinople one. This contrasts with the Visigoths, who until the very end of the Empire in the West, tended to deal with local, Gallic officials or central authority in Italy.

After Severus' death Gaiseric pressed Olybrius as his candidate for the imperial throne with Leo, but to no avail.⁵⁷⁴ Imperial envoy, Phylarchus, who dealt with Gaiseric earlier, informed Vandal king of Leo's selection of the new emperor – Anthemius – and presented him with an ultimatum of stopping his aggression on Italy or facing

⁵⁷¹ Hydatius, 200 and 209.

⁵⁷² Hydatius, 216.

⁵⁷³ Priskos, fr. 41.

⁵⁷⁴ Prokopios, *History of the wars*, III 6 5; Priskos, 52; Merrills, Miles, *The Vandals*, p. 120 argue Olybrius becoming the emperor was a matter of earlier diplomatic arrangement between Carthage and Constantinople. I would not go as far to call it a treaty, as they do, but it is clear that in this period Constantinople had a much better relationship with Carthage than Ravenna.

retaliation.⁵⁷⁵ Both the emperor in Constantinople and his new colleague in the West were determined to solve the issue of Vandal Africa. In 468 expedition of *magister militum* Basiliscus sailed against the Vandals.⁵⁷⁶ The last great effort of both parts of the Roman Empire to retake Africa ended in a disaster. Leo concluded a separate peace.⁵⁷⁷ In 472 Olybrius was sent to Italy to mediate between Anthemius and Ricimer. Afterwards he was to go to Africa to negotiate peace for Italy with Gaiseric, eastern court clearly counting on Gaiseric 'fondness' for Olybrius. However, before that happened Olybrius became the emperor.⁵⁷⁸

Vandal king did not enjoy his favourite's prominence for long, as Olybrius died only couple of months after his accession. With Zeno succeeding after Leo, relationship between Carthage and Constantinople needed to be defined once again. Zeno sent senator Severus as his envoy, granting him the title of patrician.⁵⁷⁹ He proved to be more effective than his predecessor, Tatianus, all these years before. He achieved release of some captives and ransomed others. Gaiseric also agreed to reopen 'Nicene' churches and allow exiled bishops to return to Africa.⁵⁸⁰

Church matters became even more prominent in Romano-Vandal relations in the reign of Huneric, differentiating this diplomatic relationship from that with other 'barbarians'. Vandal kings decreed Arianism, to which they adhered, to be the state religion of the African province they ruled and ensured it received proper infrastructure for its role, at the expense of the persecuted 'Nicene' Church, which emperors considered to be under their protection. By claiming all Arians in the eastern part of the Roman Empire as his to protect, Huneric positioned himself as equal to the emperor, who tried

⁵⁷⁵ Priskos, 52.

⁵⁷⁶ Steinacher, *Die Vandalen*, pp. 221-224.

⁵⁷⁷ Theophanes, AM 5963.

⁵⁷⁸ *Chronicon paschale*, s.a. 464; *PLRE* II, pp. 796-798.

⁵⁷⁹ Malchos, fr. 5.

⁵⁸⁰ Victor of Vita, I 51.

to secure the rights of the Nicenes in Vandal Africa. These matters are discussed further in chapter 3.2

Besides focus on religious matters, there was one more element that distinguished Romano-Vandal relations: association with the house of Theodosius. It served Huneric when he sought peace with the emperor Zeno. The Vandal king employed his family link as a pretext for an embassy, claiming that the fair treatment of Huneric's sister-in-law Placidia by Zeno led him to ask for the emperor's friendship.⁵⁸¹ The Vandals could hardly be treated just as another 'barbarians' usurping dominion over the Roman land anymore.

In other regards, such as dependence on Roman officials in conducting diplomacy, Vandals probably did not differ so much from the Visigoths and even the Huns. Roman advisors at the Vandal king's side are already attested for Gaiseric, who was accompanied in his invasion of Africa by Romans who entered his service in Spain, named Arcadius, Eutychius, Paschasius and Probus.⁵⁸² A glimpse of the influence of Roman officials in barbarian service on shaping the foreign relations and policies of the Vandal court can be observed in Victor of Vita's *Historia persecutionis Africanae provinciae*. King Huneric considered introducing new taxation on the property of the deceased Nicene bishops, after earlier reaching an agreement with the Constantinopolitan court on the rights of the Nicene clergy in Vandal Africa and those of the Arian one in the Roman Empire (see chapter 3.2 for more details). The change of policy was stopped at the planning stage, when Huneric was advised by his *domestici* on the potential repercussion of such a move. The Vandal king was told that the emperor would react with a symmetrical response, which would entail equal or graver sanctions against the Arian bishops in Thrace and

⁵⁸¹ Malchos, fr. 17; When Huneric's son, Hilderic, became king his descent from the Theodosian family became part of the royal propaganda of power. An epigram praised the Vandal king as progeny of the heroic emperor Theodosius: *Anthologia Latina* 215; Conant, *Staying Roman*, pp. 43-44.

⁵⁸² Prosper, s. a. 437.

other regions under Roman rule. The king was persuaded to give up on this new policy.⁵⁸³ The *domestici* mentioned by Victor are clearly professional Roman officials advising their ruler on matters of diplomatic relations with the Empire, influencing the direction of foreign policy.

Suevi, Gallaeci and the distant Empire

A similar calculated withdrawal and detachment of the imperial establishment from representing locals in their relations with the barbarians as in the case of the dispute between Attila and Asemus happened in Spain. There an even weaker position of the central authority led to such a stance more often than in the East.

After Hasdingi Vandals left Baetica for Africa in 429, Suevi were the only significant barbarian host to remain in Spain from among several different barbarian groups to invade in 409.⁵⁸⁴ Recovered from their earlier losses suffered at the hands of Romans, Visigoths and Vandals, Suevi moved to seize the new opportunity provided by their former enemies' departure. In 430 they raided Gallaecia, but soon after sought peace with the Empire. Orosius noted that Suevi requested peace treaty with Rome in the second half of the 410s, under the pressure of Roman and Visigothic onslaught.⁵⁸⁵ Romans seemingly delivered Suevi from being eradicated in the Nervasian Mountains in 419 by Vandals of Gunderic.⁵⁸⁶ This may suggest that they reached some sort of an agreement around this time, but it is in the 430s that history of Suevi-Roman 'diplomatic' relations may be studied in more detail. That is in no small part thanks to the evidence provided by bishop Hydatius.

⁵⁸³ Victor of Vita, *Historia persecutionis*, II 23-24.

⁵⁸⁴ Hydatius, 34, 60, 63 and 90; Orosius, VII 43 13-15.

⁵⁸⁵ Orosius, VII 43 14

⁵⁸⁶ Hydatius, 71 and 74; Thompson, *Romans and Barbarians*, p. 165.

The perspective of Hydatius, a 5th century chronicler is unique. The bishop of Aquae Flaviae and author of a chronicle had a keen interest in the shaping of the negotiations between the Empire, local *civitates* and the Suevi and other barbarians. His systematic focus on embassies finds little analogy amongst his literary predecessors and successors.⁵⁸⁷ The chronicle did not shy away from depicting acts of violence and chaos, which destabilized the social structure of the region. The more vivid and lengthy descriptions focus on cities pillaged, clergy mishandled, and holy places ruined.⁵⁸⁸ The bishop of Aquae Flaviae refers to the Suevi predominantly in negative terms, as untrustworthy and violent enemies. At the same time his primary focus is to find an agreement that would ensure some sort of a peaceful *modus vivendi* with the Suevi warband, which explains his interest in diplomatic exchange.⁵⁸⁹

With that motivation he took part in a legation to Aetius to receive the imperial authorities' support in the negotiations with the Suevic king in 431. The Gallaeci managed to strike a peace agreement with the Suevi under king Hermeric, who pillaged central Gallaecia, but suffered heavy losses at *castella* held by locals from which they could counter Suevic incursions.⁵⁹⁰ After a short respite, hostilities were renewed, the peace treaty between the Suevi and Gallaeci was broken and Hydatius himself, one could imagine with the support of other local authorities, sought help from Aetius, the main representative of the imperial authority in Gaul and, by extension, Spain.⁵⁹¹ The response of the *magister militum* was to send the *comes* Censurius in 432, but not as a military

⁵⁸⁷ Gillett, *Envoys and Political Communication*, pp. 36-42.

⁵⁸⁸ Hydatius, 165-175.

⁵⁸⁹ Gillett, *Envoys and Political Communication*, p. 46.

⁵⁹⁰ Hydatius, 81.

⁵⁹¹ Hydatius, 86 the fact that the bishop of Aquae Flaviae describes the *pax* as made between Suevi and Gallaeci "*Rursum Suevi initam cum Callicis pacem libata sibi occasione conturbant;*" is interesting in and of itself. It stressed the regional character of it. Local authorities could be a partner to barbarian warbands, however not a sufficient one for the long term, as later developments show. The Suevi sought a confirmation and concession from the imperial government, judging correctly that such an agreement would secure their interests better. If they could not reach it, they would continue their attacks until they coerced the provincials into submission or were destroyed.

commander with a force sufficient to beat the Suevi, but as an envoy to negotiate a peace agreement.⁵⁹² Hydatius and other envoys seem to have been content with Aetius sending one of his officials, rather than responding with a military intervention of any sort. It seems that was the local embassy's aim in the first place – to have an official sanction from the imperial authority that would solidify a peace agreement as one not only between locals and barbarians, but also involving the imperial court.⁵⁹³ Judging by the Suevic king's reaction and conclusion of the treaty, imperial sanction was also something desired by the barbarians themselves. Censurius returned from the embassy, hostages were given, and the peace reaffirmed.⁵⁹⁴ An interesting aspect of this is that Aetius, not the imperial court was the primary partner for the 'barbarians' in negotiations. In similar manner, it was Constantius III, before he became emperor, who in his capacity as the *magister militum* negotiated the settlement treaty with the Visigoths in 418/419. It seems in the West the mighty *generalissimi* supplanted the emperor and his court in their diplomatic dealings.

It seems that to the Suevi this was more a beginning of negotiations than a final agreement. The struggle for power between Aetius, Bonifatius and court in Ravenna in years 432-433 and instability caused by it may have been the reason behind Suevi attempt at negotiating a new arrangement. Hermeric employed bishop Symphosius as his envoy to the imperial authorities in 435 but failed to achieve anything.⁵⁹⁵ It appears the Empire was not particularly interested in reaching a more comprehensive arrangement with the Suevi and, while entirely content with placating provincial elites, was unwilling to commit on a greater scale either diplomatically or militarily. From the perspective of the Empire, there was no point in reaching a lasting agreement with a group of barbarians

⁵⁹² Hydatius, 88.

⁵⁹³ Gillett, *Envoys and Political Communication*, p. 44.

⁵⁹⁴ Hydatius, 91.

⁵⁹⁵ Hydatius, 92.

operating in a distant and isolated region, when more pressing threats lingered closer to the imperial centre. The Suevi were of little concern and could be dealt with later, when the situation on the more important fronts was resolved. The involvement of Symphosius on the other hand shows that the local elites had a stake in seeking a longer-term solution and were ready to represent the Suevi to reach such.⁵⁹⁶

The negotiations continued later on, with Censurius returning to the Suevi in 437, this time with an otherwise unknown Fretimundus.⁵⁹⁷ The peace between the Suevi and the Gallaecians party they were in conflict with was once again reaffirmed: *Suevi cum parte plebis Calleciae cui adversabantur pacis iura confirmant*.⁵⁹⁸ However, once again it did not last for long. King Hermeric, due to his illness, transferred the kingship to his son Rechila in 438. The new Suevi leader proved to be energetic and capable. He defeated Andevotus in Baetica.⁵⁹⁹ Rechila, evidently encouraged by this victory, besieged Censurius in Martylis. The *comes* surrendered to the new king.⁶⁰⁰

Even faced with an untrustworthy partner such as the Suevi, locals preferred negotiations over military solutions. If we were to take Hydatius' view as one representative for the Gallaecian elites, then a certain scepticism towards military

⁵⁹⁶ As time passed, locals started to see Suevi as a valid option to push their own agenda. In 449, a certain Basilius gathered his own retinue of *Bagaudae* and joined the Suevic king Rechiarius. He slaughtered imperial federate troops and raided Ilerda – Hydatius, 133-134.

⁵⁹⁷ Hydatius, 102. Perhaps Fretimundus' involvement was significant, judging by his Germanic name, but without any further data his connection to the Suevi or other barbarians cannot even be speculated on.

⁵⁹⁸ Hydatius, 105.

⁵⁹⁹ Hydatius, 106: *Hermericus rex morbo oppressus Rechilam filium suum substituit in regnum; qui Andevotum cum sua quam habebat manu ad Singillionem Beticae fluvium aperto Marte prostravit magnis eius auri et argenti opibus occupatis*. There are two possibilities of who Andevotus was Thompson, *Romans and Barbarians*, p. 173 counts Andevotus as a Roman commander following Isidore, *Historia Suevorum* 85 (II 300): *Reccilanem filium suum in regnum substituit qui cum magna parte exercitus missus Andevotum Romanae militia ducem cum multis copiis ad Singilium Baeticae fluvium inito bello prostravit magnis eius auri argentique copiis occupatis*. The choice of words leaves little doubt that Isidore paraphrased Hydatius. The unanswered question remains whether he added the detail about Andevotus' command, or if it originated from a different tradition of Hydatius. *PLRE* vol. II, p. 86 speculates Andevotus to be a Vandal. The mention of taking rich spoils may be interpreted as taking over a soldier's salary, but it is more likely the treasure of a rival warlord, that Andevotus probably was, especially if we are to deem the Roman command as Isidore's addition.

⁶⁰⁰ Hydatius, 113.

intervention is discernible. A Roman expedition led in 446 by the *magister utriusque militiae* Vitus accompanied by a Gothic contingent, which marched into Spain, is described as an enterprise that led to the harassment of the residents of Baetica and Carthaginiensis by the imperial forces. After the imperial army fled from battle, the Suevi pillaged both regions.⁶⁰¹ The only thing this expedition achieved was destabilisation. In the aftermath of it the new king of the Suevi, Rechiarius, son of Rechila, continued the aggressive policies of his father, raiding, plundering and capturing cities.⁶⁰² Eventually he settled for peace with Romans after embassy of *comites* Fronto and Mansuetus in 452, which he then renewed in 454 with imperial envoy Justinianus.⁶⁰³ The latter embassy ordered by Valentinian III after Aetius' death contrasts with the Suevi efforts to strike a new arrangement after turbulent years of 432-433. This time it was imperial regime that attempted to ensure its diplomatic relations remained undisturbed by internal power struggles. Another deviation from the pattern of relations with the Suevi is that unlike Censorius, Mansuetus and Fronto, Justinianus does not appear to be a military man. He is otherwise unattested, so we cannot know whether he was a civilian official or a private person enjoying trust of the emperor.⁶⁰⁴ Perhaps this reflects the fact that it was a renewal of a peace treaty rather than a new agreement concluding a conflict. However, new Roman crisis rendered this arrangement null. The death of Valentinian III and ensuing chaos motivated Suevi king to seek new conquests.⁶⁰⁵ Although in his choice of an envoy to manage this crisis the new emperor Avitus counted on Fronto's previous successful dealings with Rechiarius, the embassy achieved nothing.⁶⁰⁶

⁶⁰¹ Hydatius, 126.

⁶⁰² Hydatius, 137, 140, 142.

⁶⁰³ Hydatius, 155 and 151.

⁶⁰⁴ *PLRE* II, p. 645.

⁶⁰⁵ Hydatius, 172.

⁶⁰⁶ Hydatius, 170.

Following events did not inspire much enthusiasm in the bishop of Aquae Flaviae.⁶⁰⁷ The campaign led by Theodoric II in 456, on emperor Avitus' orders, that crushed the Suevi at Campus Paramus meant only new hardships for provincials. Hydatius did not meet these attempts at restoring imperial rule with open arms, seeing its effects as only leading to further bloodshed and despoliation of the entire region with more cities falling to different warbands and armies⁶⁰⁸. His is the perspective of a member of the local elite concerned foremost with ensuring the preservation of the social order. The Roman state could no longer guarantee it and its attempts at reconstituting its rule disturbed the fragile balance achieved by the years of conflicts and negotiations between the curial elites and the barbarians. With the Suevi dissolving into multiple warbands and new Gothic incursions, there was hardly room for reaching a peace agreement.⁶⁰⁹ Perhaps most telling of the detachment of the provincial elites in Spain from the imperial centre was the fact that the Gallaecians received a joint embassy from Romans and Goths, informing them of a peace agreement reached between the emperor Majorian and king Theodoric.⁶¹⁰ The provincials seem to be nearly a separate entity that was to be informed of diplomatic proceedings between other powers.

But even before Majorian a shift in importance of diplomatic partners is observable. Rechiarius' first aggressive campaign was preceded by forging a marriage alliance with Theodoric I.⁶¹¹ Following Valentinian's death Rechiarius was approached by envoys of his brother-in-law, Theodoric II, who tried to dissuade him from his

⁶⁰⁷ Hydatius, 166-175.

⁶⁰⁸ A different view can be found in Sivan 'Theodoric II, and Gothic-Roman politics from Avitus to Anthemius', pp. 85-94, who considers Hydatius' description as positive towards effects of Avitus' intervention.

⁶⁰⁹ Hydatius, 179-181 notes that initially after the Suevi split into factions one supporting Framtane, the other Maldras, with a Gothic deserter, Aioulfus, earlier pushing his candidacy for the Suevic kingship, they were willing to reach peace with the Gallaecians, but the impossibility of achieving a lasting agreement with a group lacking political unity was soon displayed in renewed raids conducted by Maldras in Lusitania.

⁶¹⁰ Hydatius, 192.

⁶¹¹ Hydatius, 140.

expansion plans.⁶¹² After a period of political dissolution of the Suevi, it was Visigothic appointee, Remismundus, who became the new king of reunited Suevi.⁶¹³ Remismundus only turned back to the Empire, sending an embassy to the emperor Anthemius led by Lusidius, a member of local elite in Olisipo (modern Lisbon) after Euric became hostile to him.⁶¹⁴ With the disappearance of central imperial authority in the West, diplomatic relations gradually became multipolar.

Not all roads lead to rome

The barbarian rulers and their entourage did not limit themselves just to dealings with the imperial authorities and members of the local elites. Diplomatic exchange between courts of sub-Roman kingdoms-to-be became more and more common, not yet reaching the significance it would gain in the 6th century, with Theodoric the Amal's system of family connections so skilfully dissolved by Clovis and eastern Roman diplomacy but showing a tendency towards a similar arrangement of diplomacy between multiple powers. A thorough study of these 'interbarbarian' relations is beyond the scope of this thesis but taking into account at least some of the evidence serves well to better contextualise the Romano-barbarian diplomatic relationships.

The 'Hunnic alternative' served as one catalyst for the process, by providing an alternative power centre to deal with to the Roman one for the tribes and federates on the Rhine *limes* and in Gaul. There was some diplomatic exchange between Attila and the Visigothic Theodoric, and some relations with Gaiseric, but in the end the Hunnic king was too far away and had too little to offer besides a military alliance to rulers who were

⁶¹² Jordanes, *Getica* 229-231.

⁶¹³ Hydatius, 223 and 226; Jordanes, *Getica* 234.

⁶¹⁴ Hydatius, 237, 238, 240, 251. Lusidius earlier betrayed Olisipo to the Suevi see 246.

interested predominantly in expanding their influence and domain within the Roman world.⁶¹⁵

The main aim in the cases of the Visigoths and Vandals was the stabilisation of rule. At one point, they forged an alliance strengthened by marriage bonds. Huneric married Theodoric's daughter.⁶¹⁶ The alliance proved ephemeral in nature. The agreement fell apart the moment a Roman alternative was put on the table. Offered a better match for his son in the form of the emperor's daughter Eudocia, Gaiseric got rid of his daughter-in-law, accusing her of planning his assassination and sending her off to her father disfigured.⁶¹⁷ In contrast to the Suevi, who seem to have been mainly focused on solidifying and stabilising their territorial gains by reaching a favourable agreement with the Empire and locals, the Visigoths and the Vandals, being past this stage of relationship with Rome, attempted to play at diplomacy on a macro level. Even the fairly isolated Suevi received legates from the Visigoths on a number of occasions and were not beyond the horizon of Vandal interests.⁶¹⁸ There were at least two marriages between the Visigothic royal family and the Suevic aristocracy. Of the first one there is indirect information in the form of a reference to Ricimer's origin. He is said to have been descended from royal families on both sides, with his father being of a Suevic royal family and his mother of a Gothic one, a daughter of king Valia.⁶¹⁹ This could mean an attempt at forging an alliance between Suevi and Goths before 418, the date of Valia's death, probably sometime during the Gothic campaign against the Silingi and Alans in Spain.⁶²⁰ However, with Theodoric I replacing Valia and a new family rising to power amongst the

⁶¹⁵ F. M. Clover 'Geiseric and Attila' *Historia: Zeitschrift für Alte Geschichte*, 22/1 (1973) pp. 104-117. Steinacher, *Die Vandalen*, p.192.

⁶¹⁶ Jordanes, *Getica* 184.

⁶¹⁷ Jordanes, *Getica* 184.

⁶¹⁸ Hydatius, 163, 165, 193-204, 233.

⁶¹⁹ Sidonius Apollinaris, *Carmen* II 360-370 and A. Gillett "The birth of Ricimer" *Historia: Zeitschrift für Alte Geschichte*, 44/3 (1995), pp. 380-384.

⁶²⁰ For the campaign, see Hydatius, 67-68.

Goths, the link forged by the marriage between a Suevic aristocrat and Valia's daughter was no longer relevant.⁶²¹ The later career of Ricimer in the Roman military rather than in the service of either Suevic or Gothic rulers could signify a secondary position within the Suevic aristocracy and a need to gain his standing elsewhere. Perhaps the Suevic side of Ricimer's family also lost their primary status.

The second union and its context are better known, with the Suevic king Recharius marrying the daughter of Theodoric I in 448/9.⁶²² This alliance inspired Recharius to new raids. He pillaged Vasconiae, lands neighbouring Caesaraugusta, and took Ilerda. However, it did not outlast Theodoric's death. With Theodoric II ascending to the throne and establishing Avitus as emperor, the relations with the Suevi became a function of the Roman alliance. Romans and Goths sent their coordinated embassies to keep Recharius in check in 456, but he responded by raiding Tarraconensis.⁶²³ Theodoric attempted one more legation to his brother-in-law, but it also failed to convince Recharius to stop his raids, in the end leading to his downfall and the Suevi dissolving into competing warbands.⁶²⁴ Gothic embassies continued, though, with the demise of the emperor Avitus in Italy no longer nominally representing Roman interest. Hydatius informs us of embassies sent to the Suevi by both Visigoths and Vandals in 458 though he failed to note which of the several competing Suevic kings was to receive them.⁶²⁵ It was probably a reaction to Majorian's plans to subjugate the Visigoths and prepare an expedition against the Vandals. Another legation in 460 was already in the context of joint efforts of Romans and Visigoths to pacify Spain before invading Africa. Suevic

⁶²¹ For the lack of familial connections between Theodoric I and Valia, see Gillett 'The birth of Ricimer', pp. 380-384.

⁶²² Hydatius, 132.

⁶²³ Hydatius, 163.

⁶²⁴ Hydatius, 165.

⁶²⁵ Hydatius, 186.

embassy to Theodoric followed it later the same year.⁶²⁶ The diplomatic exchange continued, with a Gothic embassy led by Salla to the Suevic king Remismund in 466 and intensified again with Euric's murder of Theodoric. Several embassies between Suevi, Goths, Vandals and the emperor followed, although achieving little beyond gathering information.⁶²⁷

The evidence for Spain is unique thanks to Hydatius and his interest in embassies, but there is no reason to believe Gaul was any different with its numerous barbarian kings and Roman warlords. With the weakening of imperial power in the provinces, diplomatic relations became multipolar. Barbarian kings and warlords exchanged embassies between themselves, civic communities and the imperial court, drawing on Roman practices, but applying them to a new geopolitical context.

Conclusions

The world of foreign affairs changed significantly over the span of the 5th century. The assertiveness of barbarian warlords, transformed into kings, forced Roman practice to adjust accordingly. The imperial court was no longer dealing with frontier kings, often mimicking Roman practices, but lacking the proper apparatus and resources, who could be simply removed by assassination or abduction. Royal courts had officials of their own and the gap in resources, though still substantial between the eastern Roman court and the emerging sub-Roman kingdoms' courts, was not as wide as in the 4th century and earlier. There were differences between these diplomatic 'partners'. Attila was mostly interested in extorting more payments and recognition of his position. Gaiseric sought to keep and expand his territorial gains. Suevi were continuously struggling for a more satisfying settlement arrangement. But there were also common developments. Local

⁶²⁶ Hydatius, 200 and 203.

⁶²⁷ Hydatius, 233-241.

elites, who occasionally represented ‘their’ barbarians in the negotiations with the imperial officials out of their own interest in reaching an acceptable agreement began in time to fill the ranks of royal courtiers, Romanising them in some sense. Adjusting to the fact that they could no longer dictate the conditions to their enemies and allies, Romans sought to win them over with envoys of the appropriate rank and relationship to given ruler or his entourage.

The western court, with its instability and decrease of revenues, became a less desired partner of a diplomatic exchange. Vandals started to treat Constantinople as the only Roman diplomatic partner that mattered. Visigoths focused on relations with their Gallic neighbours, before they decided to break with the Empire for good. The development of a diplomatic set of protocols to better reflect the much more complicated reality of foreign relations between the remaining part of the Roman Empire and its post-Roman partners and rivals in the West, happened on the platform of common practices stemming from already established imperial and provincial traditions. It led to a convergence of diplomatic practice, setting the stage for the sophisticated Byzantine system of later centuries.⁶²⁸

⁶²⁸ For an analysis of Byzantine diplomacy, see Luttwak, *The grand strategy of the Byzantine Empire*, and Nechaeva, *Embassies – negotiations – gifts*.

Part III: Bishops and women: At the intersection of ethnic, religious and gender identities

Chapter 3.1 Gothic bishops

The question of the saliency of the ethnicity of ‘barbarian’ commanders, warlords and kings was explored in the previous chapters, especially in the context of their political activity, but what was the significance of the ethnic identity of individuals and communities in the religious context? Did the intersection of ethnic, linguistic and religious identity lead to the emergence of separate phenomena, or merely add new elements to already existing ones? Let us consider this question with the example of the leaders of Gothic Christians and their communities.

The history of the Christianisation of the Goths has been usually associated with one name - that of a bishop, Wulfila. His mission and influence on the development of Gothic Christianity, especially due to the translation of the Bible into Gothic he conducted, won him much understandable attention.⁶²⁹ The conversion has also been studied as a political decision, focusing on the shift among the political elites around the time of the battle of Adrianople in 378, with a special concentration on Fritigern.⁶³⁰ The notion of a prime role of a single bishop or of barbarian warlords has given way to a more nuanced view of the Christianisation of the Goths, stressing the diversity and sophistication of the Christianity amongst the Goths we find in the evidence of the primary sources.⁶³¹ An Arian mission developed a sizeable community, as its founder,

⁶²⁹ E. A. Thompson, *The Visigoths in the time of Wulfila* (Oxford, 1966), pp. 94-119 and 127-132. Although Wulfila is one of the main themes, Thompson was very cautious when speculating as to whose influence the ‘Arian’ creed owed its eventual victory. He focused mostly on the literary and scholarly achievements of Wulfila, at the same time perceiving the translation of the Bible into Gothic as cutting Gothic ‘Arianism’ off from the richer Greek and Latin literature, condemning it to remaining “primitive”. However, Thompson did not associate Wulfila with the conversion of the Goths, he saw him and the clergy trained by him as the foundation for Christianising the rest of the Germanic peoples. Wolfram, *History of the Goths*, pp. 75-85, though mentioning missionary works of other Christian groups, stressed the role of Wulfila and his clergy in Christianising the Goths, even after Wulfila’s exile to Moesia. For discussion of the consecration of Wulfila, see T. Barnes ‘The consecration of Ulfila’, *Journal of theological studies*, 41 (1990), pp. 541-45 and H. Sivan ‘Ulfila’s own conversion’, *The Harvard theological review*, 89/4 (1996), pp. 373-386.

⁶³⁰ P. Heather ‘The crossing of the Danube and the Gothic conversion’, *GRBS* 27/3 (1986), pp. 289-318, and N. Lenski ‘The date of the Gothic Civil War and the date of the Gothic conversion’, *GRBS* 36/1 (1995), pp. 51-87.

⁶³¹ Berndt, Steinacher, *Arianism: Roman heresy and barbarian creed*.

a Syrian clergyman Audius who disagreed with the Nicaean regulations concerning Easter, was exiled to ‘Scythia’. Epiphanius of Salamis attested a number of local Gothic bishops belonging to this group, one even by name – Silvanus. After escaping the same persecution by a Gothic ruler that led to Wulfila’s and his community’s migration to Moesia, the Gothic Audian Christians travelled to Cyprus and then to Audian monasteries in Cilicia and Palestine. The well-developed Gothic branch of this community disappeared in the subsequent decades.⁶³² The substantial links between the persecuted Gothic Christians of all creeds and the Christian communities on the Roman side of the Danube and in Asia Minor are attested by the rich literature on persecutions.⁶³³ A number of clerics and monks accompanying the Goths attempting to cross the Danube in 376, priests taking part in the negotiations between Valens and Fritigern prior to the battle of Adrianople in 378, or a Gothic bishop Selenas taking an active role in the dispute between the ‘Arian’ splinter groups, paint an image of a far more diverse Gothic Christianity than one dominated by the actions of a single individual.⁶³⁴ Yet the leaders of these Christian groups – Gothic bishops, representing their communities or trying to strengthen their own position, played a role in the politics between the elites of *Barbaricum* and the *Imperium Romanum*.

How did they differ from Roman bishops? It has been suggested that the Empire sought to establish one bishop per people outside its borders.⁶³⁵ This idea proposed by Mathisen, reflects the evidence of individual imperial decisions regarding specific Christianising missions rather than a consistent policy that would be later recognised and preserved by these Christian communities. It served Mathisen as an explanation for 5th

⁶³² Epiphanius of Salamis, *Panarion* VI 15.

⁶³³ See *Martyrs and martyrologies* in: P. Heather and J. Matthews (eds) *The Goths in the Fourth Century*, (Liverpool 1991), pp. 103-13.

⁶³⁴ See the evidence below.

⁶³⁵ R. W. Mathisen ‘Barbarian bishops and the churches “in Barbaricis Gentibus” during late antiquity’, *Speculum* 72/3 (1997), pp. 664-697, particularly pp. 665-670.

and 6th century cases of a single ‘Arian’ bishop in the entire Visigothic realm. Mathisen’s assertion, that the structure of the church hierarchy and number of bishops in the external states and communities depended on the Roman perception of these being more or less civilised is faulty. Examples he provided with Persia and Armenia, perceived as more civilised, with 40 and 10 bishops respectively, each led by a *catholicos*, were compared to the Iberians, queen Mavia’s Saracens, and missions to Arabia with their single bishops. It suggests rather a difference in the scale of the required structure of the church hierarchy and the local Christian traditions than any considerations of the level of “romanisation” of the barbarians on the part of the imperial policy makers.⁶³⁶ In the case of the Goths it is also worth pointing out that we owe our perspective of “one bishop” to Greek sources, each with its own angle. Philostorgios, Sokrates and Sozomen distinguished Wulfila because of their Constantinopolitan geographic perspective. The focus Auxentius, a student of Wulfila, bishop of Durostorum in Moesia and the main contemporary source in Latin on the Gothic bishop, has given him was due to the intention of praising his teacher.⁶³⁷ His presentation of Christianity amongst the Goths was ultimately subserved to glorifying Wulfila. Arguably if Wulfila had not settled with his people in Moesia, these sources, with the exception of Auxentius, might not have even acknowledged him at all. They did not notice Arian bishops or pay that much attention to Wulfila’s ‘predecessor’ Theophilus. The Latin perspective represented by Orosius wholly omits the Gothic bishop in the story of the conversion. It is Valens who Christianises the Goths, sending them

⁶³⁶ The narrative about a mission to Mavia seems to be only a pretext for criticising the ‘Arian’ bishop of Alexandria, Lucius, in Sokrates Scholastikos IV 36. Sozomen VI 38 embellished it with more ethnographic details but nevertheless repeated it. Also, the appointment of a bishop for Mavia’s Saracens was hardly a Roman initiative.

⁶³⁷ Auxentius, *Epistola de fide, vita et obitu Ulfilae*; for the identification of Auxentius see: *Scholia ariana in concilium Aquileiense: Maximini episcopi dissertatio contra Ambrosium* 55 in: R. Gryson, *Littérature arienne latine*, (Louvain 1980), vol. 1, p. 149-171; Philostorgios II 5, Sokrates Scholastikos II 41 50-64 and IV 33, Sozomen VI 36 and VII 17; in both Sokrates and Sozomen Wulfila’s mission serves as a prelude to the Gothic invasion.

bishops (one could note their plural number here).⁶³⁸ *Gothi antea per legatos supplices poposcerunt ut illis episcopi, a quibus regulam Christianae fidei discerent, mitterentur. Valens imperator exitiabili pravitate doctores Arriani dogmatis misit. Gothi primae fidei rudimento quod acceperere tenuerunt.* It is hard to see any consistent imperial policy that would establish a single bishop over a specified group, especially with the lack of any official statements of emperors or their officials. Nor is there any indication of defined territorial limits to bishops' zones of influence. It is difficult to even estimate their number or speculate about the organisational structure of the communities they were leading. Eunapios, who criticised Valens for letting the Goths into the borders of the Roman Empire on the basis of what he had seen as a "fake" Christianity on their part, painted an image of a numerous clergy including bishops:

They all claimed to be Christians and some of their number they disguised as their bishops [ὡς ἐπισκόπους] and dressed them up in that respected garb and, providing for them, as it were, a large fox-skin, brought them forward. Thereby they were able to get access to and appropriate what they rendered unguarded by swearing oaths which they held in contempt but which the Emperors greatly respected.⁶³⁹ (trans. R. C. Blockley)

The entire passage of Eunapios serves to show how the Christianity of the emperors merely made them vulnerable to treachery, but it certainly attests the presence of a number of bishops among the Goths. It is plausible to suppose that most of them were 'Arians' if they were counting on the help of the imperial officials under Valens. Clearly even the adherents of the then 'imperial' creed did not abide by Mathisen's rule. There must have been multiple 'Arian' communities among the Danubian Goths at the time, possibly based

⁶³⁸ Orosius VII 33 19.

⁶³⁹ Eunapios fr. 48 2.

around the aristocrats and warlords, but we cannot exclude a possibility that they were in fact independent power centres themselves.

We find evidence for another Gothic community led by a bishop, this time in Constantinople, in the Church Histories of Sokrates and Sozomen. They presented it as relatively coherent and semi-independent within the greater ‘Arian’ community, its leader Selenas was called by Sozomen a successor to Wulfila, who in turn had been a successor to Theophilus.⁶⁴⁰ This image of continuity may owe as much to a predilection for the idea of a line of succession of a bishop or a heresiarch among each single Christian group, which can be observed in the anti-heretical and broader Christian literature, as to the picture of the actual functional structure of the Gothic community.⁶⁴¹ The context in which we hear of Selenas is that of a controversy between two ‘Arian’ parties in 383.⁶⁴² One led by Dorotheos of Antioch chose not to name God “Father” before the existence of the Logos “Son”, while the group supporting Marinos of Thrace favoured an opposite opinion. The second group later split between supporters of Marinos, and Agapios who was earlier consecrated by Marinos as the bishop of Ephesus.⁶⁴³ Selenas as the bishop of the Goths was to favour first Marinos and then Agapios. In outline, the narratives of these events by Sokrates and Sozomen are identical, but they do differ in the detail regarding Selenas.

Sokrates gives us information on Selenas’ ancestry and language proficiency in both Gothic and Phrygian, indicating that the group around him was at the very least in its core constituted by the descendants of the Phrygo-Gothic Christian community of

⁶⁴⁰ For the ‘Arian’ controversy, see Sokrates Scholastikos, *HE* V 23 and Sozomen *HE* VII 17; Selenas called a successor to Wulfila is mentioned in the same passage of Sozomen, while Wulfila is named a successor to Theophilus by Sokrates Scholastikos, *HE* II 41 63-64.

⁶⁴¹ This assumption of continuity is found mainly in the Greek sources: Sivan ‘Ulfila’s Own Conversion’ pp. 373-386 observed that the view of Wulfila as a “national” apostle was most likely constructed by “Arian” sources such as Auxentius and Philostorgios and picked up by the Nicenes, Sokrates and Sozomen. The lack of such a construct in the Latin sources is indicative that it was in fact a hellenophone idea.

⁶⁴² Mathisen ‘Barbarian Bishops and the Churches’, pp. 664-697.

⁶⁴³ Sokrates Scholastikos, *HE* V 23 and Sozomen *HE* VII 17.

Wulfila. We cannot say what was the exact area of Selenas' activity, but given the Constantinopolitan perspective of both Sokrates and Sozomen and his support for Marinos from Thrace and then Agapios of Ephesus, we can assume it was around the capital:

This section of the Arians was denominated Psathyrians, because one of the most zealous defenders of this opinion was Theoctistus, a Syrian by birth, and a cake-seller [ψαθυροπώλης] by trade. Selenas bishop of the Goths [ὁ τῶν Γότθων ἐπίσκοπος] adopted the views of this party, a man of mixed descent; he was a Goth by his father's side, but by his mother's a Phrygian [Γόθος μὲν ἦν ἐκ πατρὸς, Φρυγὴ δὲ κατὰ μητέρα], by which means he taught in the church with great readiness in both these languages. This faction however soon quarrelled among themselves, Marinos disagreeing with Agapius, whom he himself had preferred to the bishopric of Ephesus. They disputed, however, not about any point of religion, but in narrow-mindedness about precedence, in which the Goths sided with Agapius.⁶⁴⁴ (trans. P. Schaff and H. Wace)

The image of the Gothic community emerging from Sozomen's history is a bit more detailed than Sokrates':

The names "Psathyrians" and "Goths" were given to the partisans of Marinos; Psathyrians, because Theoctistus, a certain cake-vendor [ψαθυροπώλης] was a zealous advocate of their opinions; and Goths, because their sentiments were approved by Selenas, bishop of that nation [Γότθων δέ, καθότι καὶ Σελινᾶς ὁ τούτων ἐπίσκοπος ὁμοίως ἐδόξαζεν]. Almost all these barbarians followed the instructions of Selenas, and they gathered in churches with the

⁶⁴⁴ Sokrates Scholastikos HE V 23.

followers of Marinus. The Goths were drawn to Selenas particularly because he had formerly been the secretary of Wulfila, and had succeeded him as bishop. He was capable of teaching in their churches, not only in the vernacular, but also in the Greek language [οὐ μόνον κατὰ τὴν πατριὸν αὐτῶν φωνήν, ἀλλὰ γὰρ καὶ τὴν Ἑλλήνων]. Soon after, a contest for precedence arose between Marinus and Agapius, whom Marinus himself had ordained bishop over the Arians at Ephesus; and in the quarrel which ensued, the Goths took the part of Agapius.⁶⁴⁵ (trans. P. Schaff and H. Wace)

Unlike in the case of Sokrates' narrative, in Sozomen's we can observe that Goths shared newly founded churches with followers of Marinos. The fact that this split group of Arians was capable of raising resources for that purpose suggests they had rich sponsors. Although one can only speculate what sort of upper echelons of the Constantinopolitan society could be behind them and whether Roman military officials of Gothic background could be one such group.

Once again, an issue of language comes to light. We do not hear of the Phrygian language in this context, which is most likely due to the omission of Selenas' ancestry by Sozomen. Nevertheless, Sozomen draws a more apparent connection between the bishop's position and his language proficiency. One could argue it had a possibly greater effect in building Selenas' position among the Gothic speaking community of Constantinople and around, than any association with Wulfila. A comparison with another bishop, this time a stationary one, with his own episcopal see and a member of the then imperial Church, also claiming apprenticeship under Wulfila, may be instructive. Auxentius, a bishop of Durostorum educated by a Goth, is evidence for the level of integration of the adherents of the 'Arian' creed from different ethnic backgrounds within

⁶⁴⁵ Sozomen HE VII 17 11-13.

the greater Church, next to their commitment to internal controversies, but most of all provides an interesting contrast to Selenas. We hear from Auxentius about the education he received from Wulfila:

[Wulfila] received me from my parents as his disciple in the earliest years of my life [*Qui me a prima etate mea a parentibus meis discipulum suscepit*]; he taught me the Holy Scriptures and made plain the truth, and through the mercy of God and grace of Christ he raised me in the faith, as his son in body and spirit.⁶⁴⁶ (trans. P. Heather and J. Matthews)

The fact that Wulfila was given Auxentius as a pupil attests his integration within the local context of Moesia, after he settled here with his community. Auxentius' parents must have hoped for a fruitful career for their son under Wulfila's tutelage. He eventually became a local bishop, unlike Selenas, who did not have a fixed bishopric, being attached to a mobile community. The boundaries existed but were not insuperable, Wulfila's apprentices could have successful careers both as traditional bishops and leaders of an itinerant religious group. Though the Gothic bishop is mostly recognised for his work as a translator of the Bible into Gothic, his preaching clearly was not limited just to this language. He was well-versed in other languages such as Greek and Latin, at least according to Auxentius:

[...] he preached unceasingly with apostolic grace in the Greek, Latin and Gothic languages [*greecam et latinam et goticam linguam*], in the one and only church of Christ, [...].⁶⁴⁷ (trans. P. Heather and J. Matthews)

⁶⁴⁶ *Scholia ariana in concilium Aquileiense: Maximini episcopi dissertatio contra Ambrosium* 55 in: R. Gryson, *Littérature arienne latine*, (Louvain 1980), vol. 1 p. 149-171.

⁶⁴⁷ *Scholia ariana in concilium Aquileiense* 53.

Any modern attempts to differentiate Wulfila and his Gothic followers from the rest of the 'Arian' Church on the basis of cultural differences, coming from little knowledge of Greek or Latin teachings, would probably be met by Auxentius with a rise of the eyebrow.⁶⁴⁸ Clearly the Goths were fairly well integrated with other members of the Christian community, even if they required preaching in another language and had their own leader. The fact that both Wulfila and Selenas preached in other languages than Gothic shows these leaders didn't limit themselves only to the Goths, therefore hardly distanced themselves from the rest of the 'Arians'. One may wonder if that caused any difficulties between the stationary bishops and the Gothic ones operating in their area. Other than the controversy in which Selenas played a part, although not as one of the main actors or instigators, we do not have any such evidence. What was the difference between Auxentius and Selenas then? Both were students of Wulfila. Could Auxentius have taken Selenas' place? The descriptions of Wulfila and Selenas, both of Phrygian descent, stress their language proficiency with Gothic and the languages of the Empire such as Greek, Latin or Phrygian. With the lack of detailed information on Selenas' and Auxentius' social backgrounds, their language skills and ethnic origin remain the main difference influencing the careers of these two students of Wulfila. His students were probably all well-educated in Greek, possibly in Latin, but apparently only the ones of at least partial Gothic descent knew that Germanic language.

Although Selenas' position in his bishopric seemed solid, his role in the controversy seems to be secondary to the main actors. Nevertheless, his and his supporters' involvement points to some sort of a distinction between the Gothic subgroup and the 'Arian' community in Constantinople, at least to observers from the outside, especially Sozomen who reports that the supporters of Marinos were labelled as

⁶⁴⁸ For a view about the rudimentary character of preaching in Gothic and isolation from Greek and Latin literature, see Thompson cited above.

‘Goths’.⁶⁴⁹ No distinction in clothing, way of life or liturgy is mentioned, although admittedly Sokrates and Sozomen did not show much interest in such things. We see Goths interacting with the rest of the community, sharing churches and supporting different groups. The only distinction is the language of preaching. Selenas’ episcopal position was most likely based on these language requirements or preferences of Goths living in the capital, as recognised by John Chrysostom’s later attempts to preach to them through translators.⁶⁵⁰ Liturgy and preaching in their language, rather than any sense of independence, could be the main reason for the existence of a Gothic bishop operating next to other ones in the community. The existence of Selenas’ community was a case of an intersection of language, religion and descent leading to the emergence of a group with a defined, but not very strong boundary. Still it belonged to a greater community and closely followed its own divisions.

The presence of a Gothic bishop in Constantinople seems to have been ephemeral. We certainly do not hear about one when the conflict is resolved later on, though the man to bring the two parties together is of barbarian extraction. The entire conflict appears to have been resolved in 419 by the already mentioned military commander of Gothic origin – Plinta.⁶⁵¹ After achieving the rank of *magister militum praesentalis*, he engaged not only with the politics of the ‘Arian’ community of Constantinople, but was active in this field also in other parts of the Empire. He took part in a conflict between Saturninus and a Nestorian bishop Dorotheus over the see of Marcianopolis, and mediated with John of Antioch on behalf of the emperor in order to reconcile him with Cyril of Alexandria.⁶⁵² What does it tell us of Plinta’s involvement in the dispute between the two splinter groups

⁶⁴⁹ See above.

⁶⁵⁰ Theodoret of Cyrus *HE* V 30.

⁶⁵¹ Sokrates Scholastikos *HE* V 23 Sozomen *HE* VII 17; for Plinta, see *PLRE* II 892-893.

⁶⁵² *PLRE* II 892-893; Plinta clearly possessed a talent for diplomacy since he was often sent on embassies to the Huns: see Priskos fr. 1.

of ‘Arians’ in Constantinople? At first glance we might consider it an expression of ethno-sectarian identity and an active involvement in his religious group’s internal conflict. In the context of his other activities a more sensible explanation seems to emerge. As a high-ranking member of the imperial establishment, Plinta must have been committed to maintaining order in the cities and regions of the Empire. Avoiding the development of community rivalries and conflicts into open riot had been always one of the main concerns for Roman officials.⁶⁵³ Ethnic and religious links Plinta had with the antagonised groups could have been the reason why he was the one to engage with them on the part of the Roman establishment, and the well-being of his religious community was most likely not the main motivation behind his involvement. We cannot even tell whether a distinct Gothic community existed inside the group of Marinos’ supporters.

We do not hear anything of this community’s leader, Selenas, or of any his successor in the context of John Chrysostom’s missionary work amongst the Goths of Constantinople, nor when Gainas sought to obtain the right to a church inside the city walls for the ‘Arian’ community. Though perhaps they should be identified with the ‘Arian’ community using the churches outside of city walls.⁶⁵⁴ At the time of the riots that led to the slaughter of Gainas’ soldiers and the Gothic inhabitants of Constantinople, there is no indication of the presence of a religious head of that particular community either (see chapter 1.1). John Chrysostom’s missionary work in Constantinople among the Goths living there suggests the group was significant enough to capture his attention:

It was perceived by John that the Scythians were involved in the Arian net;
he therefore devised counter contrivances and discovered a means of winning
them over. Appointing presbyters and deacons and readers of the divine

⁶⁵³ See an example of such involvement, not even of a Christian, but an openly pagan urban prefect, Praetextatus, in Ammianus Marcellinus XXVII 9 8.

⁶⁵⁴ Sozomen, *HE* VIII 4; Theodoret of Cyrus *HE* V 30-31.

oracles who spoke the Scythian tongue [όμογλώττους], he assigned a church to them, and by their means won many from their error. He used frequently himself to visit it and preach there, using an interpreter who was skilled in both languages [έρμηνευτὴν χρώμενος τὴν ἐκατέραν γλῶτταν], and he got other good speakers to do the same. This was his constant practice in the city, and many of those who had been deceived he rescued by pointing out to them the truth of the apostolic preaching.⁶⁵⁵ (trans. P. Schaff and H. Wace)

Lack of mention about any sort of a bishop of this group in this context is surprising. If the Goths still constituted a semi-independent group amongst the ‘Arians’, why do we not hear of anyone the like of Selenas trying to counteract Chrysostom’s campaign? What is even more significant, when we hear about the conflict that arose between Gainas and the bishop of Constantinople over allowing the ‘Arians’ to have a church inside of the city, there is no mention of any religious authority on the side of Gainas.⁶⁵⁶ It is possible that Sozomen or Theodoret simply chose to focus on John’s struggle against Gainas and perceived introducing any additional enemy as diluting the story about an noble underdog bishop standing up to an all-powerful tyrannical barbarian commander. However, would it not make John Chrysostom achievement even more significant had he won, not just against a barbarian commander, but also against a heretical bishop, if such had actually taken part in the dispute? The only mention of any sort of continuous community we have is Sozomen’s marginal note about the church in which Goths tried to find asylum during the riot. They were burnt there by the imperial soldiers. This church used to be called the one of the Goths, because they frequently congregated there.⁶⁵⁷ But even in this case it

⁶⁵⁵ Theodoret of Cyrus *HE* V 30; John is said to have also encouraged missionary work among the Danubian Goths in V 31.

⁶⁵⁶ Sozomen VIII 4; Theodoret of Cyrus *HE* V 32.

⁶⁵⁷ Sozomen VIII 4.

seems Sozomen meant Gainas' soldiers rather than any sort of Gothic community.⁶⁵⁸ John's preaching could have been pointed at the soldiers of barbarian origin stationed in Constantinople, rather than at any still enduring community of Goths. This brings up the question of what disappeared first, the position of an independent bishop preaching in Gothic, or the inner community of Gothic speaking 'Arians'? The role of a 'barbarian' bishop might not have differed so much from that of a barbarian warlord. Much like them, his significance must have been tied to the cohesion, survival and success of the group led by him. Selenas' people melted at some point in time, as part of a process of acculturation in the capital and as the Nicenes made further gains in the city, John Chrysostom's missionary work being one example of that. The so-called Lesser Goths living in the rural areas of Moesia, where acculturation must have been slower, due to their dense settlement and a lesser probability of missions of the 'Nicenes', were said to continue living as a separate group even until the time of Jordanes.⁶⁵⁹ *Excerpta Valesiana* and *Liber Pontificalis* attest existence of likely other organised Arian communities in the 20s of the 6th century. Both sources describe an embassy, with bishop of Rome John being one of envoys, sent by Theodoric the Amal to the emperor Justin regarding co-believers of the former.⁶⁶⁰ According to *Liber Pontificalis* Justin confiscated Arian churches and turned them to Nicenes. Since these communities gained attention of the emperor it is likely that they operated in Constantinople rather than in rural areas like Moesian Goths, though probably outside of the city walls. Could this be a successor of Selena's community? Theodoric's interest in protecting them may suggest so, but on the other

⁶⁵⁸ It appears that, even though Gainas failed to attain a church for 'Arians', his soldiers still used one frequently enough for it to be called after them. Most likely some sort of a sharing agreement must have been in place between 'Nicenes' and 'Arians'.

⁶⁵⁹ Jordanes, *Getica*, LI; a separate matter was whether the bulk of these people were actually descendants of Wulfila's group or the community was in fact constructed through a later military settlement that demilitarised over time, with Jordanes 'historicising' it by fixing it with Wulfila's legacy.

⁶⁶⁰ *Excerpta Valesiana* XV 88-91; *Liber Pontificalis* LV 1-2;

hand this can stem from networks formed during his time as a hostage in Constantinople and a desire to present himself as defender of his co-believers rather than any kind of 'Gothic' solidarity.

Yet another possibility is that, even if Selenas' community remained distinct in some form until the time of Plinta, already at the time of Gainas their sense of identity did not overlap with that of Gainas and his soldiers. Even though they shared religious views, language and, from the Roman perspective, ethnicity, these elements were not enough to incite a sense of common interest. Other factors such as social background, different experience that led to the formation of groups, integration in the local society, or the lack of it in case of Gainas' men, did not leave much room for a sense of a shared identity to emerge.

Another role attributed to the barbarian bishops, again by Mathisen, who here follows a suggestion of Jones, has been that of a military chaplain accompanying warlords and commanders.⁶⁶¹ The evidence given in favour of this hypothesis are the cases of Sigisarius attending Alaric and Ataulf, Maximinus attached to Sigisvult's force sent to quell Bonifatius's rebellion, and the bishop of Poetovium, Julianus Valens, who joined a group of Goths after helping them to capture his episcopal see. Involvement of bishops in Constantine's campaign against Persia, attested only by Eusebios, was seen as a precedent and a model for that practice.⁶⁶² Except for Sigisarius, the evidence is rather problematic. One of the main pieces of evidence employed in Mathisen's argument, Augustine's biographer Possidius, states simply that Maximinus arrived with the Goths

⁶⁶¹ Jones, *The Later Roman Empire*, pp. 632-633; R. W. Mathisen, 'Emperors, priests, and bishops: military chaplains in the Roman Empire' in D. L. Bergen (ed.) *The sword of the Lord: military chaplains from the first to the twenty-first century*, (2004), pp. 29-43, particularly pp. 37-39.

⁶⁶² Eusebios, *Vita Constantini* IV 56, but Eusebios' mention of the emperor calling upon bishops to accompany him and providing a special tent for prayer is problematic like his entire report of Constantine's preparations for the campaign against Persia. Eusebios went so far as to claim Constantine agreed to peace with Persia during the preparations, while all the other sources insist he died during preparations (see Eutropius X 8 and Festus XXVI), or refused to accept peace with the Persians (Libanios *Oratio* LIX).

“Cum ipsorum quoque Arrianorum episcopo quodam Maximino, cum Gothis ad Africam veniente, apud Hipponem, quampluribus volentibus petentibus, et praeclaris interpositis viris, contulit, et quid singulae adseruerint partes scriptum est.”⁶⁶³ This is hardly a confirmation of a chaplain position or permanent attachment to Sigisvult’s unit or to the commander himself. As pointed out by McLynn, Maximinus was most likely in Africa for diplomatic reasons, while being a bishop of a city in Illyria he was not aligned with any military force. Bonifatius recently married an ‘Arian’ and given how the conflict was ultimately resolved in a diplomatic way, McLynn’s interpretation seems to be the best.⁶⁶⁴ We seem to hear as much from Maximinus himself in the record of his dispute with Augustine:

Maximinus said, “I did not come to this city in order to stage a debate with Your Holiness. Rather, I am here, sent by Count Sigisvult with a view to peace.”⁶⁶⁵ (trans. B. Ramsey)

What is even more important, his dispute with Augustine was most likely not just an incidental discussion of a ‘heretic’ who happened to be around in a region held wholly by Nicenes (either Cyprianists or Donatists). A recent analysis shows a notable ‘Arian’ presence in pre-Vandal Africa.⁶⁶⁶ It seems they were a bigger concern for Maximinus, than Sigisvult’s soldiers. Concluding his speech, he hinted at his aim of strengthening the faith of those in communion with him rather than convincing anyone of the other party:

After all, we do not speak to obtain praise from someone, but out of the desire to strengthen the brotherhood we have. Perhaps you wanted to challenge us

⁶⁶³ Possidius, *Vita Augustini*, XVII 7.

⁶⁶⁴ N. McLynn, ‘From Palladius to Maximinus: passing the Arian torch’, *Journal of early Christian studies*, 4/4 (1996), pp. 477-493.

⁶⁶⁵ *Collatio cum Maximino* I.

⁶⁶⁶ R. Whelan, ‘Arianism in Africa’ in: Berndt, Steinacher (eds) *Arianism: Roman Heresy Barbarian Creed*, pp. 239-255.

to make an answer so that those you have observed to belong to us might agree, as I said, with what you profess. For this reason, I had to answer you on account of the fear of God. It was not only by your words that you tried to take from me the discipleship of these men; you also gave me your treatise to which I had to answer those things which you have professed concerning the invisibility of the omnipotent God.⁶⁶⁷ (trans. B. Ramsey)

The group of Maximinus' supporters Augustine refers to are actually local adherents to this brand of Christianity (Bonifatius' wife being another example of such). Mathisen tried to explain it by suggesting the Arians in question were mostly 'peregrini', as he explains it, the barbarian soldiers of Bonifatius. Even the dispute between Maximinus and Augustine was to be arranged by the rebellious commander, and the 'Arian' bishop's success was to be advantageous in regards to the negotiations between the imperial government and Bonifatius.⁶⁶⁸ McLynn went more along the lines of Maximinus attempting to keep the group of local 'Arians' coherent and safe from Augustine's attempt to convince them to his creed.⁶⁶⁹ Whelan however showed that they were not necessarily any sort of 'peregrini', but locals.⁶⁷⁰ Furthermore, Augustine's passage, that Mathisen appeals to, seems to refer to the influx of people to Africa after the fall of Rome and the desolation of Italy, not barbarian soldiers.⁶⁷¹ This further weakens the assumption about Maximinus being a military chaplain of a barbarian group and not one of the many religious leaders taking part in the politics of the Roman Empire and an active role in the

⁶⁶⁷ *Collatio cum Maximino* XV 6.

⁶⁶⁸ Mathisen 'Sigisvult the patrician, Maximinus the Arian, and political stratagems in the Western Roman Empire c. 425-40', *Early medieval Europe* 8/2 (1999), pp. 173-196.

⁶⁶⁹ McLynn, 'From Palladius to Maximinus: Passing the Arian Torch', pp. 477-493.

⁶⁷⁰ R. Whelan, 'Arianism in Africa' in: Berndt, Steinacher (eds), *Arianism: Roman heresy and barbarian creed*, pp. 239-255.

⁶⁷¹ Mathisen considers the *peregrini* that appear in Hippo and are mentioned by Augustine in *In Iohannis evangelium tractatus* XL 7 9 to be barbarian soldiers, but, given how it is dated to 414, identifying these people with refugees from Italy seems much more plausible.

Church controversies. His identification as a military chaplain cannot stand on its own, especially when we do not see any evidence for him actually seeing to the spiritual needs of Sigisvult or his soldiers.

What about the bishop of Poetovium (modern Ptuj in Slovenia) – Julianus Valens? His case seems to have more to do with a change of political affiliation than any need for spiritual guidance of the Goths involved. It was not even a permanent one, as we can see in Ambrose's epistolary report to the emperors about the council of Aquileia:

The same opinion was held by Attalus, a priest who admitted his collusion with and adherence to the sacrilegious teachings of Palladius. Why should we speak of his master Julianus Valens? Although he lived close by, he refused to attend the council of bishops, fearing he would be compelled to explain before the bishops the ruin of his country and the betrayal of his citizens. He, desecrated by the impiety of the Goths [*impietate Gothica*], is said to have even dared like a heathen, wearing necklace and bracelets, to make his appearance before the Roman army. Such conduct is obviously sacrilegious, not only in a bishop but in any Christian whatsoever. It is also alien to Roman custom, although the idolatrous worshipers of the Goths are accustomed to appear thus [*etenim abhorret a more Romano nisi forte sic solent idolatrae sacerdotes prodire Gothorum*]. [...] Let him at least return to his own home, let him not befoul the cities of a very flourishing Italy.[...] Being unable to stay at Poetovium, he is now at Milan after the overthrow, or, let us say, 'betrayal', of his country.⁶⁷² (trans. M. M. Beyenka)

⁶⁷² Ambrose *Epistulae ad concilium Aquileiense pertinentes* II 9/10 10.

Ambrose had obvious motives in presenting Julianus Valens as a traitor. Even though the bishop himself was not at the council of Aquileia, his Milan counterpart tried to associate him with the 'Arians' who came to it, thereby trying to transfer the label of traitors to all of them. But, even in Ambrose's biased presentation of Julianus Valens, we may notice indications of a different view on the bishop of Poetovium, probably closer to how most people viewed him at the time. Had Julianus Valens really betrayed the city of Poetovium to the Goths, would he find a refuge in Italy? What is even more striking, would this have been at Milan, at the time the residence of Gratian's court? Would he remain unmolested by the imperial authorities if his betrayal was as apparent as Ambrose claims? What of his demonstrative signs of loyalty to the Goths that Mathisen finds so convincing? A more plausible scenario is that Julianus Valens negotiated the city's surrender to the Goths, which Ambrose tried to present as treason. Such an action would not necessarily be recognised as treason by the imperial authorities. The question of "priestly clothing" - however even the bishop of Milan admits the dubious nature of the evidence calling it rumours - is not so easy to interpret. It may be explained by the time spent with the Goths and the recognition the bishop could have received through gifts from the war band's elite. But without any details provided by Ambrose, it is difficult to understand what he precisely meant. Could it be that the 'Arian' Gothic clergy had already developed a different form of clothing to that of the 'Nicones' or even other 'Arians'? Or perhaps the attire of the clergy in the Balkans differed from that which Ambrose was used to in Milan? The appearance of Julianus Valens in front of the Roman army could have had to do with him being used as an envoy to the Romans, as was a common practice at the time (see chapter 2.3). Rummel argues that the specific elements of Julianus Valens' attire named by Ambrose had in fact military character, not ethnic one. In such interpretation bishop of Milan stressed Julianus Valens' error of dressing like a soldier, a practice similar to

that of Gothic priests: *etenim abhorret a more Romano nisi forte sic solent idolatrae sacerdotes prodire Gothorum*.⁶⁷³ The fact that at the time Ambrose composed his letter, Julianus Valens was a refugee staying in Milan, possibly as an 'Arian' bishop expelled from his see by war, and could count on the sympathy of Valentinian's mother, contradicts any permanence of the connections the bishop of Poetavium could have formed with the Gothic raiders.⁶⁷⁴ Ambrose's spiteful remarks about how he should be sent back to his city only mean that return at the time was out of question, most likely due to the presence of the Goths. Nor do we hear about any actual spiritual role of the bishop among the Goths. In light of this, Julianus Valens can hardly be considered a chaplain of the 'barbarians'.

What of the last of Mathisen's examples – Sigesarius? We observe him on a number of occasions. He obviously took part in high level politics when he baptized Attalus, the usurper imposed by Alaric in 409:

The Arians imagined that, as soon as he found his reign firmly established, Attalus would reinstate them in the supremacy over the churches which they had enjoyed during the reigns of Constantius and of Valens; for he had been baptized by Sigesarius, bishop of the Goths [τῶν Γότθων], to the great satisfaction of Alaric and the Arian party.⁶⁷⁵ (trans. P. Schaff and H. Wace)

It is hard to tell what Alaric had in mind by baptizing the emperor he enthroned. One explanation could be that he sought to reinforce Attalus' connection to himself. Another is that the barbarian warlord counted on support from 'Arians' in Rome. The

⁶⁷³ P. von Rummel 'Ambrosius, Julianus Valens und die „gotische Kleidung“. Eine Schlüsselstelle historisch-archäologischer Interpretation' in: S. Brather (ed.), *Zwischen Spätantike und Frühmittelalter: Archäologie des 4. bis 7. Jahrhunderts im Westen* (Berlin - New York 2007) pp. 45-64.

⁶⁷⁴ Ambrose, *Letter* 11 mentions Julianus Valens' preaching activity alongside Ursinus in Milan, which offers further proof of the lack of any consequences towards the bishop of Poetovium for his 'treachery'.

⁶⁷⁵ Sozomen IX 9 1.

aforementioned ‘Arian’ *peregrini* who sought asylum in Africa, after the desolation of Italy at the time of Alaric, are evidence for a still active community of ‘Arians’ in this part of the Empire.⁶⁷⁶ Sozomen’s mention of the ‘Arians’ expecting to regain their position must also mean that there were such in Rome, as he also mentioned earlier similar hopes of ‘pagans’ for the reopening of the temples. Nevertheless, such a community either did not have a bishop in the city or was reluctant to wholly side with Attalus and Alaric. That could be one explanation why the Gothic warlord chose to call for his own bishop instead. Another possible interpretation would be an attempt at reaching out to the Roman ‘Arians’, through elevating Sigesarius’ status and prestige, making him an intermediary between Alaric and the locals.

The next time we hear of Sigesarius, he was in a far riskier situation. He continued in his function after the death of Alaric, at the side of Ataulf and his successor Singeric:

On his deathbed Ataulf told his brother to hand back Placidia and, if they could, ensure Roman friendship towards themselves. But Singeric, the brother of Sarus, by conspiracy and coup rather than by the Gothic law of succession, became his successor and he killed Ataulf’s children by his first wife, tearing them by force from the arms of the bishop Sigesarus.⁶⁷⁷ (trans. Blockley)

Sigesarius failed in his attempt to save Ataulf’s children, but even his trying signified quite a position in Alaric’s and Ataulf’s force. Sigesarius could oppose the new warlord and come out of it unscathed. Perhaps breaking the right of asylum was one of the reasons for Singeric’s quick fall. Compared to the above cases, Sigesarius’ role alongside Gothic

⁶⁷⁶ For the strife between Damasus and Ursinus, see Ammianus XXVII 3 12-13; for Ursinus see J. Desmulliez, C. Pietri and L. Pietri (eds) *Prosopographie de l'Italie chrétienne (313-604)*, Rome 1999, vol. 2, pp. 2356-2357.

⁶⁷⁷ Olympiodoros fr. 26.

warlords is indisputable and can be seen as unique. But why did Alaric need a bishop? Such a religious leader could have been a mark of status stressing the warlord's independence and position in the eyes of his supporters. Yet it did not exclude the bishop's importance and independence in the internal politics. The attempt by Sigisarius at stopping king Singeric from killing Ataulf's children was an example of just that. Such a role would also explain the development of a practice of one regnal bishop in the Visigothic kingdom as noted by Mathisen.

Attachment to their communities and the religious affiliation of Gothic bishops and elder clergymen made them potential intermediaries between Gothic warlords and the imperial establishment. They had indispensable networks and knowledge of both sides. Examples of such a role are provided with the mission of Wulfila to Constantinople, and of a presbyter sent by Fritigern to Valens before the battle of Adrianople in 378:⁶⁷⁸

[8] While the necessary preparations for the decisive battle were going on, a Christian presbyter [*Christiani ritus presbyter*] (to use their own term), who had been sent by Fritigern as an envoy, in company with some humble folk came to the emperor's camp. He was courteously received and presented a letter from the same chieftain, openly requesting that to him and his people, whom the rapid forays of savage races had made exiles from their native lands, Thrace only should be granted as a habitation, with all its flocks and crops; and they promised lasting peace if this request were granted.

[9] Besides this the aforesaid Christian [*Christianus*], apparently a confidant and trusted friend of Fritigern, presented also a private letter of the same king, who, all too skilled in craft and in various forms of deception, informed

⁶⁷⁸ For Wulfila mission, see Philostorgios II 5, and Sivan 'Ulfila's Own Conversion', pp. 373-386.

Valens, pretending that he hoped soon to be his friend and ally, that he could not tame the savagery of his people, or entice them to adopt conditions favourable to the Roman state, unless the emperor should from time to time show them near at hand his army ready for battle, and through the fear aroused by the imperial name check their destructive eagerness for war. But as to the envoys, their sincerity was doubted, and they left without accomplishing their purpose.⁶⁷⁹ (trans. Rolfe)

Ammianus' passages are attestation to the level of Christianisation of the Danubian Goths at the time, with clergy serving in the entourage of the highest political leaders. Although we do not hear of any bishops at Fritigern's side, this unnamed presbyter could have been a model predecessor to bishop Sigesarius at Alaric's. He was trusted enough to convey Fritigern's own plans, but must have been recognised as a valid ambassador by the other members of the Gothic host's elite to present their requirements in the first place. Bearing in mind the aforementioned passage from Eunapios, with his multitude of bishops, perhaps we should ask why Fritigern's ambassador was 'merely' a presbyter? The scant evidence does not allow us to draw any constructive hypothesis. It must be sufficient that he was considered to be appropriate by Fritigern and the remaining leaders.

But such practice was not exceptional for the Goths. Bishops and high ranking clergymen were used as emissaries in other border zones of the Empire. An analogous situation occurred in Africa during the rebellion of Firmus. After experiencing a series of losses, the rebel attempted to negotiate with Theodosius, the Roman commander in chief of the campaign. Firmus sent as his envoys Christian priests with some captives. They managed to broker a temporary, as it later turned out, peace and exchanged gifts.⁶⁸⁰ A

⁶⁷⁹Ammianus Marcellinus, XXXI 12 8-9.

⁶⁸⁰Ammianus Marcellinus, XXIX 5 15.

reverse situation, with Roman authorities sending a bishop as an envoy, occurred when John Chrysostom was said to have negotiated on behalf of the emperor Arcadius with Gainas, after the latter was expelled from Constantinople.⁶⁸¹

Whether involved in imperial missions, church controversies, diplomatic negotiations or the internal affairs of the war band politics of the 4th and early 5th century, Gothic bishops had an important position partly owed to their links to both the Roman imperial elites and the ‘barbarian’ ones. With their knowledge and connections, they were valuable partners, while their religious status shielded them from the more violent risks of taking part in late Roman politics. On the other hand, their position was less permanent than that of a stationary bishop. They were dependent either on their communities or the warlord they served. With the shifting nature of different Gothic groups after entering the Roman Empire, formalising and continuing episcopal status must have become even harder. Communities such as that of Selenas, based only around the language of preaching were doomed to eventually disappear in the broader Roman society, taking the position of their bishop with them. Language as the sole mark of distinction of the group to create and sustain its boundary was simply not enough. Even at the time of his community still functioning, Selenas was able to leave his mark only within the controversy of the local ‘Arians’. Unlike Wulfila, Fritigern’s presbyter, or Sigisarius, he played no role in politics at the imperial level. Much like the Audian bishops reported by Epiphanius of Salamis, Selenas and his Goths were of no importance to the Roman world outside of the local area they operated in, and slowly drifted away into oblivion. Sigisarius’ path proved to be a more promising one. Warlords he was loyal to were successful enough in keeping the group intact and distinct from Roman society. He was able to retain his position and

⁶⁸¹ Theodoret of Cyrus, *HE* V 33; it is irrelevant whether John Chrysostom’s embassy actually took place, but telling that Theodoret believed that such embassies were possible.

usefulness to them, giving a beginning to a continuous function of a Visigothic court bishop. But that is a subject for the next chapter.

Chapter 3.2 Barbarian upper clergy in the 5th century successor states

Besides the Gothic clergy within the ‘Arian’ Church, there were other ‘barbarians’ within the ‘Nicene’ Church hierarchy and in various other ‘Arian’ Churches. We do not see that many instances of barbarian priests reaching high positions in the local churches inside the Empire, and the ones recorded receive only brief mention. This hardly allows us to draw any conclusions on the nature of their social background, the reasons for their appointment or the course of their career, not to mention attempting to address the question of whether their ethnicity was relevant in any of these matters. Exploring the intersection of their ethnic identity is bound to be limited. However, one may assume the patterns of their careers did not vary so much from that of their Roman contemporaries. The scarcity of recorded examples reflects the low percentage of individuals of barbarian origin, or identifying as barbarians, in Roman society. The ‘Arian’ communities with a substantial barbarian presence, but under *de facto* rather than just *de iure* imperial rule, seem to have been functioning with a clergy that could serve the needs of the different language and ethnic groups constituting them, as exemplified in Wulfila or his successor Selenas, both of mixed background (with Wulfila’s parents originating from Asia Minor and acculturating into the Gothic identity, as the bishop’s name proves, and Selenas being the product of an actual mixed marriage). Their *modus operandi* might have to do with being heads of freshly uprooted religious community on the run and the necessity to be adaptive to the new environment. However, Selenas’ language skills even though serving to accommodate needs of differing ethnic groups (Goths and Phrygians) still reflected the ethnic mixture of the group formed prior to Wulfila and his people finding refuge in the Roman Empire.

A different picture could be expected in the sub-Roman kingdoms of those rulers who adhered to 'Arianism'. Dependence on support from a ruler and the 'barbarian' and 'Arian' members of his elites, combined with the limited possibilities of recruitment of priests from the prevalently 'Nicene' population of the controlled territories, would suggest a greater role for the barbarian priests and bishops of the 'Arian' Churches compared to the Imperial one. The intersection of ethnicity, religious creed and profession would contribute to a unique social position for such clergymen. But was it indeed the case?

Answering the above question requires a closer look at the organisational and functional similarities and differences between 'Arian' Churches in the sub-Roman kingdoms and the Imperial Church. One should also bear in mind the distinct roles each Church played in the specific sub-Roman kingdoms. The main church structure that will be analysed here is the one in Vandal Africa, mostly during Gaiseric's and Huneric's reigns. It is going to be complemented by limited material from the Churches functioning under Gothic rule in Aquitania and Burgundian rule in central and southern Gaul.

The African Arian Church under Vandal Rule

When Gaiseric and his men finally conquered Carthage in 439 and solidified their grip on Africa Proconsularis, one of the challenges they needed to face was that of the sectarian differences between them, adherents of *homoian* theology – 'Arians' – and their new subjects, at the time predominantly supporters of *homousian* theology – 'Nicones'. The Vandal kings' policy towards their subjects of a different creed tended to oscillate between uneasy tolerance and open hostility. The limited source material we have for the period, mostly the work of Victor of Vita, stressed the role of the Arian clergy in the persecution. Cooperation of Arian bishops, such as Cyrila, in enforcing king Huneric's religious policies was characterised not only by passivity and reactivity to royal

expectations. The bishops actively participated in identifying the Nicene opposition and inspiring royal authority to act against it. Arian bishops in Vandal Africa were not simply subservient tools of royal policies, but rather active players of the conflict, who readily participated in various repressive programmes against their rivals. How different was the African Arian Church at the time, from its Nicene counterpart? Did the Vandal dominance and the influx of clergy of Vandal origin differentiate it?

Arian clergy were present in Africa or neighbouring provinces even before the Vandal conquest.⁶⁸² Some of them may have come from abroad just for a brief time like bishop Maximinus who disputed with Augustine.⁶⁸³ Others must have enjoyed favour from high ranking officials such as the *comes* Pascentius, a declared Arian, who challenged Augustine to a dispute.⁶⁸⁴ Even if the members of a household were nominally Nicenes, as in the case of the *comes Africae* Bonifatius and his wife Pelagia, Arian clergymen could still find patronage and gain a foothold for their religion. In this particular example, they managed to baptise the daughter of the noble pair and converted members of their household, including consecrated virgins.⁶⁸⁵ According to Hydatius, when Gaiseric raided Sicily and besieged Panormus he encountered an 'Arian' bishop Maximinus, who convinced him to start a persecution of the 'orthodox'.⁶⁸⁶ Vandals and the clergy who accompanied them were not entering a *homoian* vacuum, albeit we might wonder what was the exact extent of the 'Arian' Church's structures in Africa.

We see only glimpses of this organisation at work during the Vandal era. After the conquest the main task of 'Arian' clergy was to provide spiritual service to the Vandals. Heather argued that this was the main concern behind Gaiseric's ban on

⁶⁸² Whelan, 'Arianism in Africa', pp. 239 – 255.

⁶⁸³ McLynn, 'From Palladius to Maximinus: passing the Arian torch', pp. 477-493.

⁶⁸⁴ Possidius, *Vita Augustini* XVII; Augustine, *Ep.* 238-241.

⁶⁸⁵ Augustine, *Ep.* 220 4.

⁶⁸⁶ Hydatius, 112.

‘Nicene’ clergy preaching in the *sortes Vandalorum*, creating a monopoly for the ‘Arian’ clergy amongst his followers so that religion could serve as a catalyst for unifying diverse group formed of Vandals, Alans and Goths.⁶⁸⁷ According to Heather ensuring this domination of ‘Arian’ creed in the ‘barbarian’ population of his domain was the primary aim of Gaiseric, who contrary to claims of Victor of Vita had little interest in pursuing an anti-Nicene course beyond securing arian monopoly in *sortes Vandalorum* and resources and infrastructure necessary for its development and continuous functioning appropriated from the ‘Nicene’ Church. This also meant that the ‘Arian’ Church was mostly limited to these areas established predominantly in Africa Proconsularis.⁶⁸⁸ The new policies introduced in the late 50s of the 5th century and designed to combat the ‘Nicene’ Church were to be the result of successful lobbying of the ‘Arian’ Church, which emerged as a political power following its development facilitated by Gaiseric.⁶⁸⁹ This is a plausible interpretation of Gaiseric’s initial aims and later influence of the strengthened ‘Arian’ Church on the religious policies of the royal court. However, we should not overstress ‘Arian’ clergy’s influence on the shift of royal court’s policy towards the ‘Nicene’ Church. Although the ‘Arian’ bishops had a say in introducing a requirement that all royal officials should be ‘Arians’, they are not portrayed as having anything to do with a ban on consecrating new ‘Nicene’ bishops in the entire Africa Proconsularis.⁶⁹⁰ This last provision, enacted some time after the death of bishop of Carthage Deogratias in 457, was particularly successful in thinning the number of ‘Nicene’ bishops in Proconsularis, reducing it from 164 to 54 by the reign of Huneric.⁶⁹¹ Perhaps Gaiseric purposefully made

⁶⁸⁷ The ban is mentioned in Huneric’s edict calling for the council of 484, so it is difficult to pinpoint the specific moment of Gaiseric’s reign it was introduced in Victor of Vita, *Historia persecutionis* II 39. P. Heather, ‘Christianity and the Vandals in the reign of Geiseric’ in: *Wolf Liebeschuetz reflected*, Bulletin of the Institute of Classical Studies, Supplement 91 (London, 2007), pp. 137-146.

⁶⁸⁸ Victor of Vita, *Historia persecutionis* I 13.

⁶⁸⁹ Victor of Vita, *Historia persecutionis* I 43; Heather, ‘Christianity and the Vandals’, pp. 143-144.

⁶⁹⁰ For the law regarding the confession of royal officials see Victor of Vita, *Historia persecutionis* I 43 for the ban on consecrations I 23 and 29.

⁶⁹¹ Victor of Vita, *Historia persecutionis* I 29; *Notitia provinciarum et civitatum Africae* 54.

space for further expansion of his own Church beyond *sortes Vandalarum*, though admittedly still limiting it just to Africa Proconsularis, leaving the ‘Nicene’ Church in Byzacena and Numidia undisturbed.⁶⁹² Nor does it seem that exiling ‘Nicene’ bishops of cities in Tripolitania, Vicis of Sabrata and Cresconius of Oea was a result of lobbying of ‘Arian’ clergy predominantly focused on Proconsularis.⁶⁹³

It is in Proconsularis that one can find indications of centralised and hierarchical structure of the ‘Arian’ Church. At the council convened by king Huneric in Carthage in 484, one of the bones of contention was the patriarchal title of the ‘Arian’ bishop Cyrila. Nicene bishops were offended by what they called the usurpation of a title. Was it really an invention of Huneric or Cyrila? Was it a way to combat the Nicenes, by elevating one of the Arian bishops to the level of a patriarch? Cyrila was not the first of the Arian bishops under Vandal rule to bear this title. Bishop Iucundus, who took part in earlier persecutions in the time of Gaiseric, was also titled a patriarch.⁶⁹⁴ Although seemingly a Roman, he partook in Vandal politics. Huneric ordered his execution, based on the support that the bishop was to exhibit towards Huneric’s brother and a possible contestant for the Vandal throne – Theodoric. If such was the case, then Iucundus must have exercised a considerable influence that would hardly come with being just a “palace” bishop. His closeness to the dynasty probably means he was the Arian bishop of Carthage, given how important the city was for the Hasdingi. Yet we cannot be sure whether he came with the Vandals from Spain, joined them when Gaiseric took control over Numidia

⁶⁹² Although there is at least one ‘Arian’ bishop in Byzacena attested in 484 and likely established there either at the end of Gaiseric’s reign or in the beginning of Huneric’s Victor of Vita, *Historia persecutionis* III 42. I hypothesise there was an ‘Arian’ bishop in Hippo Regius in Numidia. The seat of Augustine and his successor Heraclius is not listed in the *Notitia provinciarum et civitatum Africae* II. Given how Hippo became the main city of the territory granted to Gaiseric in the treaty of 435 Prosper s. a. 435; A. Merrills, R. Miles, *The Vandals* (Oxford, 2010), p. 60-61. It likely became a *foci* of Vandal power in the later period and perhaps one of *sortes Vandalarum*, which would explain lack of a ‘Nicene’ bishop there in 484.

⁶⁹³ Victor of Vita, *Historia persecutionis* I 23.

⁶⁹⁴ Victor of Vita, *Historia persecutionis* II 13: *Adstante vulgo in media civitate pro gradibus plateae novae episcopum suae religionis, nomine Iucundum, quem patriarcham vocitabant;*

in 435-442 as a result of a *foedus*, or had been a member of an Arian clergy in pre-conquest Africa Proconsularis.⁶⁹⁵ Iucundus was not the only one of the Arian clergy to be sentenced to death by Huneric in regards to a possible treason plot.⁶⁹⁶ One can assume the other victims were his close associates and clergy loyal to him.

Surprisingly enough, Victor of Vita does not comment on Iucundus' title, it is only when Cyrila used it at the council, that the Nicene bishops protested, seeing and presenting it as an usurpation. After both sides gathered and the Nicenes raised the point of who was to judge the outcome, Cyrila responded:

While these and other things were being said, the king's notary answered:

"The patriarch Cyrila [*patriarcha Cyrila*] has named some people." Our people, abominating the proud and unlawful title which he had usurped, said:

"Read out to us who gave permission for Cyrila to take this title for himself!"

At this our enemies made a loud clamour and began to bring false accusations.⁶⁹⁷ (trans. J. Moorhead.)

The entire incident looks purposefully incited by Nicene bishops, who jumped at the first opportunity to provoke a violent response from the other side that would allow them to claim oppression and unjust treatment at the hands of a heretic king and his clergy. It was a way out of a council that could only result in a Nicene defeat. Their 'surprise' at the title borne by Cyrila was a mere tactical ploy devised for the specific context of the event. The patriarchal ambitions of the most important bishop of the Vandal kings was therefore

⁶⁹⁵ Conant, *Staying Roman*, p. 56.

⁶⁹⁶ Victor of Vita, *Historia persecutionis* II 16: *Qui non solum episcopum suum Iucundum, ut superius demonstravimus, flammis adussit, sed et presbyteros et diaconos suos, id est Arrianos, quam plurimos incendit nec non et bestiis mancipavit.*

⁶⁹⁷ Victor of Vita, *Historia persecutionis* II 54.

not just an incidental occurrence, but rather a continuity between the reigns of Gaiseric and Huneric and the patriarchates of Iucundus and Cyrila.

What could be the aim and purpose of that title? Mathisen suggested that the patriarchal title borne by Cyrila signified his primacy amongst the Arian clergy, a role that he explained as similar to that of Wulfila amongst the Goths, a case of a “one people – one bishop” rule that he would like to see applied to all northern barbarian groups.⁶⁹⁸ The fact that Victor of Vita refers to Cyrila as “Huneric’s bishop” is also supposed to signify a system where high ranking clergymen would be associated with the palace rather than be part of a city-based church structure.⁶⁹⁹ According to Mathisen the author of the *History of the Vandal Persecution* was not familiar enough with the structure of the Vandal branch of the Arian Church. This was the reason why he mistakenly used the term “bishop”.⁷⁰⁰ But is that the case? Would Iucundus also be such a ‘primate’ amongst the Vandals? The context in which Victor refers to Cyrila as Huneric’s bishop is that of a vision of a bishop Quintianus, foreseeing the persecution that the king and his bishop are about to unleash. It is not a list of Arian bishops at a council, but a simple correlation of two main persecutors, in which the bishop’s link to the king is more important than that with his diocese. One can even argue that not mentioning Cyrila bishop’s see is a purposeful device employed by Victor to diminish the Vandal bishop by presenting him as wholly dependent on the king, without any proper episcopal power. Victor of Vita frames homoian, ‘Arian’, clergy as highly involved in the politics of the royal court, but it is a way to diminish them as the Vandal kings’ creatures, not full-fledged priests.⁷⁰¹

⁶⁹⁸ R. Mathisen, ‘Barbarian ‘Arian’ clergy, church organization and church practices’ in Berndt, Steinacher (eds) *Arianism: Roman heresy and barbarian creed*, pp. 145-193, particularly pp. 164- 166.

⁶⁹⁹ Victor of Vita, II 22: *Reor ego illas duas ollas Sicca Veneria et Laribus duas esse civitates in quibus multitudo prima fuerat congregata, e quibus incendium initium sumpsit – aut Huniricum regem et Cyrilam episcopum eius.*

⁷⁰⁰ R. Mathisen, ‘Barbarian ‘Arian’ clergy’, p. 166.

⁷⁰¹ R. Whelan, forthcoming, *Being Christian in Vandal Africa: the politics of orthodoxy in the post-imperial West*, pp. 25-26. I thank the author for granting me access to his work.

Furthermore it would be difficult to see why the Arian Church under Vandal rule would not try to structure itself in the same way the Nicene Church in Africa operated. Vandal rulers were meticulously adopting Roman ways of government and lifestyle, and the administrative system of Africa from the time of Roman rule remained intact.⁷⁰² Why would the Arian Church be any different, especially if it consisted not only of Vandals, but also of Romano-African Arians who functioned in the area earlier, before the Vandal conquest, and later converts from among the local population? Victor skews our perception of homoian clergymen as subservient to their political masters, rather than members of the institutionalised Church in Africa. In fact, the presence of clergy at the centre of power is not anything extraordinary in Late Antiquity and cannot be evidence for an absence of other activities.⁷⁰³

We can see the possibility of a different answer in several instances in which Vandal rulers seem to be trying to establish themselves as patrons of homoians in the eastern part of the Roman Empire. Such was the case, when the emperor Zeno and Placidia, Huneric's sister-in-law, daughter of Valentinian III, negotiated with the Vandal king over the ordination of a new Nicene bishop of Carthage – Eugenius:

He [Huneric] has written back to them [Zeno and Placidia] and ordered that the legates sent by them are to be told that you [the Nicene bishops] are to go ahead and ordain the man you want as your bishop, in accordance with what they have sought. There is one condition : the bishops of our religion who are at Constantinople and throughout the other provinces of the East are to have, at his command, the right to preach to the people in whatever languages they wish in their churches and to practise the Christian

⁷⁰² Conant, *Staying Roman*, pp. 43-58.

⁷⁰³ Whelan, *Being Christian*, pp. 26-28.

religion, just as you will have this right, here and in the other churches which are in the provinces of Africa, to celebrate mass, preach and do the things which pertain to your religion, in whatever way you wish. Now, if this is not observed concerning them, the order is given for both the bishop who will have been ordained and the clergy, together with the other bishops with their clergy who are in the African provinces, to be sent among the Moors.⁷⁰⁴

(trans. Moorhead)

Presenting loosing the persecution against Nicenes as a price to pay for rights of the ‘Arian’ clergy in the Roman Empire could be disregarded as a mere image ploy, Huneric’s way to appear on equal terms in negotiations with the Roman emperor. But the claim of patronage seems to be consistent at least within Victor of Vita’s perspective. When Huneric contemplated a new wave of persecutions against Nicenes, which revolved around taxing the possessions of dead bishops, the consideration that prevented the king from enacting this law, and choosing instead to harass consecrated virgins, was precisely his concern for Arian bishops in the Empire:⁷⁰⁵

But where the Devil strove to erect this building, straightaway Christ saw fit to pull it down. His household officers pointed out to him: “If your precept gives sanction to this, our bishops [*nostri episcopi*] who are in the territory of Thrace and other regions will begin to suffer worse things.”⁷⁰⁶ (trans. Moorhead)

If we add to this the persistent basing of the *homoian* claims to orthodoxy, and of their persecution of Nicenes, on the acts of the councils of Ariminum and Seleucia in 358,

⁷⁰⁴ Victor of Vita II 4.

⁷⁰⁵ Victor of Vita, II 23-24.

⁷⁰⁶ Victor of Vita, II 24.

convened by Constantius II, that endorsed the *homoian* creed, and Huneric's campaign against 'Manichean' heretics amongst the Arian clergy at the beginning of his reign, we can observe an assertive ruler and Church imitating or, perhaps more appropriately, continuing and appropriating imperial patterns.⁷⁰⁷

One of the arguments against the Vandal African 'Arian' Church having a similar structure to its Nicene counterpart, is the relative paucity of references to 'Arian' bishops taking over episcopal sees and churches.⁷⁰⁸ Besides the evidence of Victor of Vita, which is going to be discussed later, there is one piece of non-literary evidence of a bishop belonging to the Vandal African 'Arian' Church. It is a funerary inscription from the basilica of saint Cyprian in Ammaedara (modern Haidra) that mentions Victorinus, a "bishop of Vandals": *Victorinus episcopus in pace Vandalorum*.⁷⁰⁹ The ethnonym seems to be a later addition to the inscription, as is indicated by a different script and its position on the stone, probably during Byzantine rule in Africa.⁷¹⁰ It is intriguing for several reasons: the choice of an ethnic or political label rather than a sectarian one, he was not called an Arian or a heretic; the later addition which marks the change of control over the church from the Arians to the Nicenes; the preservation of the episcopal burial despite this, as well as adding a word "unitatis" to the grave inscription of Nicene bishop Melleus buried in the same church in order to differentiate him from this 'Arian' counterpart.⁷¹¹ Bockman suggests an explanation for all these unusual circumstance – for some reason Victorinus remained respected enough by the local community to be kept in the basilica not far away from relics of Cyprian.⁷¹² This might well be the case. An alternative

⁷⁰⁷ Victor of Vita, III 5, II 1-2; Merrills, Miles, *The Vandals*, p. 71.

⁷⁰⁸ Mathisen, 'Barbarian 'Arian' Clergy', pp. 164-166.

⁷⁰⁹ N. Duval, F. Prevot, *Recherches archéologiques à Haïdra. Les inscriptions chrétiennes. Rome : École Française de Rome* (Rome, 1975). (Publications de l'École française de Rome, 18) pp. 87-88.

⁷¹⁰ R. Bockman, 'The non-archaeology of Arianism' in Berndt, Steinacher (eds) *Arianism: Roman heresy and barbarian creed*, pp. 201-218, particularly p. 208.

⁷¹¹ Ibidem.

⁷¹² Ibidem.

explanation would be that the modification was done so long into the Byzantine period that the sectarian conflict lost its clarity and started to be seen more through the lenses of political loyalties, which would explain the perception of Victorinus as bishop of the Vandals, of the royal Church, rather than of ‘Arians’. Perhaps the total collapse of the Vandal kingdom made keeping Victorinus, a representative of an opposing faction, but after all a local bishop, a statement of respect for a local figure.

Whatever we assume of the attitudes of the later Christian community in Ammaedara towards their Arian former bishop, the evidence is still relevant for the 5th–6th century African Arian Church. Here we have another Roman bishop in the service of the Vandal state Church. This is demonstrated not only by the Latin name of Victorinus, but also by describing him as a bishop “of Vandals” rather than “a Vandal”. It is also worth noting that he is evidently a stationary bishop, with his burial in the important city basilica. Ammaedara itself is relatively distant from Carthage, but it still had an Arian bishop. It does give us an impression of a network of Arian bishoprics in Vandal Africa, especially if we take into account another piece of evidence from the *History of the Persecutions*.

Victor of Vita mentioned only one instance of a city-based Vandal bishop, when an unnamed Arian bishop, a former notary of Cyrila, was sent to Tipasa in Mauritania to take over the diocese there.⁷¹³ Apparently the new bishop’s arrival was to cause a massive exodus of the inhabitants to Spain. Mathisen argues that the singularity of the event proves the Arian Church’s lack of interest in becoming more like its Nicene rival. Due to Vandalic dominance, Arian clergymen, mostly of Vandal origin, were supposedly content with serving the royal household.⁷¹⁴ There is no doubt Victor chose this event for its uniqueness. But was it indeed the very fact of taking a city bishopric by an ‘Arian’,

⁷¹³ Victor of Vita, III 29.

⁷¹⁴ Mathisen, ‘Barbarian ‘Arian’ Clergy’, pp. 164-166.

possibly also a Vandal (given his affiliation with Cyrila), the exceptional element the author of *History of the Vandal Persecution* stressed? It seems it was rather the escape of the residents of Tipasa, the backlash against their opposition and the miracle that supposedly followed the incident that drew Victor's attention.⁷¹⁵ These were the reasons Victor mentioned the entire event, rather than any sort of uniqueness in an Arian bishop claiming a diocese. Argument from the absence of evidence is dubious in this case, especially as we have instances of Vandal kings endorsing the takeover of a church. Gaiseric handed the main church of the Carthaginian bishop, the *Ecclesia Restituta*, to his own bishop, when he sentenced bishop Quodvultdeus to exile.⁷¹⁶ The churches inside the walls of Carthage and many outside, including a shrine of Cyprian in Mappalia, shared the fate of the *Restituta*.⁷¹⁷ After the council of Carthage, Huneric also ordered the Nicene churches to be shut and passed to 'Arians', although we have no idea of the numbers.⁷¹⁸ The already mentioned basilica in Ammaedara might have been such a case. This was clearly for the establishment of 'Arian' clergy as dominant in the Vandal kingdom. Taking over churches with holy relics may also suggest a desire for control of the cult of saints, which the Vandal 'Arian' Church also practiced.⁷¹⁹ If we do not see that many further individual seizures of Nicene churches, perhaps it is because the 'Arian' clergy still needed to develop the numbers to man the ones they already had. At least during Gaiseric's era, the royal persecution mostly targeted the economic foundations of the Nicene Church.⁷²⁰ But later on the conflict became multifaceted. The 'Arian' Church

⁷¹⁵ Victor of Vita, III 29-30.

⁷¹⁶ Victor of Vita, I 15. If we also consider the evidence provided by Y. Modéran, 'La Notitia Provinciarum et Civitatum Africae et l'histoire du royaume vandale' *Antiquité Tardive* 14 (2006), pp. 165-185 (see below), then it turns out Tipasa was the seat of one of the bishops who converted to the 'Arian' side after the council of 484, Reparatus. Cyrila's nominee was probably Reparatus' replacement.

⁷¹⁷ Victor of Vita, I 15-16.

⁷¹⁸ Victor of Vita, III 2.

⁷¹⁹ R. Wiśniewski 'Local and overseas saints and religious identity in Vandal Africa', *Sacris Erudiri: a journal of late antique and medieval Christianity*, 52 (2013), pp. 103-118.

⁷²⁰ Merrills, Miles, *The Vandals*, p 181.

combated its counterpart by appealing to the faithful through almsgiving, criticised by Nicenes, whose resources must have been significantly diminished. Polemics of the Nicenes also reveal lively theological disputes and rivalry over the faithful by attempting to attract them by ritual.⁷²¹

In this context, the idea of claiming a primacy amongst the ‘Arians’, by a patriarch subordinated to the Vandal king in Carthage, may be more sophisticated than some think.⁷²² Vandal kings had ambitions to replace the emperors in the territory they controlled, they championed their own orthodoxy and for that purpose made claims of universality of their patronage over adherents of the *homoian* creed. Having their own patriarch, who could be seen as a clear opponent to those of Rome, Constantinople or others, must have served that aim. Did this policy originated from Huneric or his father? We do not see traces of it in the mission of bishop Bleda to Gaiseric in 455/6, after the raid on Rome and capture of women of the imperial family.⁷²³ Even though the bishop was an ‘Arian’, a fact that emperor Marcian probably wanted to exploit, Gaiseric showed no special regard for the emissary’s creed. Bleda did not make any appeals to Gaiseric, as to the empire-wide patron of ‘Arians’. The ideology of a patronage over ‘Arians’ was more likely an invention of Huneric, as it would fit with his assertive politics towards his own clergy, ridding himself of Iucundus and his supporters, but also earlier on in rooting out “Manichean” heresy. Nevertheless Iucundus’ patriarchal title must have been already in place during Gaiseric’s reign, probably as a way of centralising and ordering the structure of a rapidly expanding Arian Church. The ‘Arian’ Church seemed to have clergymen operating throughout the Vandal territory, even if it did not have the same

⁷²¹ Y. Modéran “Une guerre de religion : les deux Églises d’Afrique à l’époque vandale”, *Antiquité Tardive* vol. 11 (2003), pp. 21-44.

⁷²² Mathisen, ‘Barbarian ‘Arian’ Clergy’, p. 166.

⁷²³ Priskos, Fr. 31.

numbers as the 'Nienes', it certainly had similarly spread networks.⁷²⁴ Yves Modéran argued that the *Notitia Provinciarum et Civitatum Africae* which reported the number of Nicene bishops that attended the council convened by Huneric in 484 in fact reveals a conversion of 20% (88) of bishops to Arianism in the years following.⁷²⁵

Notitia... contains names of 459 bishops in total, grouped by provinces of their bishoprics. Along the names of bishops list offers comments on their status such as 'Corsica', 'exilium' or an enigmatic formula 'prbt'.⁷²⁶ At the end the document contains a summary with erroneous number of bishops – 466; as well as divides this number into categories: 88 of those who perished 'qui perierunt' and 378 of those who endured 'permanserunt'.⁷²⁷ The last number also includes those who were exiled to Corsica, became confessors or passed away. Noticing that the number of those who perished – 88 – largely corresponds to 90 bishops ascribed with the formula prbt, Modéran offered a reading of *qui perierunt* as those who suffered a spiritual death, lapsed during the persecution and converted to the 'Arian' creed. *Notitia* would be a document produced for the council of 484 as an argument in favour of Nicene Church, a show of force and numbers in the face of Huneric's persecution that would be reworked between 484 and 487 to serve a different purpose - updating the state of the 'Nicene' Church in Africa in the aftermath of the persecution.⁷²⁸

In the context of such major developments in numbers and structures, the authority of a patriarch from Carthage would be a factor of centralising and stabilising the entire institution of the homoian Church. The above-mentioned establishment of Cyrila's

⁷²⁴ Whelan, *Being Christian in Vandal Africa*, pp. 10-13.

⁷²⁵ Modéran 'La Notitia Provinciarum', pp. 165-185.

⁷²⁶ Some examples can be found *Notitia provinciarum et civitatum Africae* I 2-9 and II 2.

⁷²⁷ *Notitia provinciarum et civitatum Africae* VIII. It divides numbers into those who escaped, were exiled, became confessors or died VIII 8-12: *Corsica relegate numero XLVI. Hic relegate numero CCCII. Fugerunt numero XXVIII. Passus numero I. Confessor numero I.*

⁷²⁸ Modéran, 'La Notitia Provinciarum', pp. 165-185.

nominee in Tipasa, the previous bishop of which, Reparatus, switched to the ‘Arian’ side, would be one case of a patriarch acting in a capacity as the central authority of the Church.⁷²⁹

How ‘Vandal’ was the African Arian Church at the time? Individuals with both Roman and Vandal names seem to be a part of it: Anduit (V), Iucundus, Cyrila (V), Clementianus, Marivadus (V), Antonius, Victorinus, Varimadus (V) and Pinta (V) – five Vandal names and four Roman.⁷³⁰ We cannot estimate the proportions between the Romans and Vandals in the church structures, as no extant list of Arian clergy in Africa exists, even the information about bishops is incidental. Including 88 ‘Nicene’ bishops who switched sides in the aftermath of Huneric’s persecution would obviously skew the evidence in favour of Romans. Bishops who converted and remained in their position were likely followed by at least some of the clergy in their service, who were materially dependant on resources of these bishoprics. This must have Romanised the African Arian Church further. Lapsed ‘Nicens’ may not have been the only source of local clergymen for the royal Church. Victor of Vita reports at least one Donatist convert to Arianism, Nicasius, who is notable enough to justify a mention of his death next to that of Huneric’s.⁷³¹ He could be a significant member of the *curiales* class, a court official or even a Donatist bishop, given that he was brought up in such a context.

The change brought by developments in the reign of Huneric had also a geographical aspect. As we have seen Gaiseric limited his anti-Nicene policies designed to solidify the ‘Arian’ Church to Africa Proconsularis, although there were some indications ‘Arians’ gained footholds in Byzacena and Numidia. Mapping the *Notitia*

⁷²⁹ *Notitia provinciarum et civitatum Africae* IV 99.

⁷³⁰ Victor of Vita, I 41 and 44, II 8, II 2, I 48, III 43; *Vita Fulgentii* 47; Duval, Prevot, *Recherches archéologiques à Haïdra*, pp. 87-88; *Contra Varimadum* – a polemic against an otherwise unknown Arian deacon.

⁷³¹ Victor of Vita, III 71. On issues of authenticity of this passage see Victor de Vita, *Histoire de la persécution Vandale en Afrique*, ed. and trans. S. Lancel (Paris 2002), p. 212 n. 549.

Provinciarum and taking into account Modéran's reading of it allows the creation of a spatial model that can give us some ideas on the transformation of the 'Arian' Church that took place in 484 and later as well as indicate its prior geographical extent.

For that purpose, I collected and processed data for Proconsularis, Numidia and Byzacena from the *Notitia Provinciarum* (the dynamics of conversions in Mauretania Caesariensis and Sitifensis were likely less connected to the core of the 'Arian' Church in the Vandal Africa). I was able to identify and locate 40 out of 54 bishoprics of Africa Proconsularis, 71 out of 122 of Numidia and 49 out of 107 of Byzacena.⁷³² This is respectively 70%, 58 % and 45% of bishoprics named in *Notitia Provinciarum*. Not all locations are certain and some of them are approximations rather than anything else. There is also an obvious bias towards the bigger and better-known cities. The model has its obvious limitations and should not be treated as a reconstruction of the 'Nicene' episcopal network or of the 'post-Nicene' component of the episcopal network of the 'Arian' Church. However, it can offer a picture of the tendencies and possible conversion-factors such as proximity of 'Arian' bishoprics, *foci* of royal power or accessibility by major roads.

It is in Proconsularis that we can observe the results of the clash between Huneric and the most resistant ones of the 'Nicene' hierarchy. On 7th February 484 after 'Nicene' bishops made a symbolic stand at the council and left it, Huneric decreed that all Nicene churches should be closed, unless their bishops returned to the council.⁷³³ On 24th February an edict followed, applying the old imperial legislation against heretics to

⁷³² For that purpose I used: P. J. Mesnage, A. Toulotte, *L'Afrique chrétienne, évêchés & ruines antiques* (Paris, 1912); E. Babelon, R. L. V. Cagnat and S. Reinach, *Atlas archéologique de la Tunisie* (Paris, 1893); R. S. Bagnall, R. J. A. Talbert, *Barrington atlas of the Greek and Roman world* (Princeton-Oxford, 2000); 'Digital Atlas of Roman and Medieval Civilizations' <https://darmc.harvard.edu> (25 July 2018); 'Digital Atlas of the Roman Empire' <http://imperium.ahlfeldt.se/places/32568.html> (25 July 2018). The mapping of the Vandal settlement is based on Y. Modéran 'L'établissement territorial des Vandales en Afrique', *Antiquité Tardive* 10 (2002), pp. 87-122.

⁷³³ Victor of Vita, III 1.

‘Nicones’. They were given time to convert until 1st of June after which they were going to be subjected to these laws.⁷³⁴ In Summer of 484 Nicene bishops gathered at Carthage were requested to swear an oath of accepting Huneric’s son, Hilderic, as his successor to kingship and promise to cut ties with Church outside of Vandal kingdom; according to Victor of Vita the ones who agreed were resettled and removed from office, the ones who refused were exiled to Corsica.⁷³⁵

Bishops of important seats such as Carthage or Utica and lesser ones such as Aradi or Pia resisted royal request. We find these bishoprics and their territories closer to Carthage, this is to be expected with the resistance being organised by bishop Eugenius (see Map 1). However, even some bishops of seats in the immediate proximity of Carthage, such as Maxula Prates or Megalopolis, seem to have agreed to Huneric’s condition, though they did not convert and if Victor of Vita is to be trusted some of them were later sent to distant parts of Huneric’s domain. But even in this heartland of Nicene resistance there were bishops, who switched sides. Locations of 3 of these bishoprics out of 4 are identifiable, but seemingly they were of little importance. Only Uchi Maius lies in proximity to major roads of Proconsularis (see Map 2). Tagarata neighbours a cluster of bishoprics, which incumbents were exiled (see Map 3). Its bishop’s choice seems to be a deviation from the local norm, even though there might have been Vandal settlement nearby in Thuburbo Maius, as a local Vandal notable is attested to have been buried in a church there, which could be a factor in bishop’s decision.⁷³⁶ Lastly there is Bulla Minor close to border with Numidia and less important than its neighbour Bulla Regia. A Vandal massacre of Nicene Christians during the reign of Gaiseric at the neighbouring town – Thunusda – possibly indicates there were military settlers or a garrison in the area, which

⁷³⁴ Victor of Vita, III 2.

⁷³⁵ Victor of Vita, III 4.

⁷³⁶ Modéran, ‘L’établissement territorial des Vandales en Afrique’, p. 89.

could be a factor in Felix's, bishop of Bulla Minor, decision to convert.⁷³⁷ However, certain or possible attestation of Vandal settlers do not correspond with bishoprics, whose incumbents converted in the aftermath of 484 council and Huneric's policies (see Map 4).

What about Numidia? Perhaps surprisingly seats of bishops of this province, who converted tend to be situated to its western border (see Map 5). The notable exceptions are Thagaste and Caesaria, the last one neighbouring Theveste, a site of Vandal burials, which may indicate there was one of *sortes Vandalorum* in the area (see Map 6 and 7).⁷³⁸ However, bishop Ianuarius' of Thagaste and Domnicus of Caesaria did not pull along any other neighbouring bishops. A different picture seems to emerge in the western part of the province – where two major clusters of converted bishops and their bishoprics appear along major roads. First one includes such bishoprics as Thamugadi, Gauriana and Lacum Regium (see Map 8). The most important of bishoprics of the second cluster further north and on the road to Mauretania was Cirta also known as Constantina, the former capital of the province (see Map 9). It seems the conversion of its bishop Victor lead to those of his neighbours.

Notitia... lists only two bishoprics that we can find on the coast of Numidia. Even though the document mentions vacant bishoprics in Byzacena and Mauretania Caesariensis, this is not the case in Africa Proconsularis and Numidia.⁷³⁹ On the list we do not find one of the most notable bishop seats in Numidia – Hippo Regius, which after its capture by the Vandals in 430 became Gaiseric's residence until the successful siege of Carthage in 439 (see above and Map 10).⁷⁴⁰ Even though its zone of influence ranged

⁷³⁷ Victor of Vita, I 42.

⁷³⁸ Modéran, 'L'établissement territorial des Vandales en Afrique', p. 89.

⁷³⁹ For Byzacena and Mauretania see *Notitia provinciarum et civitatum Africae* III 109-115 and IV 122-126, for Proconsularis and Numidia, I and II.

⁷⁴⁰ Merrills, Miles, *The Vandals*, pp. 60-61.

to Fussala and Calama in the south, the bishopric vanishes in the Vandal period, possibly suggesting that Vandal rulers introduced a bishop of Arian Church to the city early on. The first settlement of Vandals on the coast of Numidia under the treaty of 435 and then retaining the eastern and northern Numidia under the treaty of 442 could explain why Hippo was not named as a vacant see in the *Notitia* and why there were so little ‘Nicene’ bishoprics on the coast named by this source.⁷⁴¹ Modéran showed that ‘Nicens’ in their aim of using *Notitia* as an official document to be presented to king Huneric, avoided listing bishoprics in Proconsularis which were banned from being filled up already by Gaiseric.⁷⁴² It is possible this ban extended also to areas of Numidia which remained under Vandal control the longest, such as Hippo Regius and that is why it does not appear in the list of African bishoprics.

The little evidence we have for Vandal settlement in Numidia, usually does not correspond with seats of lapsed bishops. This may be due to shortages of data behind the model. However, it is also possible to argue that the emerging tendency in the landscape is perfectly fitting the logic of religious controversy in the Vandal Africa in the mid-80’s of the 5th century. Bishops facing the choice between suffering persecution and conversion, might have succumbed due to fear for losing their property, lives, resettlement etc. But it is likely an incentive of retaining their social position and office by joining the Arian Church that was additional motivation they needed to make such a decision. Doing so in an area in proximity to one of *sortes Vandalorum*, where we can conjecture presence of Arian clergy and a bishop probably meant that chances for keeping the ecclesiastical office after switching sides were low and the incentive motive disappeared. If this assumption is correct it would provide us with indicators on the range of the ‘Arian’ episcopal network. Can we observe something similar in Byzacena?

⁷⁴¹ Victor of Vita, I 13; Merrills, Miles, *The Vandals*, pp. 61-66; Steinacher, *Die Vandalen*, pp. 143-144.

⁷⁴² Victor of Vita, I 29; Modéran ‘La *Notitia Provinciarum*’ pp. 169-171.

Seats of bishops who converted to Arianism are almost exclusively concentrated in the northern part of this former Roman province (see map 11). Although admittedly there are only 4 out of 10 that I was able to locate. Of these only Chusira can be potentially seen as in the zone of influence of Mactaris, a possible location of Vandal settlement (see map 12). Neither Iubaltiana nor Aquae Regiae lie in proximity of it, though perhaps the conversion of the bishop of the second of these cities could have something to do with its location on the major road to Sufetula. A similar possibility exists for the last of these bishoprics – Amudarsa further to the south (see map 13).

Unlike in the case of Numidia there are no major bishoprics that were gained by the ‘Arian’ Church in Byzacena. In this regard the religious landscape of the province is more like Africa Proconsularis where only a handful of bishops of marginal seats converted. What is also significant is that we do not find any bishops switching sides in the southern part of the province, where ‘Arian’ bishop Antonius vehemently partook in the persecution.⁷⁴³ This may again indicate that ‘Nicene’ bishops were less likely to convert in the areas of a heated rivalry and strong presence of the ‘Arian’ Church.

The permanence of these conversions or their impact for the expansion of the ‘Arian’ Church is an open question. Modéran was careful to stress that conversion did not necessarily mean the bishop retained his rank, but I believe the geographical spread of conversions indicates the bishops who made such a decision could be motivated by the possibility of remaining in their position. The synod of Lateran in March of 487 was convened by bishop of Rome Felix III to advise the African Church, which was divided on the issue, on how to treat the *lapsi*, who after the end of persecution during the reign of Gelimer, Huneric’s successor, sought to rejoin the ‘Nicene’ Church.⁷⁴⁴ Italian bishops recommended readmitting these priests. Assessing what share of lapsed priests returned

⁷⁴³ Victor of Vita III, 42-46 i 53-54.

⁷⁴⁴ Felix, *Epistula* 13.3.

to the 'Nicene' Church is as impossible as hypothesising on how many deacons and presbyters followed their lapsed bishops and converted, possibly swelling the ranks of the 'Arian' clergy. However, the later history of the conflict between the 'Arian' and 'Nicene' Church may offer some indicators.

The council of Carthage convened in 525 as a result of king Hilderic's policy of reconciliation with his 'Nicene' subjects gathered only 61 bishops with 37 of them from Proconsularis.⁷⁴⁵ A rather low number for an assembly of 'Nicene' bishops from the entire Vandal kingdom. Especially in comparison to 459 of the council of 484 (54 of Proconsularis). Admittedly Hilderic's kingdom was smaller than that of his father. Western territories fell to Moors.⁷⁴⁶ Thrasamund's persecution also had its impact on thinning 'Nicene' episcopate.⁷⁴⁷ However, Huneric's persecution, with its result of 20% of the African bishops converting, others exiled, and many others resettled at least for a time, could have been crucial for shaping the dynamic that eventually decimated the 'Nicene' hierarchy. It is unlikely that at the same time it did not facilitate the growth of the 'Arian' Church.

An indicator of the significant, also numerically, position of this Church in Africa may be emperor Justinian's initial approach to dealing with it after the reconquest. Justinian allowed the 'Arian' clergy to join the 'Nicene' Church and retain their offices and related properties. This inspired an objection of the 'Nicens'. At a council convoked by Reparatus, bishop of Carthage, in 535 African bishops appealed to Rome for support in resisting the imperial decision.⁷⁴⁸ Under their combined pressure Justinian conceded

⁷⁴⁵ Victor of Tunnuna, *Chronicon* 106; *Vita Fulgentii* 26-27; For number of bishops attending see *Concilium Carthaginense a. 525 Subscriptio*. Merrills, Miles, *The Vandals*, pp. 200-202.

⁷⁴⁶ Steinacher, *Die Vandalen*, p. 287.

⁷⁴⁷ Merrills, Miles, *The Vandals*, pp. 196-200.

⁷⁴⁸ *Collectio Avellana* 85; C. Saumagne 'Étude sur la propriété ecclésiastique à Carthage d'après nouvelles 36 et 37 de Justinien' *Byzantinische Zeitschrift*, 22 (1913), pp. 77-87.

issuing a new legislation on the 1st of August.⁷⁴⁹ This was a different approach from that adopted by the ‘Nicene’ Church in 487 when it accepted the lapsed clergy. Perhaps the numbers of ‘Arian’ clergy were perceived as too high and there were too many potential issues integrating the clergy, even after the deportation of the Vandals.⁷⁵⁰

This brings us back to the issue of the dynamic of the development of the ‘Arian’ Church. The number of Vandals in the ‘Arian’ clergy must have been, at the very least, substantial enough to sustain a liturgy in the Vandal language for *sortes Vandalorum*. The initial number of Vandal-speaking ‘Arian’ clergy can be estimated. As noted by Heather it is likely the division into 80 units headed by chiliarchs ordered by Gaiseric in preparation for the crossing to Africa was later reflected in the settlement.⁷⁵¹ It means there were around 80 communities in need of religious services in Vandal that according to Gaiseric’s policies could be only offered by ‘Arian’ priests. This gives us some idea of the numbers of bishops and presbyters required to conduct liturgy and give sermons in Vandal. This must have at least partially continued into the reign of Huneric.

At the council of Carthage in 484 Nicene bishops demanded an answer from Cyrila, who tried to avoid it by claiming not to know Latin.⁷⁵² Although an obvious trick, the assertion would have no basis if there were no services, with both liturgy and reading of the scripture, fully in Vandal.⁷⁵³ They most likely used Wulfila’s translation of the Bible for this purpose. One can imagine that, just as in the case of bishop Selenas in charge of the Gothic community in Constantinople, the Vandal clergy became increasingly bilingual as their presence in Africa continued, if they were not already such

⁷⁴⁹ *Novellae Iustiniani* 37.

⁷⁵⁰ Prokopios, *History of the wars* IV 8 4, 9 1 and 14 17-18.

⁷⁵¹ Victor of Vita, I 2; Prokopios, *History of the wars* III 5 18; Heather ‘Christianity and the Vandals’ p. 139.

⁷⁵² Victor of Vita, II 55.

⁷⁵³ Wiśniewski, ‘Local and overseas saints and religious identity in Vandal Africa’, pp. 103-118.

before the conquest.⁷⁵⁴ Perhaps Nicenes contested Cyrila claim also because he conducted services in both languages? One could imagine the proportions were changing as the royal persecutions noted some success in conversion.

The ‘Arian’ clergy, amongst them Vandals, under Hasdingi rule were not just executors in the royal persecution, but active actors in it. We see ‘Arian’ bishops inciting the kings and members of the royal family against the Nicenes or operating on their own.⁷⁵⁵ A Vandal priest Anduit gathered men and attacked the Nicenes, who had reopened the church in Regia shut on royal orders and were celebrating Easter.⁷⁵⁶ Seemingly he did not need any open support from secular authority to conduct this attack, which means the local clergy and Arian supporters were numerous enough to attack Nicenes in Regia. Another ‘Arian’ priest – bishop of Turris Tamalleni Antonius – took on the fight against his opponents on the border between Byzacena and Tripolitania on his own initiative, although he clearly had the favour of king Huneric, who entrusted him with breaking the ‘Nicene’ bishop of Carthage, Eugenius.⁷⁵⁷ Other bishops and priests were organising ‘re-baptising’ raids.⁷⁵⁸ The impression Victor gives us might have to do with a literary device of painting his rivals in the darkest colours possible: the greater their power, the greater the glory of the confessors. But there can be little doubt about the involvement of Arian clergy in the conflict against their Nicene counterparts. They were as interested, if not more so, in subjugating them to their own orthodoxy as was the king, who tried to continue Roman policies of dealing with heretics, placing himself as the highest judge of doctrine.

⁷⁵⁴ Sokrates Scholastikos, *HE* V 23 and Sozomen *HE* VII 17.

⁷⁵⁵ Victor of Vita, I 43 Gaiseric ordered that only Arians may serve at court offices, after the intervention of his bishops; I 44 Iucundus convinced Theodoric to refrain from killing one of his men, who remained Nicene, Armogas, and change the sentence to forced labour; II 8 Cyrila intervened against the bishop of Carthage, Eugenius, at Huneric’s court; II 51 Arian bishops accused Eugenius of sorcery.

⁷⁵⁶ Victor of Vita, I 41; For the Germanic origin of Anduit’s name, see Schönfeld, *Wörterbuch*, pp. 20-21.

⁷⁵⁷ Victor of Vita, III 42-46 and 53-54, particularly 45 suggests Turris Tamalleni as Antonius seat.

⁷⁵⁸ Victor of Vita, III 48.

The image of the African ‘Arian’ Church that emerges under king Huneric is that of a hierarchical structure in league with the Vandal rulers for the purpose of endorsing its universal orthodoxy, rather than remaining a separate ‘tribally’ and court focused church organisation. Both Romans and Vandals played a role in this. The ‘Arian’ Church was capable of providing services tailored to the needs of its Vandal-speaking faithful, but certainly did not shut itself off from the Latin-speaking ones.

The role of Vandal priests

One could attempt to see the appointment of Cyrila in place of Iucundus, combined with the former’s claims of not knowing Latin and expecting the council at Carthage to be conducted in Vandal, as “vandalising” the Arian Church under Huneric’s rule, but a look at other priests, Romans among them, taking part in the persecutions and the royal aim of unifying the creed of all their subjects, betrays the clear universalistic (albeit within the limits of the kingdom) character of the Vandal Arian Church. If Modéran’s interpretation of the *Notitia Provinciarum* is correct, Huneric’s reign brought a greater entrenchment of the Arian Church in the local society and civic networks. The boundary between the ‘Arian’ and ‘Nicene’ became politically defined by the loyalty to the ruler rather than any ethnic identity.

This poses the question of the significance of the Vandal priests in such church structures. Were they the core of the priesthood and therefore dominating also the hierarchy? What other social impact and political power could they have besides the one gained through the state apparatus? The evidence is scarce, but comparison with the known church organisations and bishops’ social background in the imperial Church, taken together with the dynamic social landscape of Vandal Africa, may shed some light.

Study of the data acquired in the development of the Christian Prosopography project, allowed Claire Sotinel to draw some conclusions on the social background of the

bishops of late antiquity and their recruitment patterns.⁷⁵⁹ Bishops of senatorial aristocratic background and ones of the lowest social stratum were rather unusual, albeit in the latter case the data may be falsified by the sources' tendency not to mention the lowly origins of a bishop. A quite significant group are members of families already in church service. The other pattern that seems to emerge is a meaningful presence of *curiales*, imperial officials and academics. They were employed more for their skills than their political power or social impact. Most bishops were earlier members of the clergy: deacons or presbyters.

How can we transfer that to Vandals in the African Arian Church under the Hasdingi? Especially in the time of the early rule of Gaiseric, social mobility must have been high, and we may assume there were plenty of career openings in the newly established kingdom more attractive than a clergy career for Vandals and other barbarians from Gaiseric's host (one needs to remember about the Goths, Suevi and Alans who took part in the crossing). Perhaps that would explain why the first African Arian patriarch visible in our sources is seemingly a Roman, and it is only the second one who is so Vandal that he could risk making a claim of not knowing Latin. Similarly, to the evidence of the imperial Church, the Vandals in the Arian African Church do not seem to be recruited from the highest elites. Their names do not indicate any aristocratic background.⁷⁶⁰ It might be that in the later reign of Gaiseric and that of Huneric a church career became more attractive to the Vandals of an analogous social position to the groups that were identified by Sotinel to be the recruitment base for the upper clergy and bishops. If so, these would be the lower Vandal elites, who, with the stabilisation of Vandal rule and the end of Gaiseric's seizures of land, could no longer expect to receive estates and

⁷⁵⁹ C. Sotinel, *Le recrutement des évêques en Italie aux IVe et Ve siècles : essai d'enquête prosopographique* in: *Vescovi e pastori in epoca teodosiana* (Rome, 1997), pp. 193-204.

⁷⁶⁰ See the names above.

lands on such a scale as in the first decades of the Vandal rule.⁷⁶¹ Huneric's policies offered a chance of a career in an expanding organisation, continuously strengthened by takeovers of Nicene churches and church properties. Nevertheless, the universal claims of the royal Arian Church, its relative success in converting the local population and acculturation meant in the long run the clergymen of barbarian origin were in no better position than their counterparts in the Nicene Church.

Gothic and Burgundian Arian Churches

Much less is known about Arian Church structures in the other barbarian domains. This has to do with the above discussed 'imperial' policies of Vandal rulers, who treated Arianism as the state orthodoxy. Persecutions, which were the element of these policies, resulted in a number of sources created by the Nicenes. Arian Gothic rulers in Aquitania and Burgundian ones in Lugdunum and Geneva seem to have had much less interest in religious policies. In the case of Gibichungs, it is most likely because they perceived themselves more as semi-independent Roman officials than as independent rulers even or perhaps especially when the only emperor left was the one in Constantinople.⁷⁶² The conflicts they had with Nicene bishops seem to have been of a political nature and to have revolved around local power rivalries. Visigothic rulers tended to remove bishops of whose loyalty they were uncertain or who they perceived as obstacles to their policies, but it never seemed to have any religious character; such was the case of Sidonius who was imprisoned by Euric after he took an active part in defending Clermont against Gothic siege.⁷⁶³ The Burgundian Arian ruler Gundioc intervened with the pope against the invalid election of a bishop. This action bears the characteristics of a typical Roman

⁷⁶¹ For the summary of the discussions of land divisions see Steinacher, *Die Vandalen*, pp. 151-166.

⁷⁶² I. Wood 'Gentes, kings and kingdoms', pp. 261-263 and 266; I. Wood 'The Burgundians and Byzantium' in: A. Fischer, I. Wood (eds), *Western perspectives on the Mediterranean*, pp. 1-15, particularly pp. 2-8.

⁷⁶³ Mathisen, 'Barbarian 'Arian' Clergy', pp. 151-166.

official who attempted to establish his authority over a local church community by appealing to other bishops.⁷⁶⁴ There is hardly anything ‘Arian’, not to mention barbarian, about it. A result of this lack of religious policy, endorsing ‘Arianism’ on a scale such as in Africa, is that there is little mention of barbarian ‘Arian’ priests, let alone bishops in the sources for this period in Gaul.

There is yet another problem with the Burgundian ruling family. Gibichungs, and one can imagine therefore their military and civil officials, unlike Vandals in Africa and Goths in Aquitania were not consistently ‘Arian’. It was not a continuous element of their group identity. It seems they went through phases of ‘Arianism’ and adherence to the Nicene creed, like the Suevi in Spain.⁷⁶⁵ Orosius and Sokrates mention Burgundian conversion to orthodoxy in the early 5th century, but then two kings Gundobad and Godegisel ruling at the end of the 5th century and beginning of the 6th are said to be ‘Arians’, while king Sigismund, king Gundobad’s son, and Gundobad’s wife Caretena, are reported to adhere to the Nicene creed already during his reign.⁷⁶⁶ There is hardly any direct evidence for ‘Arian’ clergy in action under Burgundian rule, let alone for Burgundians in the local ‘Arian’ Church itself. An ‘Arian’ bishop was killed together with Godegisel in ‘Arian’ church in Vienne, when Gundobad stormed the city.⁷⁶⁷

The indirect evidence of ‘Arian’ clergymen comes from a letter of bishop Avitus of Vienne to bishop Victorious of Grenoble, and from the canons of the council of Epaon in regards to treatment of churches that were formerly used by ‘Arians’, since the coming to power of a Nicene creed adherent, king Sigismund.⁷⁶⁸ The canon of the council summarises the substance of the letter itself, by stating that only churches which were

⁷⁶⁴ R. W. Mathisen, *Ecclesiastical factionalism and religious controversy in fifth-century Gaul* (Washington D. C., 1989), pp. 211-217.

⁷⁶⁵ R. Kaiser, *Die Burgunder* (Stuttgart, 2004), pp. 148-152

⁷⁶⁶ Orosius VII 32 13; Sokrates Scholastikos *HE* VII 30; Gregory of Tours *LH* II 32; *Vita Marcelli* IX.

⁷⁶⁷ Gregory of Tours, *LH* II 33.

⁷⁶⁸ Avitus, Ep. 7; *Concilium Epaonense* Canon 33.

taken earlier from the Nicenes and appropriated by the 'heretics' should be used again. That is by contrast with churches founded by laymen whose owners converted to the Nicene creed or ones set up by Sigismund's father Gundobad. Avitus' reasoning is that of not giving the opposing side an excuse for claiming titles of 'martyrs' and 'confessors', but also a consideration for a possible change of the political situation. The bishop of Vienne advises restraint in order not to provoke a retaliation if the next ruler is an 'Arian'.

Several things can be learned from this letter. The first is the fact of taking over Nicene churches for 'Arian' use, which implies at least a limited policy of supporting 'Arianism' in the Burgundian domain; one could wonder when this started, but the best guess would probably be towards the end of the second half of the 5th century, when Roman authority over the Burgundians became increasingly illusory. The second is the scale of the 'Arian' Church network in the regions under Burgundian rule. If there were at least three categories of church buildings according to Avitus: oratories, private basilicas and public churches spread through the region, enough for these to be a matter of correspondence for the bishops of Vienne and Grenoble and a canon of a regional council, then it can be inferred the Arian clergy was numerous enough and had enough support from the Burgundian elite to sustain it. The third is that, even with Sigismund's sole rule over his father's domain and royal support on their side, Avitus and the rest of the bishops at the council (24 in total, plus one represented by a presbyter) found it prudent to be restrained in their retribution against Arians. This implies the other side retained enough power and support to make its violent eradication potentially too costly for implementing. Although we have no evidence of Burgundians or other barbarians in the Arian Church under Gundobad's and other Burgundian kings' rule, it is more than likely that they did enter the ranks of clergy that was so dependent on the favour of royalty and their officials, quite plausibly attaining higher ranks in it.

The evidence for the Arian clergy in the Gothic realm is more extensive, but still in no way comparable to that of the African one under Vandal rule. Only glimpses of priests in Gothic service in Aquitania are observable. The available evidence led Ralph Mathisen to offer an interesting interpretation, in which the Gothic Arian Church under the Balti dynasty had a differing structure to the Nicene one. According to Mathisen, there was no episcopal network, perhaps just a palace bishop, but with an upper hierarchy dominated by a sacerdotal college. This theory is based on the lack of mentions of specific bishops, where instead groups of clergy are noted, and a lack of any attempts at installing Arian bishops in the cities under Gothic rule.⁷⁶⁹ One passage mentioned priests in attendance on king Euric at his feast during bishop Epiphanius' embassy to him:

Straightway, he [Epiphanius] received numerous requests to dine on the next day with the king, but, since he had already heard that Euric's table was polluted by the presence of his own priests [*sacerdotes suos*], he declined saying that it was not his custom to dine at the board of another and that he planned to be on his way on the day after the morrow.⁷⁷⁰ (trans. R. Pontius)

The other instance is Sidonius' letter describing king Theodoric II and his daily routine:

Before dawn he goes with a very small retinue to the service conducted by the priests of his faith [*sacerdotum suorum*], and he worships with great earnestness.⁷⁷¹ (trans. Anderson)

⁷⁶⁹ Mathisen 'Barbarian Bishops and the churches' pp. 681-684; he voiced the same argument in: Mathisen, 'Barbarian 'Arian' clergy' pp. 148-150 and R. W. Mathisen, H. S. Sivan, 'Forging a new identity: the kingdom of Toulouse and the frontiers of Visigothic Aquitania (418-507)' in A. Ferreiro (ed.) *The Visigoths: studies in culture and society* (Leiden-Boston-Köln, 1999), pp. 1-62, particularly pp. 39-44.

⁷⁷⁰ Ennodius, *Vita Epiphani* p. 354.

⁷⁷¹ Sidonius Apollinaris, *Ep.* I 2 4.

The use of *sacerdotes* in both Sidonius' letter and Ennodius' *Life of Epiphanius* is indeed intriguing. Mathisen uses that similarity as an argument for the lack of an episcopal hierarchy substituted by a collegium of *sacerdotes*, suggesting that the omission of more specific terms such as deacons, presbyters and bishops is telling. However ecclesiastical terminology was not always detailed and specific at the time. Even in the normative acts of councils, bishops could be referred to as *sacerdotes*.⁷⁷² It is also worth pointing out that in these two cases the authors were not particularly concerned with these groups; they hardly play any active role in the story of Epiphanius' embassy to Euric or in Sidonius' description of Theodoric's daily routine. It is entirely plausible that the term *sacerdos* here means any clergymen, and both authors were simply referring to a group of clergy that could have been constituted of deacons, presbyters and bishops.

Much more convincing evidence for Mathisen's thesis of a comparatively unhierarchical Arian clergy in Gothic service relates to the presbyter Othia. This priest, a Goth to judge by his name, consecrated a votive basilica to saints Vincentius, Agnes and Eulalia in 455. The inscription has been found in Baeterrae (Beziers):

Othia pr(es)b(yster) anno XXXIII pr(es)b(y)t(eratu)s sui baselicam ex voto
suo in hon(orem) s(an)c(to)r(u)m mart(yrum) Vincenti(i) Agnetis et Eulaliae
con(s)tr(uxit) et d(e)d(i)c(avit) Valentiniano VI[II] et An[t]hem[io]
consulibus]⁷⁷³

It is indeed a peculiar situation in which a presbyter consecrated a church and dated its consecration by the years of his presbyterate. According to Mathisen, this proves the lack of an episcopal hierarchy in the 'Arian' Church under Gothic rule, as in the 'Nicene'

⁷⁷² C. Rapp 'The elite status of bishops in late antiquity in ecclesiastical, spiritual, and social contexts' *Arethusa*, vol. 33 no. 3 (2000), pp. 379-399.

⁷⁷³ *CIL* XII 4311.

Church the consecration of churches by anyone but bishops was forbidden.⁷⁷⁴ (Though the very fact there was a need for a prohibition of practice attests it was happening). But besides the Gothic name, which does not necessary mean the presbyter was an Arian, the main argument for Othia's adherence to the Arian creed is that this action would have been breaking the canons of the 'Nicene' Church. The argument becomes circular: Othia belongs to the 'Arian' Church because only there could a presbyter consecrate a church; Othia's consecration of the church is a proof for such practices in the 'Arian' Church unlike in the 'Nicene', because he was a member of it. Another possibility is that Othia was a Nicene presbyter, clearly wealthy enough to fund his own church, perhaps then powerful and ambitious enough in a local area to challenge the norms, or simply to obtain permission from his bishop. But even if Mathisen is right in assuming that consecration of a church was an element in which Arian and Nicene Churches in the area followed different practices, presbyters taking over competences associated in the Nicene Church with bishops does not signify the lack of episcopal hierarchy in the Arian Church.

Similar evidence for the extent of the Gothic Arian Church, to that of Avitus' letters and the council of Epao canons for the Burgundian Arian Church, exists in the canons of the council of Orléans in 511. Convened by Clovis after his victory at the battle of Vouillé in 507 it was to consolidate his authority over church matters in the conquered, formerly Visigothic, territory. The tenth canon concerned the fate of the Arian clergy and

⁷⁷⁴ Mathisen 'Barbarian Bishops and the Churches', pp. 681-684; Mathisen, 'Barbarian 'Arian' clergy', pp. 148-149; Mathisen, Sivan, 'Forging a New Identity', pp. 1-62, particularly pp. 39-44; He quotes the 10th canon of the Council of Orange 441: *Si quis Episcoporum in alienae civitatis territorio Ecclesiam aedificare disponit, vel profundi fui negotio, aut Ecclesiastica utilitate, vel pro quacumque sua opportunitate, permissa licentia aedificandi, quia prohibere hoc votum nefas est, non praesumat dedicationem, quae illi omnimodis reservatur, in cuius territorio Ecclesia assurgit*, text quoted from J. Sirmond, *Concilia antiqua Galliae*, vol. I (Paris, 1829). The issue with considering Othia's consecration of the church as unlawful based on this canon, arises from its context. The norm regulated by bishops at the council pertains to territorial jurisdiction, prohibiting other bishops from consecrating churches in territory not under their episcopal power; this does not mean a presbyter could not dedicate a basilica with his bishop's consent.

churches which earlier belonged to the Arians.⁷⁷⁵ Unlike their Burgundian counterparts, the Nicene bishops in Clovis' domain gave the option of acceptance into the Nicene Church to the Arian clergy, and their churches, by a simple benediction with the laying on of hands. Does this more assertive policy imply the Arian clergy of the Visigothic Balti was less numerous than the clergy of Burgundian Gibichungs? Did the lack of distinguishing conduct in regards to a heretical bishop or any upper clergy imply there were none for the Frankish Nicene bishops to deal with, and that therefore no episcopal Arian Church existed in Aquitania? It might be so, but it seems, unlike in the case of Burgundia, the Arians in former Visigothic territory were in a far worse situation than their counterparts. As we have seen above, Avitus had doubt over the future and whether the next ruler would be also a Nicene or at least favourable to them, one can also imagine that a group of Burgundian elites remained adherents of the Arian creed and allies of the Arian clergy. The Gothic Arian priesthood was deprived of such support, with the Frankish conquest. Even if there was an episcopal structure to it, contrary to Mathisen's suggestions, there was no place for these bishops in the Frankish kingdom, one could imagine that the ones who could moved to Spain and Septimania, together with the rest of the Visigothic elite. The remaining lower clergy posed no threat to the Nicene church and could be absorbed by it, as the council of Orléans' canon clearly shows.

The little material we have tends to focus on the relations of the clergy with the ruler, as the Arian clergy clearly did not pose such a threat to the Nicene Church in Gaul as the Vandal one did in Africa. It is even harder to discern anything relevant on the upper clergy of barbarian origin. With rare exceptions, such as Othia, if he indeed was an Arian presbyter, barbarian Arian clergymen are impossible to observe. Yet, if Othia was in any way characteristic for this group of barbarians, then they were in command of enough

⁷⁷⁵ *Concilium Aurelianense* X.

resources to found a church, even if dependent on royal support in that matter. Expressed loyalty to locally popular saints bears resemblance to the Vandal Arian Church and signifies a degree of acculturation with the region, even if their royal masters did not express any interest in making their Church more attractive to the local population, as the Vandals did.⁷⁷⁶ Even isolated, and focused on the needs of the barbarian elites of these kingdoms, rather than any sort of theological engagement with the locals, the barbarian upper clergy did not shut themselves off from the regional context as fully as the Nicene sources may imply. But the lack of royal interest in expanding the role of the Arian Church made them passive in comparison to their Vandal counterparts.

Conclusions

The interests of kings and ruling elites seem to have been the deciding factor in establishing the role of the Arian Church and the barbarian upper clergy in it. Where there were royal policies that endorsed the idea of a royal Arian Church, modelled in its universalistic claims on the imperial Church, as in Vandal Africa, the clergy and its barbarian members had an active role in politics to play and an economic gain to make. The barbarian clerics were particularly useful when communities still needed bilingual services and tactics employing ethnicity could be set against the Nicene opponents in disputes. There was a place for barbarian clergy at the very top of the Arian hierarchy. The interaction of their ethnic and religious identity offered some perks for their social position. But as royal policies became successful and the claim for ‘universality’ more tangible, the influx of local clergymen started to be a significant factor, most likely lessening the role of ethnically Vandal priests. Over time the barbarian origin of the

⁷⁷⁶ Wiśniewski, ‘Local and overseas saints and religious identity’, pp. 103-118

bishops and presbyters also became less of a factor, as Vandal rulers and elites acculturated and their subjects identified more with their kings.

In the Burgundian and Visigothic kingdoms the role of the Arian clergy, let alone priests of barbarian identity, seems to have been far more limited, with so little evidence for it that the structure of the hierarchy, its social impact and its political power are entirely open to speculation. Not involving and instrumentalising the clergy in the politics of the Balti and Gibichung dynasties towards the local Nicene Churches and subjects in general, meant less room for more assertive action by them and for developing a meaningful position in the socio-political landscape of these kingdoms. It also meant marginalisation of the clergy, but also, arguably, retention of a more ‘barbarian’ character of its members. A career in these Arian Churches was not so attractive to the Roman population. Let us return to the opening questions about the differences and similarities between the position of barbarian clergymen in the Arian communities in the East and the imperial Church, and the Vandal, Burgundian and Gothic Churches in the West. It appears that the possibilities of a career and its character for a barbarian cleric in the Vandal Church became more alike the ones of a barbarian in the imperial Church, with bilingual skills and ethnicity mattering less as the Vandal Church drew closer to the imperial Church, not just in its model but also its ethnic proportions. At the same time, barbarian clerics in the Gothic and Burgundian Churches found themselves in a situation similar to that of Arian communities under imperial rule in the East. They were marginalised within local politics and dependent on powerful Arian officials; albeit retaining their ‘ethnic’ character for longer, as it was also an expression of their political allegiance often expressed with ‘ethnic’ labels, they were still subject to local influences.

Chapter 3.3 Elite barbarian women in the ideology and social practice of the later Roman Empire

Women of ‘barbarian’ origin, or identified as such, are not prominent in the writings of late antique authors. But although the evidence is scarce, we can still observe that they were to a certain degree objects of the same processes as their male counterparts. How far did their acculturation and integration into the upper echelons of Roman society go? Did they adapt to the duties, obligations and activities of members of the imperial, senatorial and civic elites? Did they introduce any non-Roman substance into Roman social practice? Were they subjected to ethnicization by the Roman elites? These are just some of the questions that need to be asked and addressed when dealing with the subject of aristocratic barbarian women in the 4th and 5th centuries. The intersection of gender and ethnic identity could result in a different social position, with its own sets of privileges and restrictions, from that of ‘barbarian’ men and Roman women.

The literary *topos*.

Barbarian women, as their male counterparts, had a long history of being represented in classical literature, established before Late Antiquity. Often they were used as an image of an anti-ideal woman that is too masculine, sometimes more masculine than barbarian men, representing a reality in which the traditional roles are reversed. In a way presenting powerful and independent women in the public sphere of barbarian societies was used to stress their uncivilised ways, in opposition to the Graeco-Roman ideal of virtuous women secluded within the private sphere of life.

What, then, were the norms that Roman women were expected to meet and ‘barbarian’ women as the ‘other’ were the very antithesis of? Naturally there was no single ideal which defined the role and set of features of an ideal Roman woman throughout the whole of Roman history. A great many of these ideals depended upon the

genre of the source, the preference and aims of its author, and the social position of the women described.⁷⁷⁷ Nevertheless, we are able to discern some important features, especially in the case of wives, such as chastity, fertility, industry. *Concordia* and harmony, with the implication of the wife obeying her husband, were relevant traits of the traditional image of marriage.⁷⁷⁸ As we are going to observe, some of these features are going to appear in descriptions of barbarian women, when the author's aim was praise and affirmation, in a way romanising these women. When it was the opposite, the model of the unruly and fiercely independent barbarian was in use again.

Classical literature often used such patterns, whether in ethnographic descriptions of foreign people which served as mirrors to Greek and Roman society, or as devices in poetry and drama.⁷⁷⁹ Ancient authors since Herodotos depicted peculiarities of the social position or savage nature of women in faraway societies among other wonders of distant lands.⁷⁸⁰ Describing far away societies was an opportunity to criticise the 'decadence' of an author's own civilisation by comparing savage but virtuous barbarian women to wicked Roman aristocratic ladies. In certain cases, barbarian women could be presented as meeting that ideal far better than their Roman counterparts. Tacitus' Germanic women were virtuous, pure and uncorrupted by the temptations of spectacles, feasts and adultery, remained faithful to their husbands and raised their children themselves instead of turning for help to nurses.⁷⁸¹ These tendencies seem to have continued into Late Antiquity,

⁷⁷⁷ S. Dixon, *Reading Roman women* (London, 2001), pp. 16-25.

⁷⁷⁸ S. Dixon, *The Roman family* (Baltimore – London, 1992), pp. 69-70.

⁷⁷⁹ W. Pohl, 'Gender and ethnicity in the early Middle Ages' in: T. F. X. Noble (ed.) *From Roman provinces to medieval kingdoms* (New York, 2006), pp. 168-188, gives some examples of using especially Amazons as a literary example of a reversed-order society.

⁷⁸⁰ Herodotos IV 110-117 explained Sauromats' women participation in what was seen as men's activities in the Greek world, by their matrilineal descent from Amazons; I 216 and IV 104 described the institution of shared wives amongst Massagetes and Agatirises; Caesar, *Commentarii de Bello Gallico* V 14 attributed similar practice to the Britts; Pliny, *Historia Naturalis* VII 2 elaborated on the Bitiae of Scythia, who had magic powers, could not drown, had a double pupil in one eye and an image of a horse in another; Tacitus, *Annales* XIV 30 maintained that women of Isle of Man stood against the Roman legions; according to Strabo VII 2 3 Cimbri women would take part in human sacrifices and divination of human entrails.

⁷⁸¹ Tacitus, *Germania* 19-20.

leading to the development of a rich and diverse cultural image of barbarian women in Graeco-Roman civilisation.

On the other hand, associating with barbarian women could be seen in a bad light. The long list of vices of the emperor Gallienus includes a critique of his romantic involvement with Pipara, the daughter of a Germanic king.⁷⁸² Though it could be understood on the basis of a rejection of an extramarital relationship, the fact that some emperors such as Maximinus Thrax and Magnentius, or even the former's son Maximus, were frowned upon for their semi-barbarian origins implies a racially based bias towards unions between Romans and barbarians, whether of official or unofficial character.⁷⁸³ Even when certain peoples became romanised, differences in women's behaviour and role were noted. For Ammianus who adapted an ethnographical approach even towards romanised regions such as Gaul and alluded to its barbarian past, Gaulish women's independence and assertiveness in taking part in quarrels on their men's behalf was something shocking and worthy of ridicule.⁷⁸⁴ It is against such cultural prejudice that we need to look at attitudes towards barbarian women entering the Roman imperial elite in the 4th and 5th century.

For authors, such as Claudian or Sidonius Apollinaris, barbarian women of significance served in their poetry as personifications of greed, lust for power and thirst for blood, motivating their husbands to unjust deeds. Claudian cast in such a role the wives of Tribigild and Alaric. Since we are not even given their names, it is very likely he had no knowledge of either of them and was adapting a literary pattern of Romano-Greek literature. In the first case, he presented the beginning of Tribigild's rebellion in

⁷⁸² *Historia Augusta Gall.* 21, 3 and *Tyranni triginta* 3, 4; Aurelius Victor 33, 6.

⁷⁸³ J. Moralee 'Maximinus Thrax and the politics of race in late antiquity', *Greece & Rome: second series*, 55/1 (2008), pp. 55-82.

⁷⁸⁴ Ammianus XV 12 1 is most likely one of the cases in his narrative where stereotypes found in the literature had precedence over any actual observations of the author.

Phrygia against the domination of the eunuch Eutropius, at the Constantinopolitan court of Arcadius (see chapter 1.1). The form of Tribigild's wife is taken by the goddess of war, Bellona.⁷⁸⁵ Though we are dealing here with a goddess, her 'barbarian' form is stressed. The presentation of the 'barbarian' features is fairly conventional, with no particular elements standing out. Claudian describes an upper stratum barbarian woman; although it is difficult to discern whether her clothing serves to characterise her ethnically, one could have such an impression since in Claudian's narration these elements are listed after asserting that the goddess imitates a 'barbarian'. The character of Tribigild's wife is revealed in her call for action (quoted in chapter 1.1).⁷⁸⁶ The motivation of Tribigild's wife is lust for glory, riches and slaves, that a barbarian warlord can bestow upon his wife. This theme was used later on by Claudian, while describing Alaric's wife. His mention of Argos, Thessaly and Sparta is a clear reference to Alaric's activity in the Balkans. Tribigild's wife is motivated by negative traits, while dissuading her husband from good qualities such as loyalty and justice, desirable by Romans in their barbarian commanders and soldiers, presenting them as unwanted hindrances. Her fierce decisiveness is stressed even further by being opposed to the Romans' acquiescence in being commanded by a eunuch.⁷⁸⁷ The fact that the critique of Eutropius' effeminacy is coming from a woman, who appears manlier than the Romans under such a leader, serves to make Claudian's point about the main focus of his speech more explicit. This clearly was the main reason for introducing Tribigild's wife/Bellona character into the poem. The representation of this high-ranking barbarian woman is instrumentalised and made subservient to the main aim of the poem – satirizing the eunuch Eutropius.

⁷⁸⁵ Claudian, *In Eutropium* II 175-186.

⁷⁸⁶ Claudian, *In Eutropium* II 194-210.

⁷⁸⁷ Claudian, *In Eutropium* II 222-229.

In the second of Claudian's work – *De Bello Gothico* – the wife of a barbarian warlord is given a less prominent role, even a marginal one, but still along similar lines to that of Tribigild's wife. Although the first of Alaric's invasions of Italy, which ended unsuccessfully in the battle of Pollentia, is presented by Claudian as mainly an initiative of Alaric himself, his wife is also said to have been in favour of it, influencing her husband's decisions to a great degree. Much like the wife of Tribigild, her motivation is her desire for glory, plunder and captives:

What must then have been your despair, Alaric, when ruin overwhelmed your wealth and all that gear that years of robbing had won you, when there struck your ear the cries of that wife of yours who, too confident in her long unconquered husband, demanded in her madness the jewelled necklaces of Italian matrons for her proud neck and Roman girls for her serving women! The fair girls of Greece from Corinth and Sparta were, indeed, not good enough now for so great a lady [coniugis, invicto dudum quae freta marito demens Ausonidum gemmata monilia matrum Romanasque alta famulas cervice petebat! scilicet Argolicas Ephyreidasque puellas coeperat et pulchras iam fastidire].⁷⁸⁸ (trans. Platnauer)

Once again, a barbarian woman, or to be precise her thirst for riches, is one of the driving forces for preying upon the Romans. The image of Italian matrons to be robbed and Roman girls to be enslaved furthers the contrast between a world of Romans and that of brutal barbarians. The women on one side represent virtue and dignity, while the ones on the other side are greedy and prideful, full of their power over their husbands.

⁷⁸⁸ Claudian, *The Gothic War* 623-634.

A contrast between the virtue of an ideal Roman woman restricted to her house, and a barbarian counterpart involved in public life, is even more visible in Synesios' work *De providentia*, already discussed in chapter 1.1. In his allegorical narrative about the rise and downfall of the Gothic commander Gainas Synesios of Cyrene employed the wives of Gothic officers as instruments of the lust for power. The source of this lust, and the person who manipulated these wives, was a Roman official's wife. The spouse of Typhos, an allegory of the later praetorian prefect Caesarianus, was portrayed as the instigator responsible for inciting the Scythians/Goths to rebel against Osiris, who represented the then praetorian prefect Aurelian. Although she is Roman, she became the main negative feminine character, devoted to the search for luxuries and power. In her attempt to raise support for her husband she turns to the wife of Gainas.⁷⁸⁹ After convincing the Gothic woman, the two of them focus their combined efforts on Gainas. Eventually the Goths become persuaded of the necessity of raising arms against Osiris/Aurelian.⁷⁹⁰

The active participation in politics of both Typhos' wife, a fallen Egyptian/Roman woman, and the wife of Gainas' is placed in stark contrast to the wife of Osiris/Aurelian, whose main virtue is described as being confined to her husband's house, to such an extent that the population of the city knew of her existence solely on the basis of the public appearance of Osiris' son.⁷⁹¹ In such a context the active political role barbarian women take in the entire affair could be seen as one of the first elements of the dissolution of the ideal social order of Osiris' reign to which Synesios devotes his work. At the same time, Synesios sets Typhos and his Roman wife as the source of corruption of first the barbarian women and then the barbarian men. It is clear that fallen *Romanitas* is a far more dangerous thing than the savage disloyalty of the barbarians. The evil brought by a

⁷⁸⁹ Synesios, *De providentia* XV 108C-108D.

⁷⁹⁰ Synesios, I XV 110 C-D.

⁷⁹¹ Synesios, *De providentia* I XIII 106 A.

Roman woman acting out of place, is different to the nearly “accidental” evil of barbarian women stemming from their uncivilised primitive ways.

Another case of instrumentally used barbarians comes from the panegyric of Sidonius Apollinaris to the emperor Majorian. Pelagia, a wealthy landowner of barbarian background, attested in other primary sources, a wife of first Bonifatius and then Aetius, is presented as both a threat and a portent of the future emperor’s glory. Like Claudian, with the wives of Tribigild and Alaric, Sidonius seems to have used a set of conventional elements of description rather than any actual characteristics of the historical figure that was Aetius’ wife. She was to encourage her husband to kill Majorian, as a threat to both Aetius’ and his son’s good fortune:

But as it chanced, the wife of the leader, already jealous, had perceived that the youth’s renown was thus waxing greater, and filled with spleen, she had nursed the hidden venom in her barbarian heart [*barbara corda*].⁷⁹² (trans. Anderson)

Pelagia’s ancestry is implied at the beginning of the poem and later on it is actually used as one of the reasons behind her concern for Majorian being a threat to her son, Gaudentius’, future:

What realm shall I win for my son, debarred as I am from a Gothic sceptre, if Rome ignores me and, to crown all, our little Gaudentius is trodden underfoot by this youth’s destiny?⁷⁹³ (trans. Anderson)

Her Gothic background is of no use to her son, causing her to secure his Roman future with even greater determination. Sidonius did not limit himself to just associating

⁷⁹² Sidonius Apollinaris, *Carmen* V 128-129.

⁷⁹³ Sidonius Apollinaris, *Carmen* V 203-206.

Pelagia's ancestry with her murderous plans. He used a classical example of a nefarious barbarian woman committing atrocities and bringing woe upon her husband, that is Medea:

So now she searches the sky, casting up numbers and exhausting the astrologer's lore; she questions ghosts, explores the thunderbolts, and gazes at entrails, rejoicing to wrest God's secret purpose from every source. Even thus grimly had stood the Colchian woman on the stern of the Grecian ship in the presence of her terrified husband, ready to throw Absyrtus in pieces at his father and commit a horror worse than her brother's murder, as she used a corpse for battle and made missiles of her own kin;⁷⁹⁴ (trans. Anderson)

By drawing a connection between the two women, Sidonius is also tapping into another set of negative perceptions of women in Antiquity. Magic is usually associated with feminine desires and depravity in ancient literature.⁷⁹⁵ Sidonius' audience is provided with recognisable elements. What is even more important for the purpose of the author, astrology, necromancy and *haruspicium* all confirm Majorian's glorious fate, one that was determined by God himself. Pelagia is further employed by Sidonius in attempting to convince her husband with emotional appeals to assassinate Majorian, yet to no avail as fate's decree must be fulfilled.⁷⁹⁶

The above quoted passages present unambiguously negative barbarian characteristics, for apparent literary reasons, but this does not mean that there was not an alternative, in which barbarian origin could be represented as a positive characteristic. What remains of *Carmen IV* of Flavius Merobaudes, a Roman commander, politician and

⁷⁹⁴ Sidonius Apollinaris, *Carmen V* 129-139.

⁷⁹⁵ Apuleius, *Metamorphoses (The golden ass)* presents a number of examples of women using magic: I 8-19; II 5-6, 21-26, 30-31, III 15-20.

⁷⁹⁶ Sidonius Apollinaris, *Carmen V* 203-210, 257-259, 271- 273.

poet, closely associated with Aetius, presents the very same Pelagia's heritage as something unmistakably positive and beneficial both to Aetius and his son Gaudentius:

Let his wife be at hand with Rome's associate, her father [*socio parente*]; a wife not to be celebrated with trivial songs, an offspring of heroes, and a descendant of kings [*heroum suboles, propago rego*]. Her renown outdoes that of womanhood.⁷⁹⁷ (trans. Clover)

Her father's service to Rome, a royal and heroic barbarian pedigree, and the renown coming with it, are harnessed to bring out the qualities of her son Gaudentius who seems to be the main focus of Merobaudes' poem. When needed, a barbarian ancestry could be turned to an advantage, as long as it was royal or aristocratic. As we are going to see below, Sidonius was also capable of praising a barbarian lady of power.

Another case of bias against a barbarian woman comes from ecclesiastical literature. Eudoxia, daughter of Bauto, a Roman commander of Frankish origin and a consul of 385, raised in the house of a prominent Roman commander Promotus in Constantinople, was chosen for the emperor Arcadius' wife.⁷⁹⁸ The empress proved to be influential: deposing the all-powerful eunuch Eutropius, attaining the rank of Augusta in 400 and making her husband convene the the Synod of the Oak in September of 403. Eudoxia's position and impact on matters of state did not escape the attention of a church historian, Philostorgios, who associated her forwardness with her barbarian background:

[Philostorgios] says that the emperor Arcadius married Bauto's daughter after his father's death. Bauto was of barbarian stock but had distinguished himself as a military commander in the west. The woman [*γύναιον*] did not

⁷⁹⁷ Merobaudes, *Carmen IV* 15-18.

⁷⁹⁸ *PLRE* vol. 2, p. 410.

share her husband's sluggishness but was quite forward [θράσους] in the barbarian manner.⁷⁹⁹ (trans. Amidon)

The empress' assertiveness going against what was perceived as the ideal of a Roman woman, secluded from public life, was enough of a reason to describe her in a pejorative manner with a term *γύναιον* that can be translated as little woman. It has been pointed out that phrasing in Philostorgios' work bears resemblance to the anonymous *Life of John Chrysostom* when describing Eudoxia, and to John Chrysostom's take on Jezebel in his homilies.⁸⁰⁰ All three authors used *γύναιον* (hag, little, foolish woman), John and Philostorgios also using similar terms *θράσους* (audacity, temerity) and *θρασύτης* (overboldness).⁸⁰¹ The bishop of Constantinople was in conflict with the empress. Although the Synod of the Oak was originally devised to resolve a dispute between the bishop of Alexandria and Egyptian monks of Nitria, due to John's insult of the empress it became a judgement of his actions, eventually resulting in his exile.⁸⁰² Given the similarities of language, Philostorgios may well have based his opinion either on John's writings or on a tradition favourable to the bishop of Constantinople, as exemplified by the *Life of John Chrysostom*. It is tempting to suggest that stigmatizing the empress as a barbarian was

⁷⁹⁹ Philostorgios, XI 6.

⁸⁰⁰ T. D. Barnes 'The funerary speech for John Chrysostom' *Studia patristica* 37 (2001), pp. 328-345.

⁸⁰¹ John Chrysostom, *De paenitentia* II 3: Ἦν τις Ἀχαὶ βασιλεύς· δίκαιος δὲ οὗτος μαρτυρεῖται· ἐβασίλευσε δὲ οὗτος εἰς κακὰ ὑπὸ Τεζάβελ τῆς γυναικὸς αὐτοῦ·; John Chrysostom, *In ep. ad Philipp.* 5, 3: Ὑβρίσας καὶ Τεζάβελ τὸν Ἰησοῦ λέγουσα· Ὁ φονεὺς τοῦ κυρίου αὐτοῦ· ἀλλὰ θρασύτης ἦν, οὐ παύρησία·; Unpublished *Vita Sancti Chrysostomi: Knowing that the root of all the evil was hidden in the hag (γύναιον) in power, [God] released his hand, the arrow flew and hit the womb of the wretched woman.* Quoted after Barnes 'The funerary speech for John Chrysostom' pp. 328-345.

⁸⁰² The conflict between John and Eudoxia is an extremely convoluted event with a massive literature on it. Some of the positions worth reading for it are: Barnes, 'The funerary speech for John Chrysostom', pp. 328-345; J. N. D. Kelly, *The story of John Chrysostom – ascetic, preacher, bishop* (London, 1995); K. Stebnicka, 'Jezebel i Eudoksja- dwie królowe. Przyczynek do dziejów konfliktu Jana Chryzostoma z cesarzową Eudoksją', *U schyłku starożytności. Studia Źródłoznawcze*, 8 (2009), pp. 149-173 (some of Stebnicka's arguments are repeated in: K. Stebnicka 'Jezebel and Eudoxia – reflections on the history of the first conflict between John Chrysostom and empress Eudoxia', *Palamedes* 7 (2012), pp. 143-154; W. Mayer, 'Media manipulation as a tool in religious conflict: controlling the narrative surrounding the deposition of John Chrysostom' in N. Bronwen, W. Mayer (eds), *Religious conflict from early Christianity to the rise of Islam* (Berlin, 2013), pp. 151-168.

part of the original comparison of her to Jezebel, a foreign queen originating from Sidon, but first-hand evidence for this is lacking.⁸⁰³ However, the passage from Philostorgios' work is clearly a good example of employing the negative stereotype of a barbarian woman even against a thoroughly romanised individual.

It is debatable whether these literary attitudes to noble women of barbarian origin reflected any actual prejudice or manner of interaction on the authors' part. The instrumental use of it, based on the literary conventions we observed above, seems to imply this perspective simply served a literary role. As we shall see later, this does not exclude a certain amount of prejudice about women's role in society and the assumption that those of a barbarian heritage leaned towards uncivilised ways of conduct by their very nature. But a discrepancy between how often it is brought up in poetry, when compared to more narrative sources, may imply that it has more to do with a resonance throughout literary culture, rather than any newly developed prejudices. As we shall see in the following section, even with this cultural background, barbarian women were not wholly excluded from the world of politics.

Marriages and diplomacy

As members of the elite, barbarian women could have a role in the world of politics. Women could actively support their families' agenda, whether as matches solidifying a political alliance, or as envoys, who had enough significance to be taken seriously, but with no official position to limit them in negotiations.

Marriages were the usual way of including women of an imperial, aristocratic and royal background in the diplomacy between different barbarian groups, successor kingdoms, and the Roman Empire and there is plenty of evidence of barbarian men

⁸⁰³ I Kings 16:31.

marrying Roman women. Barbarian leaders, such as Athaulf and Gaiseric, were especially interested in marrying into the imperial family. As the domination of barbarian rulers over Roman territories became more permanent, intermarrying between Roman and barbarian elites became more and more popular, leading to a process called by Demandt the osmosis of the Roman and the Germanic aristocracy.⁸⁰⁴ Even before that, aspiring commanders married into the Roman elites. Stilicho was a son of a Vandal and a Roman, who owed his position after the death of Theodosius partly to his affinity with the imperial family by marriage with Serena, Theodosius' niece. Marrying a Roman was a way for the newcomers to strengthen their links to the Roman elites.

However, we do not hear of 'barbarian' women marrying members of the Roman elites, in the 4th and the beginning of 5th century.⁸⁰⁵ Marriages amongst the elites of Antiquity were social and political unions. Perhaps there was little to gain for a state official or a Roman senator out of marriages with 'barbarian' aristocrats. They did not require acceptance and contacts with the 'barbarian' groups outside of the Roman Empire. Nor did the emperors, who would not marry women from the families of the independent barbarian kings and warlord of the *Barbaricum*. They had other ways of shaping diplomatic relations, for example by subsidies and the elevation of barbarian warlords. There is a possibility such a picture emerges only because of the character of the surviving sources, tending to ignore barbarian women, even noteworthy, who married into the Roman elites, but the more probable explanation is that such unions were simply of no benefit to the Romans. The first generation of elite women 'immigrants' had little to offer in comparison to their male counterparts. They did not have their own warrior retinues

⁸⁰⁴ A. Demandt, 'The osmosis of late Roman and Germanic aristocracies' in E. K. Chrysos and A. Schwarcz (eds), *Das Reich und die Barbaren* (Wien-Köln, 1989), pp. 75-86.

⁸⁰⁵ For Theodosian legislation on the matter of marriages between Romans and 'barbarians', see: Sivan 'Why Not Marry a Barbarian?', pp. 136-145.

they could pledge to the Roman authorities or military expertise that would make them valid recruits for Roman commanders.

The matter was different with the progeny of barbarian commanders. Second generation women, already established in Roman society, with wealth and networks of family friends and acquaintances inherited from their successful fathers, were more attractive as matrimonial matches. The case of Eudoxia shows it was possible for a woman of barbarian origin to marry even the emperor, although it is difficult to tell whether this was due to the position gained by her father Bauto, who attained the rank of a consul in 385, or association with the powerful Constantinopolitan family of a *magister militum* Promotus, in whose house the future empress was brought up.⁸⁰⁶ Pelagia, the wife of first Bonifatius and then Aetius, mentioned above, is a more obvious example of a woman of a barbarian origin, who was sought after as a wife due to her social position and wealth.⁸⁰⁷ Merobaudes informs us of Pelagia's heritage, and though we cannot name her parents or be sure how embellished the poet's description is, given how it is constructed to praise Aetius' and Pelagia's son Gaudentius and his heritage, it is certain Pelagia's father was one of the 'barbarian' aristocrats in Roman service (quoted above).⁸⁰⁸

Marriages were not the only way of drawing connections between barbarian and Roman elites. Fostering children of the barbarian warlords was a long and ancient practice that did not exclude their female offspring. Theodoric's sister, possibly identifiable with Amalafrida who later became wife of the Vandal king Thrasamund, was brought up in Constantinople like her brother.⁸⁰⁹ She was an example of a long Roman tradition of

⁸⁰⁶ Zosimos V 3 2.

⁸⁰⁷ Marcellinus comes, 432; John of Antioch *Fr.* 224.2.

⁸⁰⁸ Flavius Merobaudes *Carmen* IV 15. It is possible her father was Beremudus, a Gothic noble named by Jordanes, *Getica* 174 as a member of the Amali family, who joined the Visigoths. As M. E. Gil Egea, 'Warrior retinues in late antiquity: the case of Pelagia' in C. Deroux (ed.) *Studies in Latin literature and Roman history* 11 (Brussels, 1999), pp. 493-503 argues, the name bears resemblance to Verimundus mentioned by Augustine, *Ep.* 230.6, a likely son of Bonifatius and Pelagia. Wijnendaele, *The last of the Romans*, pp. 49-50.

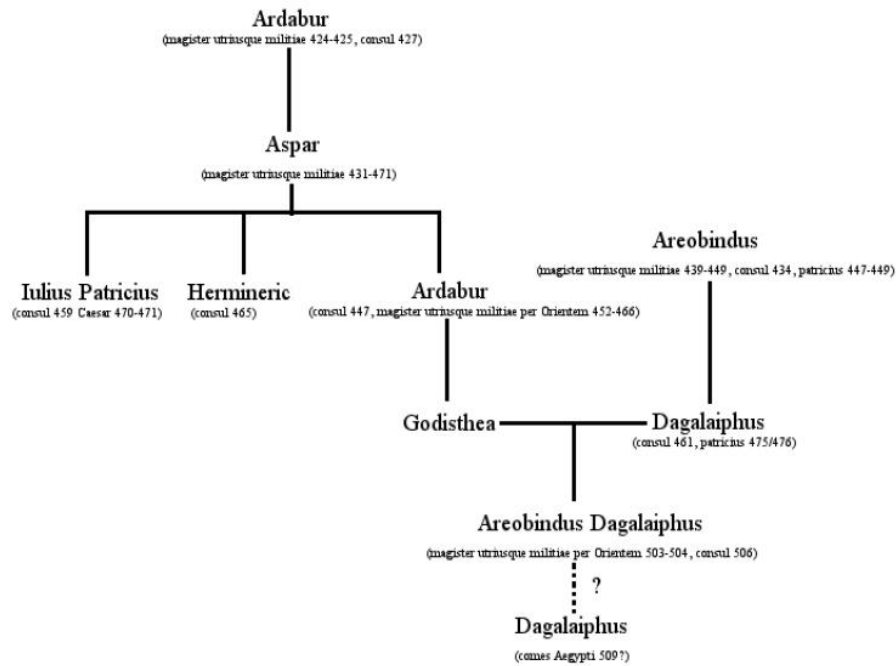
⁸⁰⁹ For the marriage with Thrasamund see: *Excerpta Valesiana* 12 68; Jordanes, *Getica* 299.

“hosting” members of the exterior groups’ elites, both as a diplomatic precaution and in order to romanise them. In this particular case Amalafrida served also as an ambassador to her brother. The emperor Zeno sent her with subsidies and put her to the task of brokering an alliance between the Gothic warlord and the Roman emperor. With her Roman upbringing and familial connections Amalafrida was a perfect choice for an envoy. She succeeded in her task, but, had she not, her failure would not be such a loss to the emperor; she was a private person not an imperial official, and her mission could have been easily disregarded.⁸¹⁰

Acculturation as a result of entering the Roman elites was not always the rule. Marriages could be used to retain a sense of separate identity and networks in Roman service, as much as they led towards the so-called ‘osmosis’ of these elites. If naming conventions can be used as an indication or a mark of an identity, then Godisthea, a daughter of Ardabourios, and granddaughter of Aspar, married to Dagalaiphos, a consul of 461, and a mother to another Roman commander – Areobindos, a *magister militum per Orientem* – seems to be one such case.⁸¹¹ Unlike Baudo’s daughter, the empress Eudoxia, the progeny of Ardabur did not bear a Roman name, but a Gothic one, Godisthea. Her ancestors, son and the family of her husband had consistently kept non-Roman naming conventions and were identified with such even though they had been serving successive imperial regimes for generations. The fact that she married a member of a family so like her own, serving Rome but retaining marks of what may be a differing identity, could be seen as a conscious attempt at keeping coherence within the group of imperial officers of a non-Roman origin, establishing a boundary between themselves and the rest of their social group (see chapter 1.2).

⁸¹⁰ John of Antioch 237 8.

⁸¹¹ Theophanes, AM 5997.



Euergetism, patronage and local communities

Euergetism had a long tradition in the urban civilisation of the Graeco-Roman world. In the fourth and fifth century Christianity found its way into it. Roman elites, pagan or Christian, continued traditional practices of almsgiving and munificence, but, with the spread of ascetic ideals, the cult of saints and the appearance of relics, new forms of expressing piety and showing power in the local communities became established. Such practices offered opportunities to establish patronage and forge links to local communities. The example of Christian euergetism was already set by Constantine and his family. Constantine's mother, Helena, was to found churches in Palestine as an expression of her and her family's piety.⁸¹² Others soon followed.

Some aristocrats, such as Paulinus of Nola, went so far as to renounce their earthly lifestyles and became ascetics, albeit still in control of their vast resources, now in the service of their religious goals. Women were particularly visible participants in such

⁸¹² Eusebios, *Vita Constantini*, 42.1-43.4.

undertakings. Both Melania the Older and the Younger founded monasteries and distributed alms, so did Paula and numerous others. Such activities earned them praise from Jerome, Gelasius, Palladius and other men of letters seemingly financially dependent on these noble ladies, ensuring survival of the evidence.⁸¹³ Barbarian women who were entering the world of Roman elites, or those who remained in the barbarian world, but perceived Roman forms as worth imitating, took on these activities.

As an example of this, we can take the empress Eudoxia, perfectly playing into these expectations with her investment in munificence, religious festivals and patronage over both court officials and clergymen. She took part in a procession welcoming holy relics, lobbied on behalf of the petition of bishop Porphyrios of Gaza to destroy the temple of Marnas, convinced John Chrysostom to recall a cleric Severian from exile, supported the Tall Brothers by suggesting the calling of a council, deposed Eutropius, and championed her own officials.⁸¹⁴ But the empress was raised in Roman culture by the Roman family of Promotus, and as a progeny of a commander of barbarian background, who had probably already been fairly romanised and included within the Roman elites. Some may have used her genealogy against her, as we have seen above, however it is difficult to imagine she could have approached her role as an empress with any sort of non-Roman ideas about power and authority. Her “barbarity” was more a literary abstraction, a way of excluding her, than a self-professed identity that could influence her actual social practice.

⁸¹³ For an overview of Christian euergetism at the time, see: R. Finn, *Almsgiving in the later Roman Empire: Christian promotion and practice* (Oxford, 2006) pp. 99-108; P. Brown, *Through the eye of a needle: wealth, the fall of Rome, and the making of Christianity in the West, 350-550 AD* (Oxford, 2012) passim. For examples of women from the imperial family undertaking Christian euergetism, see Finn, *Almsgiving in the Later Roman Empire*, pp. 109-110.

⁸¹⁴ Holum, *Theodosian empresses*, pp. 54- 58, 62, 64, 70-73. Mark the Deacon, *Life of St. Porphyry of Gaza*, 42-44. Involvement specifically with Porphyrios might be a later invention, as suggested by T. D. Barnes, ‘The baptism of Theodosius II’ *Studia patristica*, vol. 19 (1989), pp. 8-12. Nevertheless, seeking the patronage of the empress would be a normal practice at the time.

But how did elite women of an actual ‘barbarian’ upbringing, with a position based in the ‘barbarian’ communities, act in their new roles in Roman society? Did they try to introduce forms they were used to, or rather focus on adapting Roman ones? Did Christianity have any role in this acculturation? It seems that even when such women were not a part of the Roman establishment or of a barbarian one that dominated a Roman region, but rather members of the barbarian elites of the independent power centres in the border regions, they exercised their authority in a similar way to their Roman counterparts. A case can be made that they mimicked the Roman senatorial and imperial aristocratic women’s activities of participating in religious practices. This we can learn from an admittedly very late source, the 10th century *Menologium* of Basil II, which records an otherwise unknown queen Gaatha, who originated from the Danubian Goths, collecting relics of Gothic martyrs and sponsoring their *translatio* to Asia Minor in 383-392.⁸¹⁵

The remains of these martyrs Gaatha, queen of the race of the Goths, a Christian and orthodox, gathered together, with the help of other Christians, including Wellas, a layman. Leaving the kingdom in the hands of her son Arimenios, travelling from place to place she came as far as the land of the Romans; and her daughter Doukilla also came with her. Then she informed her son Arimenios and he came to join her, and she went away with him, leaving Doukilla to come to Cyzicus in the reign of Valentinian and Theodosius; and she gave part of the relics to venerate in the city. Wellas, departing again for Gothia with Gaatha, was put to death by stoning; and later Doukilla also was laid to rest. (trans. P. Heather, J. Matthews)

⁸¹⁵ P. Heather, J. Matthews, *The Goths in the Fourth Century: Texts and Sources* (Liverpool, 1991) p. 118.

The date of the source may raise our suspicions about the authenticity of the tradition. But it is hard to imagine a situation in which someone would have a purpose in forging a story about an obscure queen of a people who no longer existed. Additionally, the story of transmitting relics of Gothic martyrs echoes that of *The Passion of Saint Sabba the Goth*.⁸¹⁶ We cannot be sure about the precise status Gaatha held in her community and how we should understand her royal title, but she and her son must have had power and prominence in Gothic society. Elements of the story such, as leaving Arimenios behind, and then calling him to return with his mother, may raise an eyebrow as seemingly illogical, but overall the tradition seems sound. We can observe a Gothic lady with her power base outside the Roman sphere of influence, yet exercising the same interest in holy relics as Roman aristocrats. But this is not just appropriation of a cultural/religious practice on Gaatha's behalf. She recognised the power and importance of the relics and considered them a valuable asset worthy of granting to a Roman city. Cyzicus seems to be a conscious choice of Gaatha and Doullilla. This act of euergetism suggests the existence of links between the Gothic aristocracy and local clergy, strong enough that Gaatha thought it meaningful enough to spend funds on the expedition and share some of the relics she had collected.

What was the origin of such a connection? Given the importance of captives from Asia Minor in the process of the Christianisation of the Goths and the development of links between Transdanubian Christian communities and those of Asia Minor, as we can observe in the case of Wulfila and Selenas (see chapter 3.1), we may assume it also applied to Christianised aristocrats with inclinations to prove their piety. There was no evident political agenda behind this action, as there is no mention of an engagement with any imperial authorities. Favour was granted to a local community (Cyzicus) of no

⁸¹⁶ *The Passion of Saint Sabba the Goth* VIII 2-4.

apparent significance for relations with Constantinople or internal Gothic politics. Yet we cannot exclude the possibility that besides the religious motive, the undertaking was also an expression of cultural aspirations of local Gothic elites remaining outside the Roman Empire, a way of imitating Roman culture and striving for it. The ambitions of these groups allow us to better understand the speed with which barbarians in general, and women in particular, who entered the elites of the Empire adopted Roman forms of exercising power. Many of them must have been familiar with them earlier, not only as recipients, but also as perpetrators.

Actually entering the Roman elites offered a new set of opportunities, especially with the radicalisation of sectarian struggles. Pelagia, whom we have already discussed, caused the bishop of Hippo, Augustine, to worry about *comes* Bonifatius' proper conduct and fidelity towards the Nicene creed. In his letter to him, he wrote:

While, then, we were rejoicing that you [Bonifatius] had this resolve, you crossed the sea and took a wife. But crossing the sea was a matter of obedience that, according to the apostle, you owed to higher authorities; on the other hand, you would not have taken a wife if you had not abandoned the continence you had undertaken and been conquered by concupiscence. After I found this out, I admit, I was dumbfounded in amazement. The fact that I heard that you refused to marry her unless she first became Catholic eased my sorrow to some extent, and yet the heresy of those who deny the true Son of God has been so influential in your home that your daughter was baptized by them. Now, if what was reported to us is not false – though I wish it were false – namely, that even young women consecrated to God have been rebaptized by these heretics, with what great fountains of tears should we not bewail so great an evil? People also say, though they may be lying, that a wife

was not enough for you but that you defiled yourself by affairs with various concubines.⁸¹⁷ (trans. Teske)

Augustine, in carefully presenting this news of breaking continence, marrying a heretic, allowing heresy to spread, and having numerous concubines, as rumours he overheard, is allowing Bonifatius a way of improving his conduct without shaming him. Augustine adopted a conciliatory tone as a strategy, but he probably did believe the accusations. Nevertheless, he was careful not to blame Pelagia directly for Bonifatius' failings. Absolving her from any guilt in breaking the vow of continence by Bonifatius and putting the blame on the *comes* Augustine advised conjugal chastity and devotion to Pelagia.⁸¹⁸ What does it tell us about Pelagia? Even with her barbarian ancestry and adherence to a creed that lost the fight for imperial support, she was still assertive and confident enough in her position in Roman society to spread her religion amongst her own household. Another source stresses her wealth.⁸¹⁹ It seems she was influential enough for Augustine to opt for a strategy of gaining her sympathy. The question remains open whether Pelagia did in fact convert to Catholicism, but even if she did, her later actions show a lack of attachment to it. She must have felt integrated enough within Roman society, if she did not fear that her 'Arianism' might put her *Romanitas* into question and make her vulnerable to attempts at 'othering' her out of the Roman society.

Perhaps religious liberty, and domination over such matters in hers and Bonifatius' household, did not stem only from her considerable riches. In the same letter, Augustine made yet another point of criticism of Bonifatius. The bishop of Hippo criticised the presence of a personal retinue of the *comes*:

⁸¹⁷ Augustine, *Ep.* 220. 4.

⁸¹⁸ Augustine, *Ep.* 220.12.

⁸¹⁹ Marcell. com. s.a. 432: *Pelagiam uxorem suam valde locupletem nulli alteri nisi Aetio nupturam fore exhortans.*

Who does not see (to say just one thing about these evils) that many persons flock around you to protect your power and well-being, and that, even if they are all loyal to you and you fear no treachery from any of them, they still certainly desire to attain by means of you those goods that they too do not desire in a godly but in a worldly way? [...] When, therefore, will you be able, with so many armed men whose ferocity you fear while you coddle their craving, when, I say, will you be able I do not say to satisfy the desires of those who love the world, since that is in no way possible, but to feed them to some degree so that everything is not lost to an even further extent, unless you do what God forbids, while he threatens those who do it?⁸²⁰ (trans. Teske)

The context of his other failings being presented as new developments implies that this was also an innovation in Bonifatius' life, yet another that happened after marriage to Pelagia. It has been noted that cases of employment of *bucellarii* – private soldiers of Roman military leaders – by Bonifatius and Aetius are both attested after their marriages to Pelagia, suggesting that she had something to do with these commanders establishing such retinues.⁸²¹ Private units such as *bucellarii* became increasingly important for Roman commanders of the time, making them less dependent on the imperial military and therefore on the emperor, providing them with stronger position within the Empire, in similarity to the barbarian warlords. Given Merobaudes' praise for Pelagia's father, a barbarian king and ally to Rome, and Sidonius' mention of Pelagia being excluded from Gothic succession, it is possible she inherited her father's warband

⁸²⁰ Augustine, *Ep.* 220.6.

⁸²¹ H. J. Diesner, 'Das Buccellariertum von Stilicho und Sarus bis auf Aetius (454/455)', *Klio* 54 (1972), pp. 321-350. Olympiodoros, fr. 7.4 explained that the term itself came to be used at the time of Honorius and could apply both to Romans and 'barbarians'.

together with the substantial wealth she could support it with.⁸²² That would also explain the presence of Arian clergy in Bonifatius' household even if Pelagia did indeed convert – her soldiers probably remained Arian. An aristocratic lady in charge of her own military retinue would not be an isolated case in this era, given how a female member of the Egyptian aristocratic family of Apions could inherit and command her own group of soldiers.⁸²³ It also seems the empress Galla Placidia inherited a military retinue from one or both of her husbands, Ataulf and Constantius III.⁸²⁴ It would certainly give more reasons for first Bonifatius and then Aetius to marry Pelagia, in addition to her wealth. At the time the *comes* of Africa struggled in dealing with the Moors, while his position at the court was deteriorating.⁸²⁵ When Aetius married Pelagia it was after the defeat he suffered at the battle of Rimini in 432 from Bonifatius, who died soon after, and when he needed to rebuild his position at the court.⁸²⁶ In this respect Pelagia's barbarian origin made her more attractive as a marriage match for powerful military leaders, but it also provided her with a greater deal of influence and freedom for her household, including

⁸²² For Merobaudes see above; Sidonius, *Carmen* V 203-4: *Nato quae regna parabo, exclusa sceptris Geticis*; Wijnendaele, *The last of the Romans*, pp. 48-54 also believes that Bonifatius' retinue described by Augustine is Pelagia's, but argues that their conduct, which raised the bishop of Hippo's concerns, was caused by Bonifatius' lacking the resources to sustain them. Perhaps this is true, but it is likely they were still paid for by Pelagia, whose wealth was considered worthy of mention by Marcell. com. s.a. 432: *Pelagiam uxorem suam valde locupletem nulli alteri nisi Aetio nupturam fore exhortans*, after she married Bonifatius. Due to the conflict between the *comes* of Africa and the court in Ravenna, Pelagia would be cut from her properties in Italy and no longer be able to fund her husband's military force.

⁸²³ J. H. W. G. Liebeschuetz, 'Generals, federates and bucellarii in Roman Armies around AD 400' in P. Freeman and D. Kennedy (eds), *The defence of the Roman and Byzantine East* (Oxford, 1986), p. 463-474.

⁸²⁴ G. Zecchini, *Aezio: l'ultima difesa dell'Occidente romano* (Rome, 1983), pp. 128-129; Wijnendaele, *The last of the Romans*, pp. 47 and 50.

⁸²⁵ Augustine, *Ep.* 220.7; *PLRE* II, p. 239.

⁸²⁶ *PLRE* II, p. 23-24; Stickler, *Aëtius*, p. 206 and A. Demandt 'Der spätrömische Militäradel' *Chiron* 10 (1980), pp. 609-636 and particularly pp. 621-622, offer a different interpretation, identifying the wife of Aetius with a daughter of Theodoric I, king of the Visigoths, seeing the marriage as an expression of Aetius' and Theodoric's alliance. Although it would be possible that the wife described by Sidonius and Merobaudes is not Pelagia, wife of Bonifatius, who was later married by Aetius, but rather yet another wife of the latter, it is rather a farfetched assumption that the poets' remarks on her royal heritage must mean she was daughter of Theodoric. Sidonius' description of her as Gothic does not necessarily mean she is to be associated with the Gothic group settled in Aquitania, plus such an alliance between Aetius and Theodoric would probably resonate more in our sources. As Gil Egea 'Warrior Retinues', p. 500-502 shows the reference to royal origin of Aetius' wife can be explained with her being a daughter of one of Gothic aristocrats, said to be a member of an Amali family, Beremudus.

religious matters, as her consecutive husbands needed both her support and that of her men.

In the regions where effective Roman rule was weakened or disappeared, barbarian aristocrats also seem to have adapted to Roman religious and social practices. An example of such adaptation to her role in Roman society is a Burgundian queen, Caretena, married to king Gundobad and mother to king Sigismund.⁸²⁷ It seems the rule of the Burgundian family of Gibichungs was, at the time, very much tied to their standing within the Roman military and administrative hierarchy.⁸²⁸ It resonated with forms of expressing power and social standing in a Roman way, as an inscription from the church of St. Michael in Lugdunum (modern Lyon) dated to 506 informs us: desiring to provide a temple for angels and choirs and imitate Solomon, the virtuous queen funded a church:⁸²⁹

The support of sceptres, splendour of the earth, and radiance of the world,
Caretena wishes her limbs to be embraced in this tomb,
She whom, as your servant and influential in worldly affairs, you, Christ,
summon from the realms of this world to your own realm,
Having obtained, as a just desert, a rich treasure,
which she granted to God for the support of the poor,
For some time, her clothing concealed under ruddy purple
a chaste body that chastised adversity;
She concealed her sober fasts with a cheerful demeanor,
and in secret she dedicated her royal limbs to the cross.

⁸²⁷ For her name, see H. B. Woolf, *The old Germanic principles of name-giving* (Baltimore, 1939), p. 238.

⁸²⁸ Wood, 'The political structure of the Burgundian kingdom', pp. 383-396.

⁸²⁹ *CIL* XIII 2372; A very detailed analysis of the inscription can be found in G. Kampers, 'Caretena – Königin und Asketin: Mosaiksteine zum Bild einer burgundischen Herrscherin', *Francia, Forschungen zur westeuropäischen Geschichte*, 27 (2000), pp. 1- 32.

Having divided the princely duties with her exalted mate,
 she ruled the heights with a shared counsel.
 She delighted in inciting her splendid offspring and delightful
 Grandchildren, enlightened, to the true faith.
 Struggling to support her sublime spirit with these endowments,
 she did not spurn the heavenly yoke after receiving the diadem;
 Once she gained the dominion, she abandoned the Sabaeen fragrances,
 she undertook the marvellous work of Solomon,
 She personally founded this temple, which resounds throughout the world,
 and bequeathed lofty lintels to the angelic chorus.
 Those prayers that she often offered to the king in her efforts
 to set free the accused she now can offer, Christ, to you,
 She whom jealous death snatched after her tenth lustrum
 has received a better day, even without end.
 And now the twice eighth day of September is brought to light
 in the year bearing the name of the consul Messala.⁸³⁰ (trans. Mathisen,
 modified)

The epitaph is an expression of conventional piety. Caretena prayed, observed
 fasts and lived a chaste life, close to an ascetic ideal.⁸³¹ She honoured her duties to her
 family and raised her children in orthodoxy, at the same time establishing church
 foundations and intervening with her husband on behalf of the accused. It is a model

⁸³⁰ Mathisen, *People, Personal Expression, and Social Relations*, pp. 189-190.

⁸³¹ Kampers 'Caretena', pp. 1-32 believes that the church was part of a monastic foundation where Caretena decided to live an ascetic life, after becoming estranged from Gundobad. However, the argument, though not unconvincing, is based mostly on allusions in Avitus, *Ep.* 6 and *Hom.* XVII, *Vita Marcelli* IX, 1-5 and *Vita Epiphani* pp. 367-375; She certainly would not have been the last woman of the Gibichung family to enter a monastery. Gundobad's niece, Crona, entered a monastery after being exiled by her uncle, see Gregory of Tours, *LH* II 28. Her sister Chlotilda promoted the cult of Genovefa, see below.

description of a pious lady of the Roman elite or imperial family, whose earthly and heavenly duties coincide. The verse about interceding with, first Gundobad, and after death Christ is particularly interesting, as it reflects this tendency, even implying that Caretena was pious enough to exercise the role of a pleader for sinners as saints did. Even if we assume it was just a set of conventional expressions, having more to do with the social expectations of how women should influence their families and of their correct role in the community, the very fact that Caretena and her family conformed to such conventions of familial piety and sought patronage speaks volumes about the level of acculturation and integration with the community they had achieved.⁸³²

But is that all that we can tell about the Burgundian queen? Just a set of conventions, or perhaps was there something unusual about her activity? Another piece of evidence, this time of a literary nature – the *Vita Marcelli* – shows that the choice of words in the queen's epitaph is not coincidental.⁸³³ The basilica raised by Caretena had been dedicated to Michael the Archangel.⁸³⁴ Though we cannot be sure of the exact intention behind Caretena's choice, it is quite clear that she wanted to associate herself and her family with angels and Michael in particular. We can cautiously assume that Caretena sought a celestial patron that would provide her and her family with continuous prosperity in their rule over Lugdunum. Perhaps a connection to Michael and choirs of angels was even to become a source of heavenly power for Gundobad's and Caretena's family.

⁸³² For the issue of the rhetoric character of language concerning women's influence in Roman society, see K. Cooper, 'Insinuations of womanly influence: an aspect of the Christianization of the Roman aristocracy', *The Journal of Roman studies* 82 (1992), pp. 150-164.

⁸³³ The authorship and dating of the text is problematic, as there were two versions of the life similar to some extent, but nevertheless different. The relations between them remain vague. For a discussion and presentation of different hypotheses, see F. Dolbeau, 'La Vie en prose de Saint Marcel de Die' *Francia* vol 11 (1983), pp. 96-130, in which he came to the conclusion that the *Vita* in its current state was composed by an otherwise unknown Wulfius in the first quarter of the 9th century, but based on earlier material, amongst it documentary evidence. Dolbeau considered the passages on Caretena to be such.

⁸³⁴ *Vita Marcelli* IX

The dedication of the church itself was a social event, to which all of the local churchmen were said to be invited; the queen's intention, besides personal piety and prestige, must have been to strengthen the ties with the local clergy and increase the prestige of her family in Lugdunum. According to the narrative of the *Vita*, bishop Marcellus of Die had read her intentions, using the dedication of the church as an opportunity for a political act. To obtain tax exemptions for the citizens of Lugdunum from Gundobad, he sought the queen's patronage.⁸³⁵ At first king Gundobad opposed this motion, but after the queen's dream visions and a miracle healing of a royal servant by the bishop's saliva, he recognised Marcellus' power and gave consent to exempt the city of its obligations.⁸³⁶ We may be sceptical of the value of the *Life of Marcellus* for the political and social reality of 5th century Lugdunum under the Gibichungs, due to its possibly 9th century provenance, but besides the association of the church with Caretena, which may have originated from later local tradition, there is reason to believe the *Vita* transmits tensions that could have existed. Gundobad's unwillingness to grant the bishop of Die's petition at first gives the impression of a literary device, serving to present adversities Marcellus must defeat on his path to sainthood. However an earlier conflict of the bishop with another Burgundian ruler, Gundobad's father, Gundioc, shows Gundobad's antipathy could have been more than a literary pattern. The then *magister militum*, Gundioc, contested the election of Marcellus to the episcopacy in Die and successfully sought the intervention of the bishop of Rome, Hilarus, in 463.⁸³⁷ This led to a synod convened in 463 without participation of bishop Leontius of Arles who held metropolitan power over Marcellus' bishopric of Die, which ended inconclusively appealing to Hilarus to make the decision himself. The bishop of Rome decided in 464

⁸³⁵ Ibidem 1-2.

⁸³⁶ Ibidem 4-5.

⁸³⁷ Mathisen, *Ecclesiastical Factionalism and Religious Controversy*, pp. 211-217.

that Marcellus should be removed. Nevertheless, with a lack of interest on Leontius' part, Hilarus had no way of enforcing his decision, while curiously enough we do not hear of the later involvement by Gundioc in the affair.⁸³⁸ Nevertheless this link may explain Gundobad's antipathy and therefore stress the significance of Caretena's successful patronage over Marcellus, beyond the usual explanation of the difficulties of Marcellus' mission as part of the saint's holy struggle.

The queen's activity in a religious foundation had a function not only as a private or a familiar religious practice, but also as a form of social interaction between rulers and ruled. It offered a chance to conduct patronage and exert political authority in the civic context. By raising a church in the city, Caretena was following the practice of Roman aristocratic women, who had been establishing their importance in the local communities by shaping public space. Pagan temples, public buildings, forums, churches and monasteries were all a testimony to the wealth, position and dedication of the Roman upper classes to local communities. Pagan temples were the most popular foci of female euergetism; this continued with churches.⁸³⁹ By serving as a patron to the bishop in his attempt to obtain a favourable decision from king Gundobad, Caretena followed in the footsteps of members of the imperial family and kin to high imperial officials. The social role and forms of exacting power and authority were already there to be used by barbarian women to replace or simply take their place amongst Roman elites. It certainly was not a one-way arrangement, as Caretena's roles as an intercessor with her husband is brought up in the inscription commemorating the foundation itself.

Queen Caretena is just one example of a Burgundian royal wife taking part in politics. Sidonius Apollinaris notes the involvement of an unnamed wife of king

⁸³⁸ Ibidem.

⁸³⁹ E. Hemelrijk, 'Female munificence in the cities of the Latin West' in: E. Hemelrijk and G. Woolf (eds), *Women and the Roman city in the Latin West* (Leiden, 2013), pp. 65-84; from amongst 363 inscriptions attesting female foundations selected by the author, 56% were buildings of a religious character.

Chilperic, another of Gundioc's sons and a predecessor of Gundobad, in a political affair concerning allegations of treason.⁸⁴⁰ A brother of Thaumastus, Sidonius' uncle, was accused of conspiring with the emperor Julius Nepos. After a long list of other sins of the accusers against both Romans and barbarians, there follows a passage on the queen's impact on dropping the charges against the accused, carefully comparing her activities with those of famous heroines of Roman history:

It is true—and this is the chief comfort in our distress—that our Lucumo is restrained by his Tanaquil, who by the timely intervention of wholesome talk clears her husband's ears of the poisonous filth which the whisperers have instilled. You ought to know that it is thanks to her interest that so far the venom of our modern Cibyrate has not so worked on the mind of our common patron as to imperil the security of our common brothers in the least degree, and with God's blessing it never will do so, provided that, so long as the present ruler governs Lyonese Germany, the present Agrippina governs our and her Germanicus.⁸⁴¹ (trans. Anderson)

However scarce the evidence is, it seems we can observe a struggle amongst the local elites, in which their influences at Chilperic's court are used. One party, compared to the famous helpers of Verres in his plundering of Sicily [the Cibyrate], tried to eliminate Thaumastus' kin, while the other, as we can imagine, appealed to the queen to intervene with Chilperic on the accused's behalf. We cannot tell whether the links of

⁸⁴⁰ For Chilperic see *PLRE*, vol 2, pp. 286-287.

⁸⁴¹ Sidonius Apollinaris, *Ep.* V 7 7 there are two interesting elements in the way Sidonius shapes this passage. The mention of poisonous rhetoric the queen is saving her husband from seems to be enforcing the comparison to Germanicus, who was rumoured to have died of poison. Chilperic's wife could be seen as superior to Agrippina; unlike Germanicus' wife, the Burgundian actually succeeds in saving her husband from 'poison'. The other element is the reference to Lugdunian Germany, which also contributes to the comparison of Chilperic to Germanicus, as one overseeing *Germania*, or possibly as far more 'germanic' than the original Germanicus. I thank Neil McLynn for bringing these features to my attention.

patronage were forged in this crisis, or if Thaumastus' brother was related to her earlier; but even from this short passage of Sidonius her role as a patron is evident. It is also worth noting that both Chilperic and his wife are described in favourable terms, being likened to the famous married couples of Lucumo (i. e. Tarquin the Elder, the fifth king of Rome) and his wife Tanaquil, and of Germanicus and Agrippina. Due to her positive influence on Chilperic, his wife is compared to women of utmost respect in Latin historiography. This device served to affirm the queen's role as a patron and a force in the political landscape of the region. It is thanks to her that wrongful accusers are defeated, she is the positive influence on Chilperic and a guarantor for good and fair rule.⁸⁴²

Another member of a Gibichung dynasty leads us to a case of an influential barbarian woman in the second half of 5th century Gaul. Chlotilda, a Burgundian princess, a queen of the Franks and wife of Clovis, promoted the cult of Genovefa, a female saint who operated in the Paris area. Clovis and Chlotilda funded the church in which Genovefa was buried and chose it as a burial place for themselves and other members of family.⁸⁴³ Quite possibly it was the Frankish queen who commissioned the composition of the *Vita Genovefae*, while promoting her cult in the new seat of Merovingian power.⁸⁴⁴ Genovefa, the later patroness of Paris is an example of a woman, of a possible barbarian origin, as suggested by her Germanic name, which is undoubtedly Germanic (<*Gaino-waifa) deeply involved in Roman social and religious practices.⁸⁴⁵ The name suggests that even if Genovefa did not consider herself a 'barbarian', her parents identified as such enough to give a Germanic name to their offspring. A late 5th century figure described in a life

⁸⁴² There is yet another possible interpretation. Sidonius' could have used these examples ironically, as a comment of hardships that must be endured under barbarian rule. Even though Thaumastus has been saved, the fact he had been put on trial is a proof of how grim the situation has become.

⁸⁴³ *Vita Genovefae* 56; M. Heinzelmann, 'Vita sanctae Genovefae' in M. Heinzelmann, J. C. Poulin (eds), *Les vies anciennes de sainte Genevieve de Paris etudes critiques* (Paris, 1986), pp. 83-86.

⁸⁴⁴ J. A. McNamara, J. E. Halborg and E. G. Whatley (eds), *Sainted women of the Dark Ages* (Durham, 1992), p. 18.

⁸⁴⁵ E. W. Förstemann, *Altdeutsches Namenbuch* (Bonn, 1900-1916), pp. 143-144.

now dated by most to the 6th century attracts attention.⁸⁴⁶ Genovefa was represented as a resourceful individual, organising constructions of her holy projects and supplies for her civic community. She engaged both with the Frankish king Childeric and his son Clovis. The composition of her *Vita* ordered by queen Chlotilda was an expression of respect and strong ties to the Merovingian dynasty.

Heinzelmann saw the *Vita* as telling the story of a powerful aristocrat who collected the *annona*, negotiated the release of prisoners from king Childeric, father of Clovis, influenced the people of Paris to withstand the siege of the Huns, and founded the basilica in Catalacus above the burial of Saint Dionysius, which she had found (identified with the modern Saint-Denys de la Chapelle).⁸⁴⁷ Her deeds and ‘miracles’ usually mimic those of bishops.⁸⁴⁸ However, according to Wood, the set of activities exhibited by Genovefa was mostly an effect of employing the literary pattern of a holy bishop, as there were no other Gallic literary models with which a female saint could be presented at the time. The lack of any mention of a bishop of Paris is a proof that Genovefa’s role in the *Vita* was devised as substituting that of a bishop.⁸⁴⁹

This reduces the impact of the *Vita* in analysing the reality of 5th century Gaul, rather showing a literary reality of the 6th century.⁸⁵⁰ Nevertheless there are pieces of evidence in the *Vita* that can be used to form a view of Genovefa. Besides her later connections to the Merovingians, there is not much to suggest her barbarian origin. The

⁸⁴⁶ I. N. Wood, ‘Forgery in Merovingian hagiography’ in *Fälschungen im Mittelalter: Internationaler Kongress der Monumenta Germaniae Historica, München, 16.-19. September 1986*, MGH Schriften vol. 33 (Hannover, 1988), pp. 368-384.

⁸⁴⁷ *Vita Genovefae* 26, 35-40, 17-21.

⁸⁴⁸ L. M. Bitel, *Landscape with two saints: how Genovefa of Paris and Brigit of Kildare built Christianity in barbarian Europe* (Oxford, 2009), pp. 70-71; S. Wittern, *Frauen, Heiligkeit und Macht: Lateinische Frauenviten aus dem 4. Bis 7. Jahrhunderts* (Stuttgart, 1994), pp. 92-93.

⁸⁴⁹ Wood, ‘Forgery in Merovingian hagiography’, pp. 368-384.

⁸⁵⁰ Wittern, *Frauen, Heiligkeit und Macht*, pp. 88-91: Ideal of sainthood presented in *Vita Genovefae* influenced that of other female saints in the early Merovingian Gaul, such as *Vita Monegundis*, *Vita Radegundis* and *Vita Rusticulae*. It was composed to resonate with that time and place, rather than the one of Genovefa’s.

main evidence, as mentioned above, is her name – Genovefa. But it should be stressed the author of the *Vita* in no instance actually engages with the issues of ethnic identity and did not pay attention to the saint's name.

What about the social status of Genovefa? There is information that does not give the impression of conventional borrowings from other lives of saints and presents her as a landowner. Such is the case with one of the miracles:

In the vicinity of the town of Meaux, the virgin, with a group of reapers, was harvesting her crops when suddenly a rainstorm with a whirlwind loomed over them. Genovefa went straight into a tent and, as was her custom, stretched herself on the ground and began to weep and pray. Christ showed her admirable virtues plainly to every witness. For when all the surrounding fields were drenched in rain, neither Genovefa's crops nor her reapers were touched by a single drop of the pouring water.⁸⁵¹ (trans. McNamara, Halborg, Whatley)

From this passage, we learn that Genovefa had a landed estate near Meldensium (modern Meaux). We do not hear of any other of Genovefa's landed properties, but we certainly should not exclude them; we could even conjecture that she had other estates closer to Paris, given her interest in the city. It is a proof of the saint's affiliation with the upper stratum of local society. Another action that could be discerned from among the ones identified as literary conventions is the foundation of the basilica and establishing of a cult of saint Dionysius in Catalacus. In itself establishing a new cult centre and a church could be seen as another literary convention, but it is difficult to imagine a visible part of

⁸⁵¹ *Vita Genovefae* 49.

the city landscape that would be wrongly attributed to Genovefa so shortly after her death, when the rulers of the city were endorsing her cult.

Even if the plausible information from the *Vita* is severely limited, it still allows us to determine Genovefa's ethnic origin and social position. She was a woman of barbarian origin and possibly identity, given how she became known under this name rather than any Roman one, and of relatively high status that allowed her to exercise influence on a local community and shape the landscape by her own projects. Perhaps by itself this is not as significant as some scholars would like, but it is another piece of evidence for barbarian women's prominence in the Roman society of 5th century Gaul, proving that Caretena was not the only one to adopt Roman aristocrats' modes of operating. In a sense Genovefa turned out to be the more successful one, earning a place in the collective memory of the Parisian community and the support of the ruling dynasty. It is possible that her barbarian origin was an asset in this particular case, making her a good choice for a patroness of a barbarian dynasty and an ideal model of sainthood to follow by Merovingian queens and princesses.⁸⁵²

Another example of a barbarian woman seen as a continuator of the role of a Roman aristocratic lady is Erelieva, mother of king Theodoric the Amal, who converted to Catholicism. We do not know much about her; Jordanes calls her a concubine, while in the *Excerpta Valesiana* she is simply described as the mother of Theodoric that converted to Catholicism.⁸⁵³ But the fact that she is named implies some status, and that she could have been a member of the Gothic aristocracy. In correspondence with her, pope Gelasius, most likely counting on Erelieva's creed, asked for her patronage over the faithful.

⁸⁵² Wittern, *Frauen, Heiligkeit und Macht*, pp. 88-91.

⁸⁵³ Jordanes, *Getica* 268-9; *Excerpta Valesiana* 12 58.

I hastened to send Peter the *defensor* of the church to petition my lord, your most excellent son the king <Theodoric>, with my letters, to feed the poor. Upon his return, I did not cease also to greet your Highness, beseeching you to deign to help the case of the poor for your salvation and the increase of your prosperity. Dated the fifth Kalends of March (25 February, 493-496?)⁸⁵⁴
(trans. B. Neil and P. Allen.)

Even if Erelieva was not the one to initiate the correspondence on this matter, clearly the bishop of Rome sought her patronage in an attempt to obtain a positive answer to his petition. It seems Gelasius was fairly active in this field as we have another letter of his, showing interest in obtaining rights to estates plundered during the conflict between Theodoric and Odoacer.⁸⁵⁵ Erelieva was perceived in the same way as Gelasius' predecessors would have seen female members of the imperial family. In this way Serena, wife of Stilicho and member of the imperial family, was seen in the *Vita Melania* as someone who could solve legal matter by her influence for Pinianus and Melania. Eudoxia played such a role when the Tall Brothers appealed to her. In both cases the intervention was successful.⁸⁵⁶ Erelieva was expected to act in a similar manner, as a patron and an intermediary between subjects and the ruler she was kin of, that is as a figure with significant influence on her relative, a ruler. She was perceived of as someone possessing both an economic and an informal political power that made her a great candidate for a patron. It did not matter that her son was not an emperor but a barbarian king or that he was an Arian, while the petitioner was one of the most powerful Nicene bishops in Italy, or that Erelieva herself was a barbarian. Ways of influencing the process

⁸⁵⁴ Gelasius, *Letter* fr. 36.

⁸⁵⁵ Gelasius, *Letter* fr. 35.

⁸⁵⁶ *Vita Melaniae Graeca* XI-XIV; For Eudoxia see above.

of decision-making in one's favour remained the same as under the imperial regime decades earlier.

Conclusions

Entering within the Roman world and partaking in the activities of its elites was a challenge for barbarian women of note. Contradictory attitudes towards barbarians, literary patterns of both scorning them for their savagery and uncivilised ways, and elevating them as closer to the ideal of the Romans' ancestors than the Romans themselves, offered a set of ways either for greater inclusion in Roman society, or for putting new barriers to integration in place. Even a wholly romanised empress could be labelled as a barbarian, while an anonymous Burgundian queen was praised with comparisons to the greatest Roman ladies. It is difficult to tell how much attacks based on bias against barbarians were successful in the case of barbarian women. Perhaps Christianity had its role in easing the integration of these women, the Church being open to receiving new benefactions and patronage. But there is no reason to believe civic elites exhibited any less readiness to accept their attention. The women we encounter tended to achieve their goals, which were often similar to those of their Roman counterparts – expressing piety and gaining prestige for themselves and their families, taking part in court and foreign politics, and expanding networks of their clients in patronage. Even if they were victims of a cultural bias, they could have also had assets connected to their origin, as in case of Pelagia and her military retinue. It seems barbarian women were quite successful in finding their place amongst the Roman elites, although the scarcity of evidence prevents us from comparing them to their male counterparts in an exhaustive manner.

Overall conclusions

In the first part of the thesis [Roman commanders – barbarian warlords] I considered individual cases that may support contradictory conclusions. Tribigild's case suggests that Roman Empire reified the ethnic identity of some of its officers to retain martial characteristics associated with specific identity of soldiers they were to command. Such characterisation could be then made use of in propaganda against those 'barbarians' if they turned upon Rome. But the instrumentalisation of ethnicity could be employed by 'barbarians' themselves. Tribigild successfully used his function of 'ethnic officer' to mobilise support for his own political aims. Gainas acted in a similar manner.

The case of the Alano-Gothic family of Ardabur and Aspar, who came to dominate the politics of the Constantinopolitan court from the reign of the emperor Theodosius II to that of the emperor Leo also demonstrates possibilities of instrumentalising ethnicity. The evidence of the naming practices of the family, marking their differing identity, their marriage alliances with other families of Roman officers of barbarian origin, and their adherence to the Arian creed, give the impression of a deliberate strategy of retaining a group identity distinct from the rest of the elites. Although eventually this family of powerful commanders fell from grace, this strategy possibly allowed them to keep their position for so long based on the support of other barbarians in the military.

Part Two of the thesis [Emperors, kings and *decuriones*] I focused on the changed dynamics of the instrumentalisation of ethnicity and the integration of 'barbarians' in the Roman Empire in the 5th century – the time of 'barbarian' rulers taking effective control over Roman territories. As the power hierarchy became increasingly favourable towards the 'barbarians', relations between them and Romans required new modes of interaction and shifted identity instrumentalisation. Romans could either claim that they were ruled by 'barbarians' and lament this 'unnatural' position, or ascribe to their new rulers Roman

traits, sometimes presenting their specific identity as non-barbarian and on a par with the Roman one, at times even showing their rulers as Romans. ‘Barbarian’ rulers tuned into the expectations of their Roman subjects, stressing foremost their position as Roman officials and their adherence to the Roman order, mimicking the imperial image of power to appeal to local communities. Those ‘babarians’, who earlier belonged to the imperial establishment, had already some experience in adapting to socio-cultural practices of Roman elites. Their position required them to engage in the game of *amicitia* and face its many challenges, issues of ethnic boundary being one of them. The final stage of this identity politics – Ostrogothic Italy in the 6th century – has been thoroughly described by Patrick Amory, but the earlier evidence reveals the development of such a model in other regions of the Roman world under ‘barbarian’ rule. The alternative way of ‘accommodating’ different identities was to ‘localise’ the specific ‘barbarian’ one by enriching it with marks of regional identity. Jonathan Conant has shown this was the case of the Vandal Africa, where being ‘Vandal’ eventually started to mean being ‘Romano-African’. Although other regions do not produce so much evidence, the adoption of these two models can be seen in shaping the language of identity and political loyalties in the relations between the successor states and the Roman Empire. Barbarian kings either emphasised their submission and service to the Roman ruler (Burgundian Gibichungs) or attempted to establish themselves as independent regional sovereigns, nearly of equal status to the emperor (Vandal Hasdingi), shaping their diplomatic relations in accordance to these perspectives. The third part of the thesis [Bishops and women: At the intersection of ethnic, religious and gender identities] reflects on less studied groups of ‘barbarians’ and how the intersection of political and social realities, and the cultural discourse of instrumentalised ethnicity influenced their relations with the rest of the Empire’s elite in comparison to those who normally attract our attention, military

officials, warlords and kings. The first of these groups are the ‘barbarian’ bishops and upper clergy, differentiated from ‘Roman’ clergy, due to their linguistic skills and service to non-Roman communities within the Empire. It seems that the majority of cases in which these clerics, and the groups they led, retained a distinct ethnic identity, occurred when their ‘otherness’ in regards to the Romans was reinforced by their adherence to a different religious creed – Arianism. This allowed Gothic bishops to keep their position of the 4th century as leaders of their communities and actors in Christian controversies, instead of dissolving into the imperial Church. This position was further solidified by liturgy and teaching in the Gothic language. But contrary to the view held by the major contributor to the study of ‘barbarian’ bishops, Ralph Mathisen, it did not lead to the construction of a formalised ethnic Arian Churches. This is particularly visible in the 5th century, when successor kingdoms started to shape their religious policies. Upper clergy became partners for the ‘barbarian’ rulers. In their effort to emulate the Roman emperor, the Vandal kings attempted to create their own state Church, treating the Arian creed as its orthodoxy and enforcing it amongst their subjects, in the very same way emperors did. Barbarian Arian bishops and upper clergy played an active role in carrying out this policy, vigorously supporting their king, disputing with the Nicene bishops at councils or enforcing Arianism amongst the population. Although Vandal clergy celebrated liturgy in the Vandal language and in this sense retained a sort of distinction, the very nature of the Vandal kings’ policies, aimed at making Arianism the prevalent creed of the land under their rule, meant that the Vandal Arian Church became increasingly regional – African – limiting its ‘ethnic’ character and claiming a curious sort of regional universalism. The Arian clergy in other successor states seems to have had a much lesser role to play. The Visigothic and Burgundian rulers showed little interest in regulating their subjects’ religion, possibly preferring not to antagonise the emperor and the local

elites. This meant the Visigothic and Burgundian Arian upper clergy's role was mainly one of seeing to the private religious needs of the court and barbarian soldiers, which meant little contact with the indigenous elites. Although they acquired some resources, as the evidence for Arian churches and shrines in Gaul suggested, they were much more dependent on the support of Arian aristocrats than their Vandal counterparts. Nevertheless, there is no trace of this 'private' religion having an ethnic character.

Yet another group different from the commanders, warlords and kings were women of 'barbarian' origin. In scholarship, they are usually studied as individual cases. However, taken as a group and compared to males, be these politicians, military or clergy, this thesis reveals a slightly different set of models of acculturation and integration. Victims of the same xenophobic bias as their male counterparts, they suffered, in addition to that, from a Romano-Greek set of gender stereotypes. Cultural prejudice played a role in relations between barbarian women and the rest of the Roman elite, but it did not stop their integration and acculturation. Being of barbarian background did not stop one from becoming an empress, nor did it prevent others from carrying out the usual activities of Roman ladies of the upper strata: funding churches, distributing alms, establishing patronage over individuals and communities, or managing their estates. They could play a role in the diplomacy of the time, complement the position of their royal husbands in relations with the local elites, and shape the image of the dynasty. Yet unlike men they could only become independent actors when they possessed resources and networks within the Roman Empire. Newcomers into the Roman Empire were wholly dependent on their male kin and husbands, who made careers in the imperial service by offering their military expertise. Only women born and raised within the Empire could become more independent, but within the model of the Roman aristocratic lady, which meant their position was far more alike their female Roman counterparts than their male 'barbarian

brethren'. Their gender identity had a greater impact than an ethnic one, even with the intersection of these identities resulting in a different set of privileges and penalties (assets and limitations) connected to different resources and networks tied to their identities.

The integration of the barbarians within the elites of the Roman world was a diverse and lengthy process. Different models of integration were adapted over time. It seems at first the route of acculturation was a more prevalent choice for barbarians closely associated with the imperial apparatus, giving at the time better chances for promotion and imperial recognition. On the other hand, the leaders of the independent war bands more often stressed their distinct identity, when faced with the indifference or hostility of the imperial authorities. Processes of ethnicization were fuelled at different times, on the one hand by the Roman imperial ideology and old elites as a way of controlling groups and individuals by 'othering' them, while on the other hand some leaders of 'barbarian' groups both those politically aligned with the Empire and those who had a more difficult relationship with it were interested in limiting the 'normalisation' of their own groups or in reifying their differing identity. This was a way to retain the coherence of the group, and in turn the social and political position that depended on their hegemony over it. As imperial power waned and left a vacuum, new opportunities opened to barbarians, now in the positions of rulers and kings. It became possible for Vandals to remain Vandals, yet become Romano-African, and for Burgundians to stay Burgundian yet become Gallo-Roman. These new patterns allowed the barbarian and Roman elites to become one, and eventually transform into the aristocracy of the early Middle Ages.

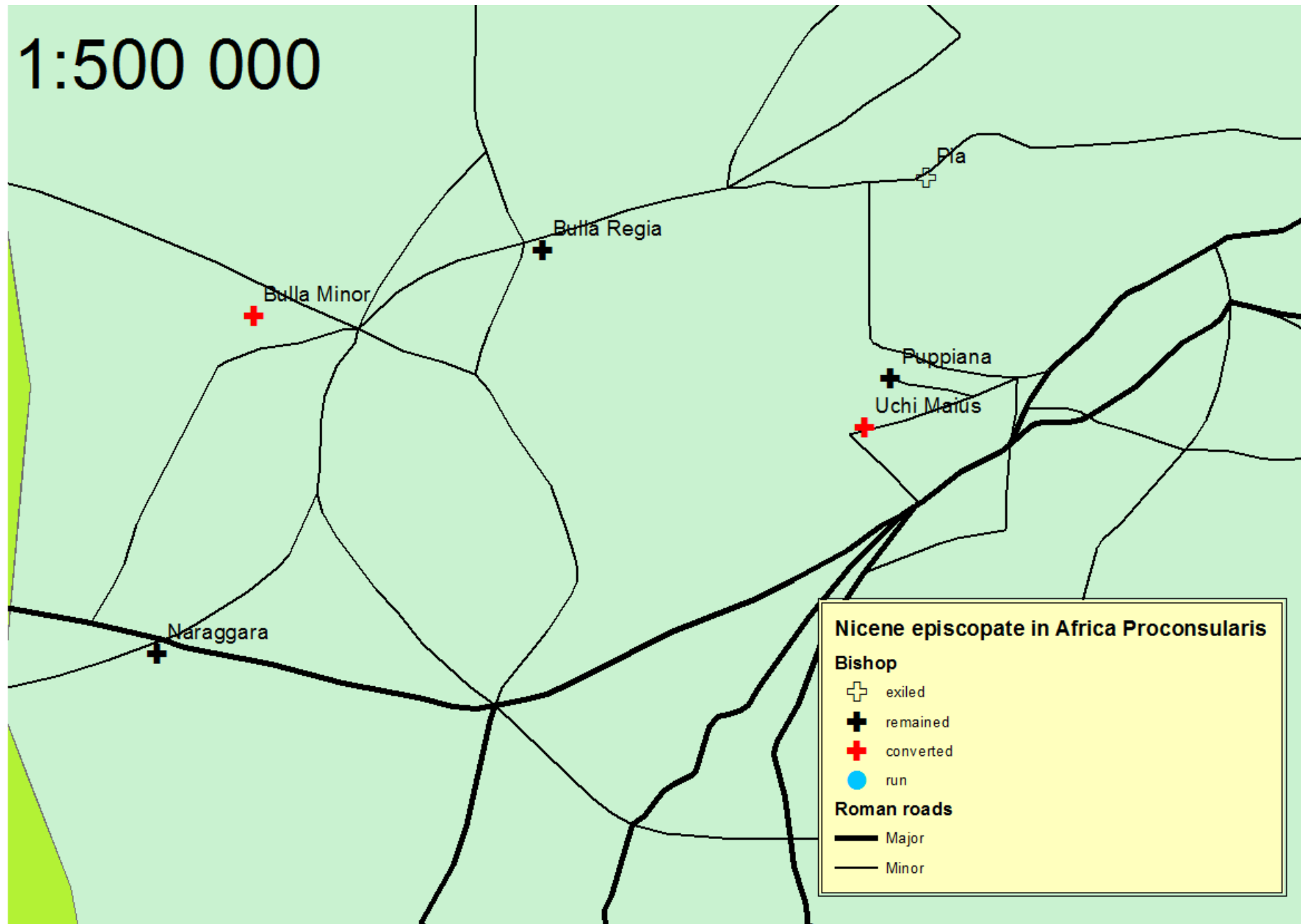
Maps

Map 1: Nicene episcopate in Africa Proconsularis after 484

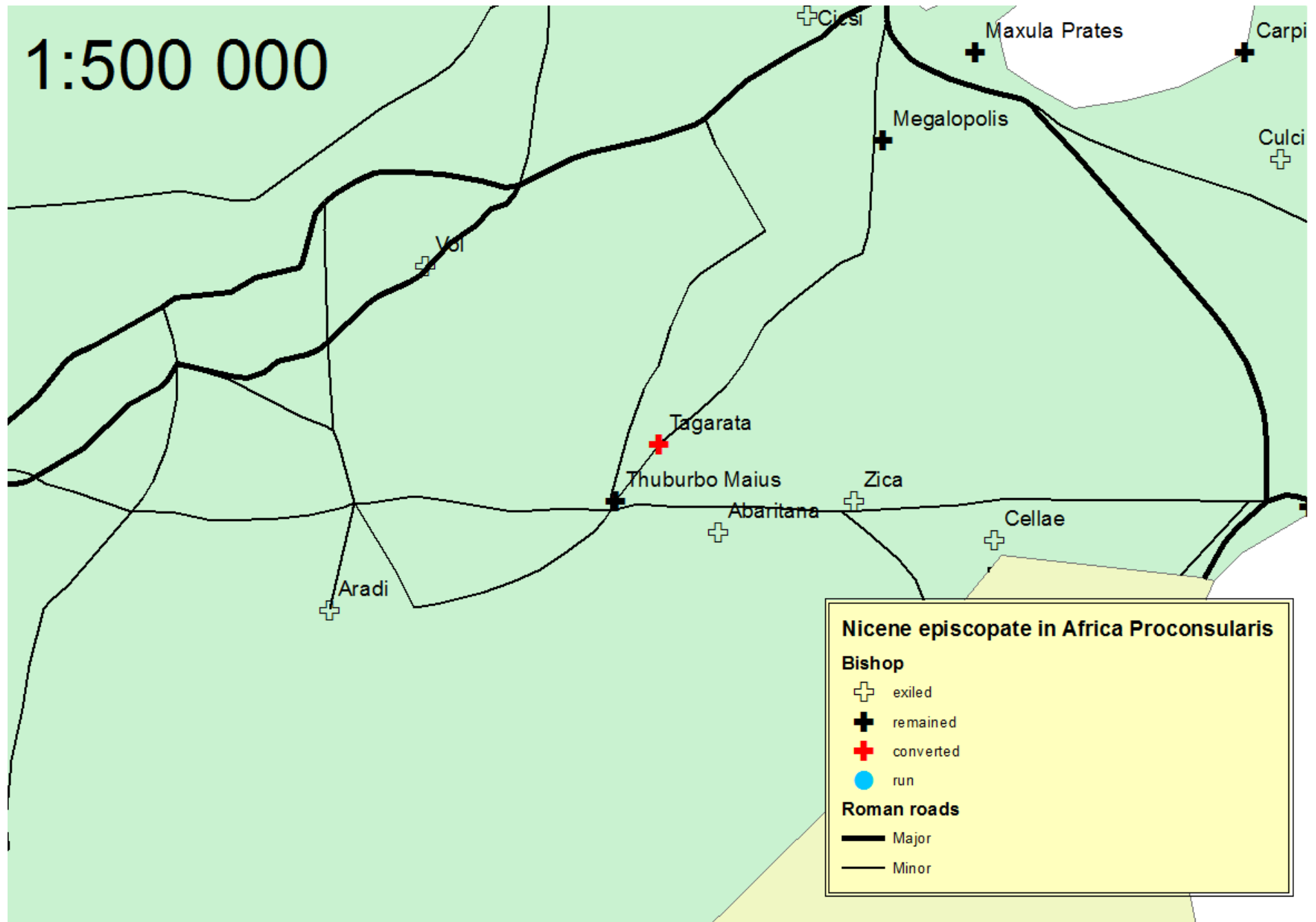
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Map 2: Nicene episcopate in western Africa Proconsularis after 484

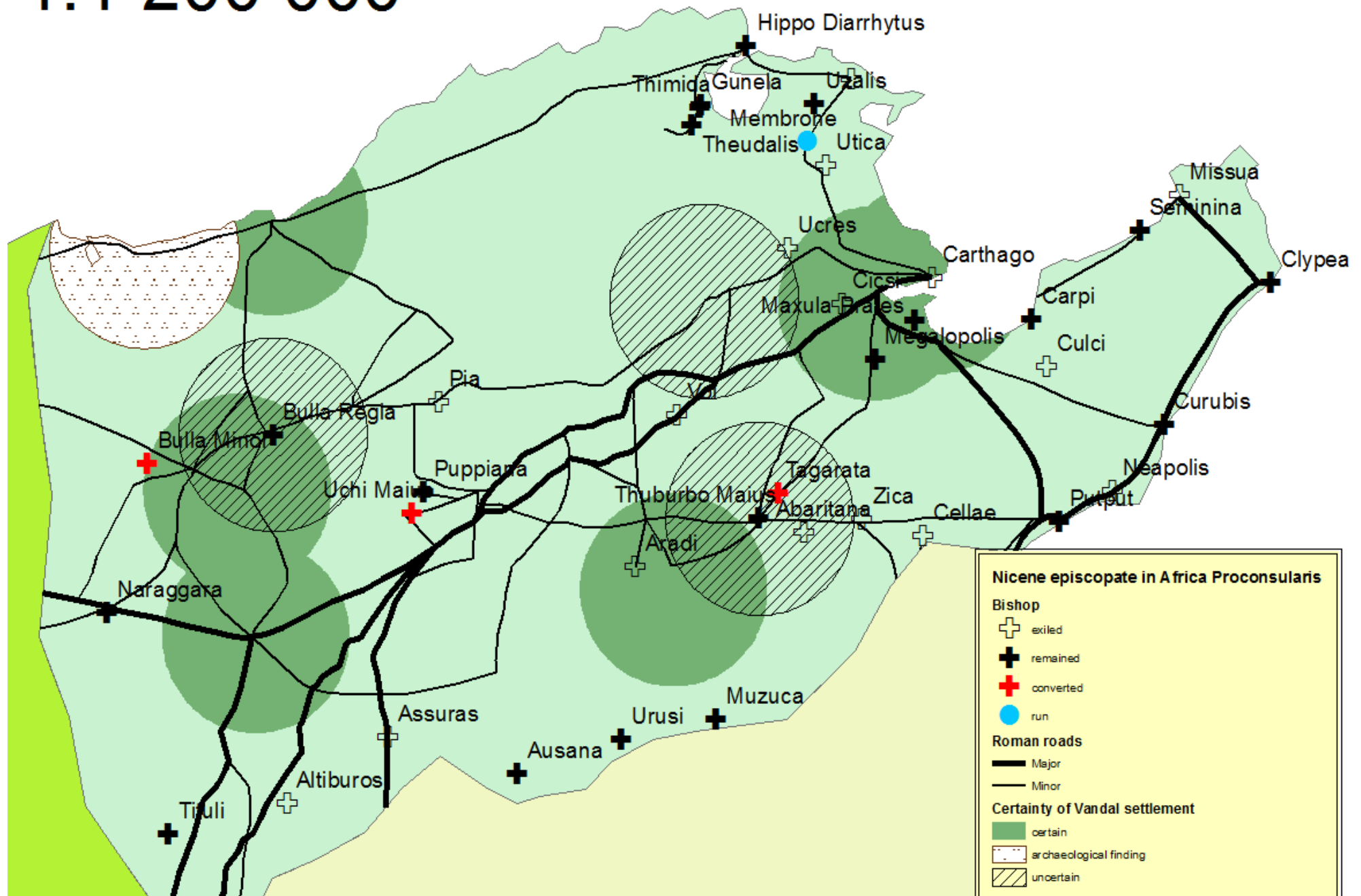


Map 3: Nicene episcopate in eastern Africa Proconsularis after 484



Map 4: Nicene episcopate and possible sites of Vandal settlement in Africa Proconsularis

1:1 200 000



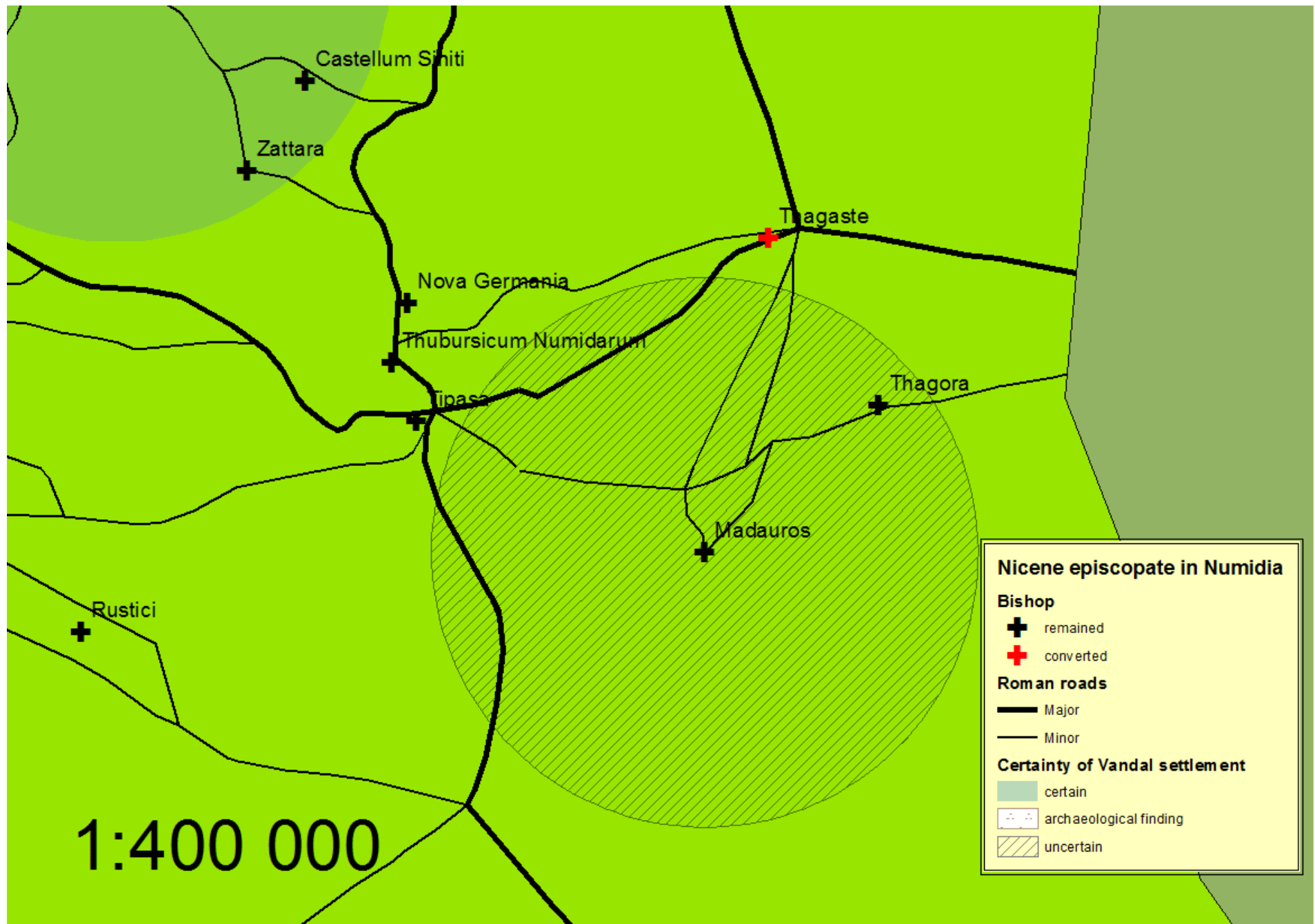
Nicene episcopate in Numidia

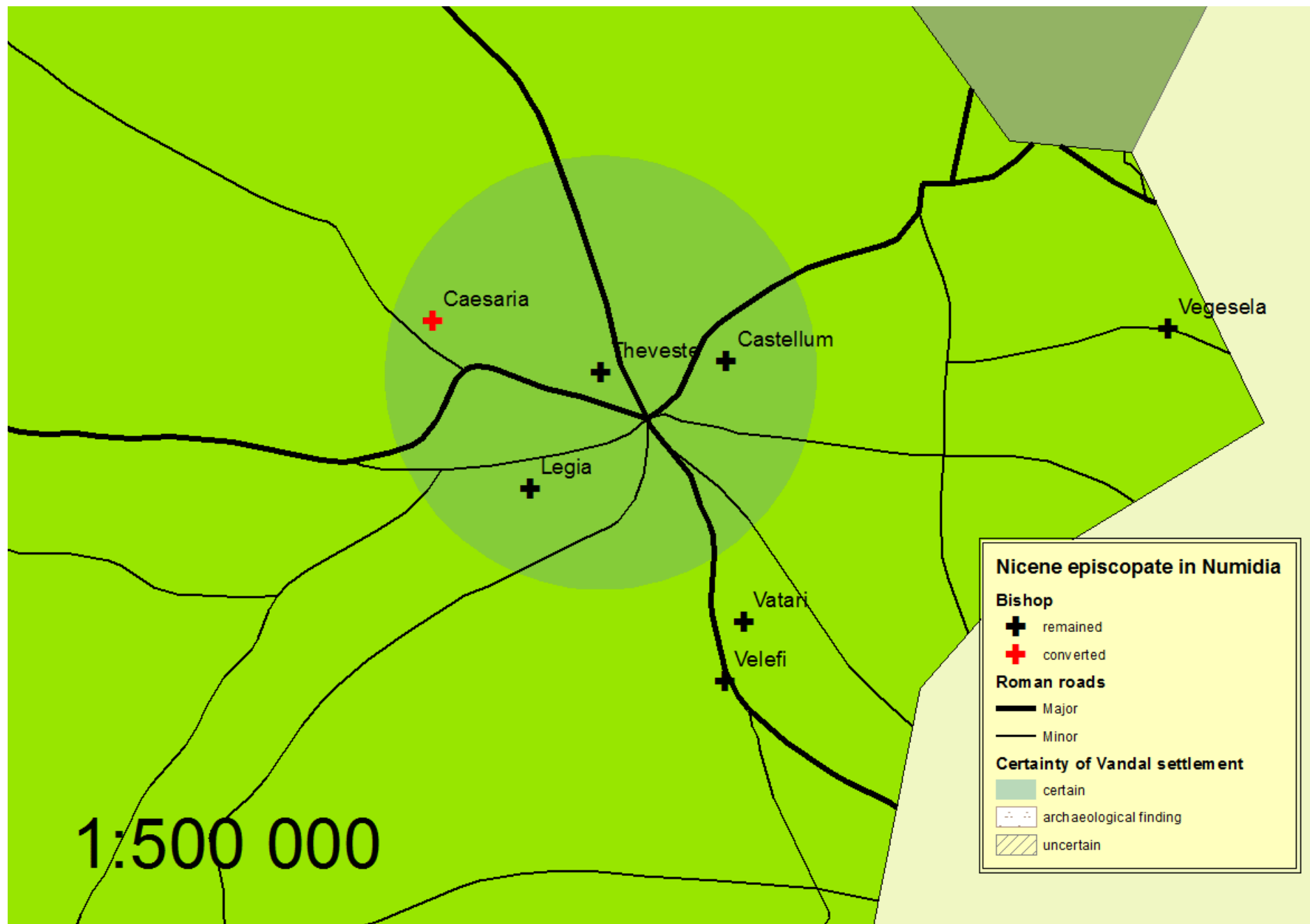
- Bishop
 - + remained
 - + converted
- Roman roads
 - Major
 - Minor

Scale: 1:1 500 000

302

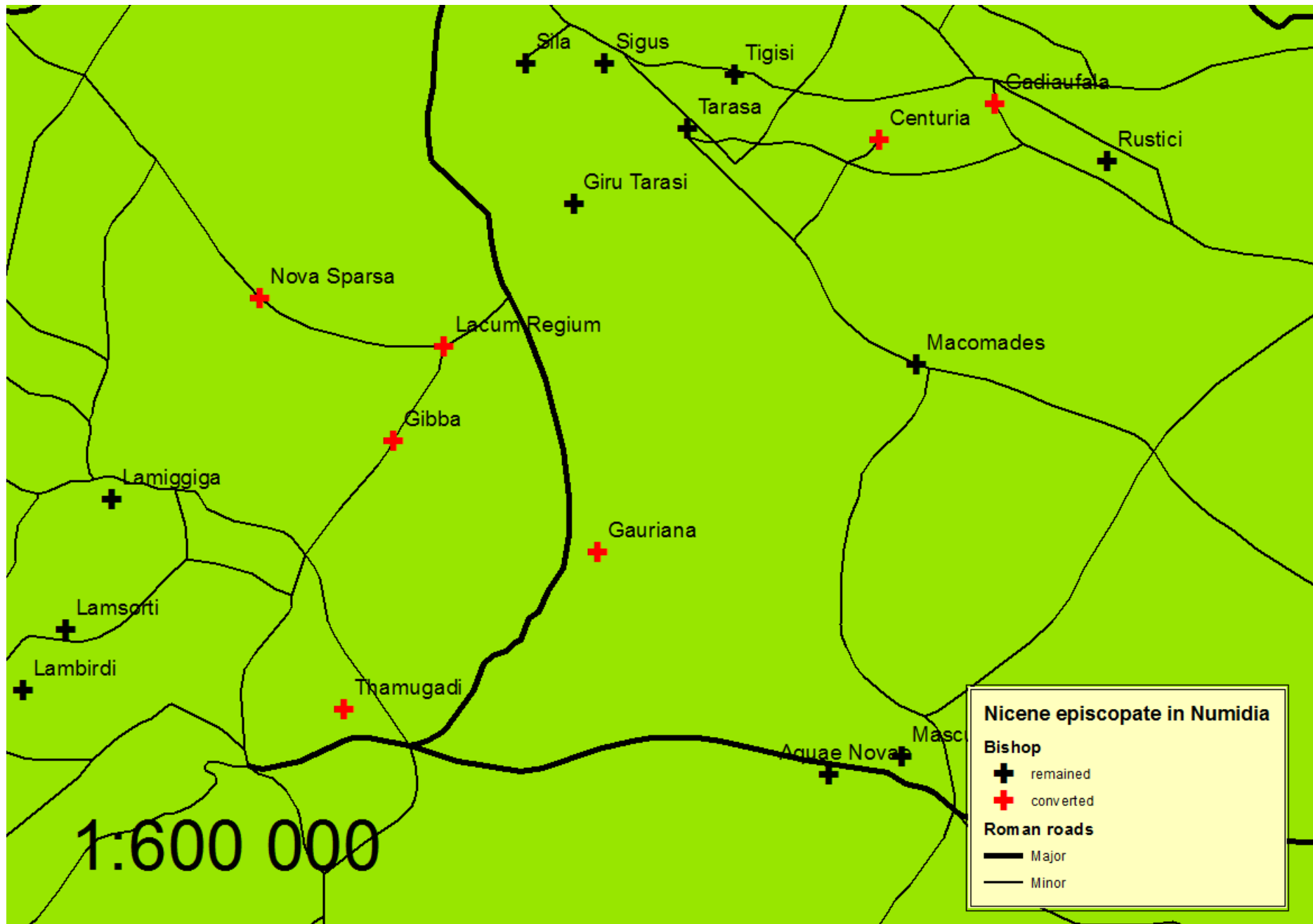
Map 6: Nicene episcopate in north-eastern Numidia after 484



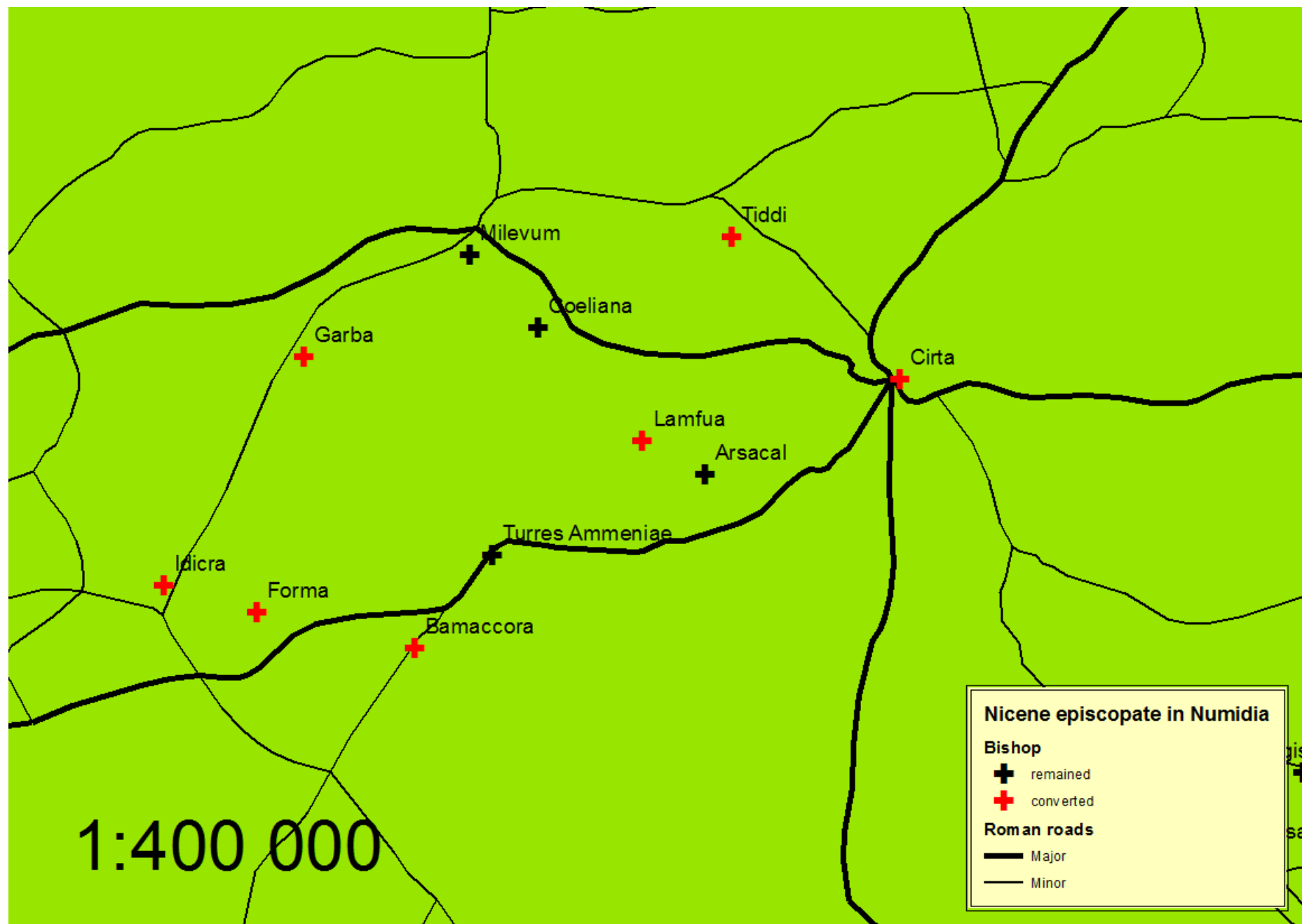


Map 7: Nicene episcopate in eastern Numidia after 484

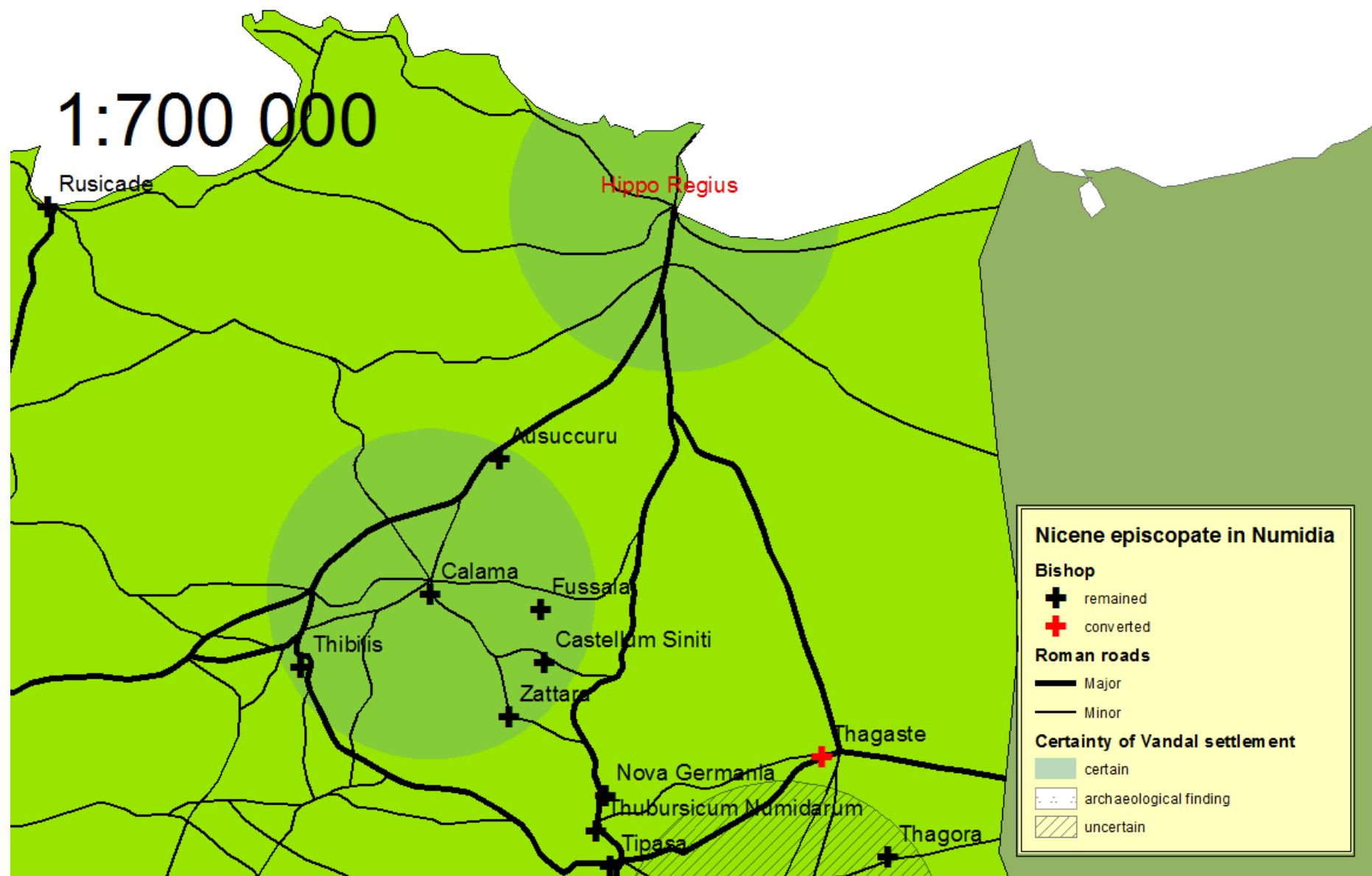
Map 8: Nicene episcopate in western Numidia after 484



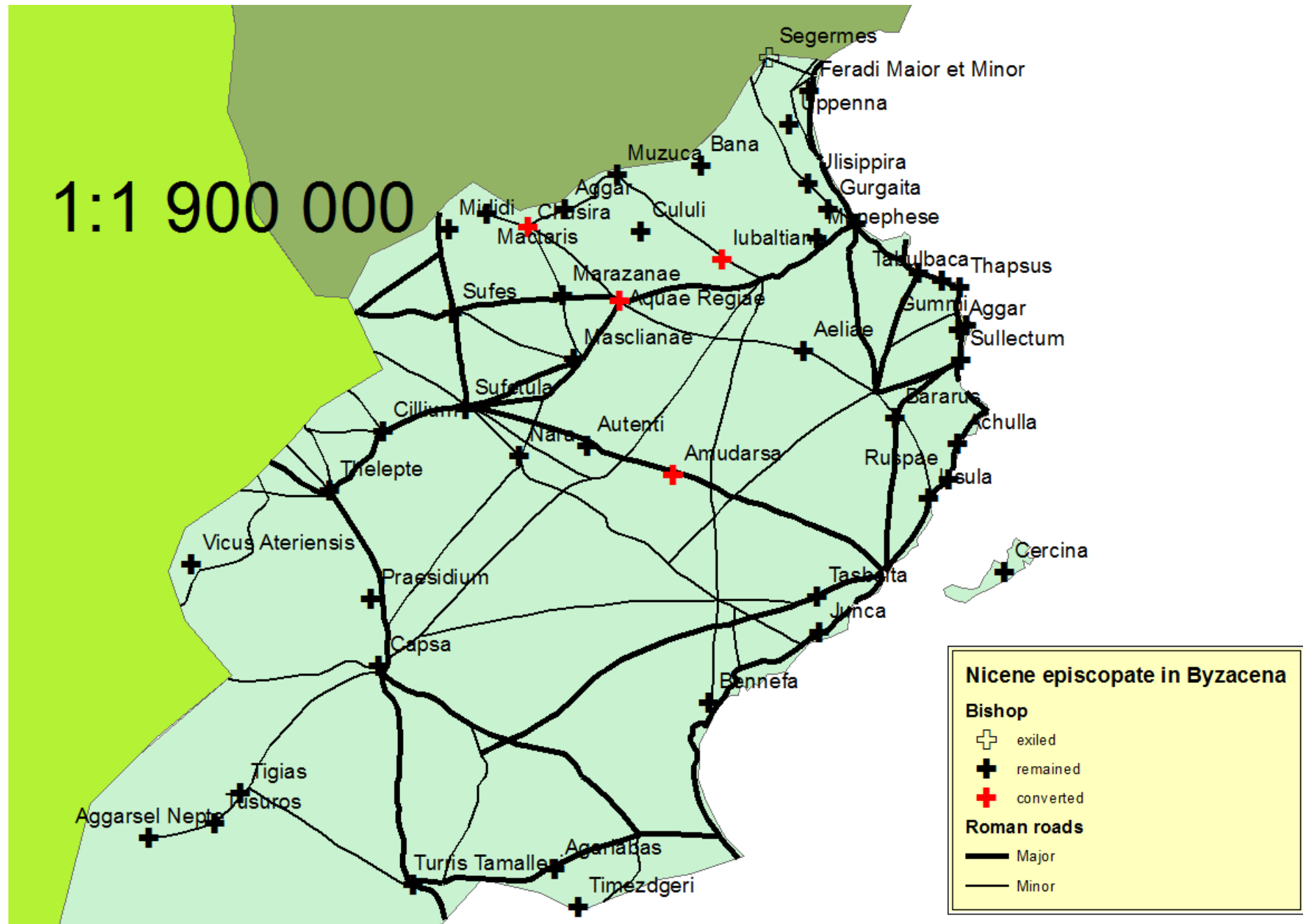
Map 9: Nicene episcopate in the region of Cirta after 484



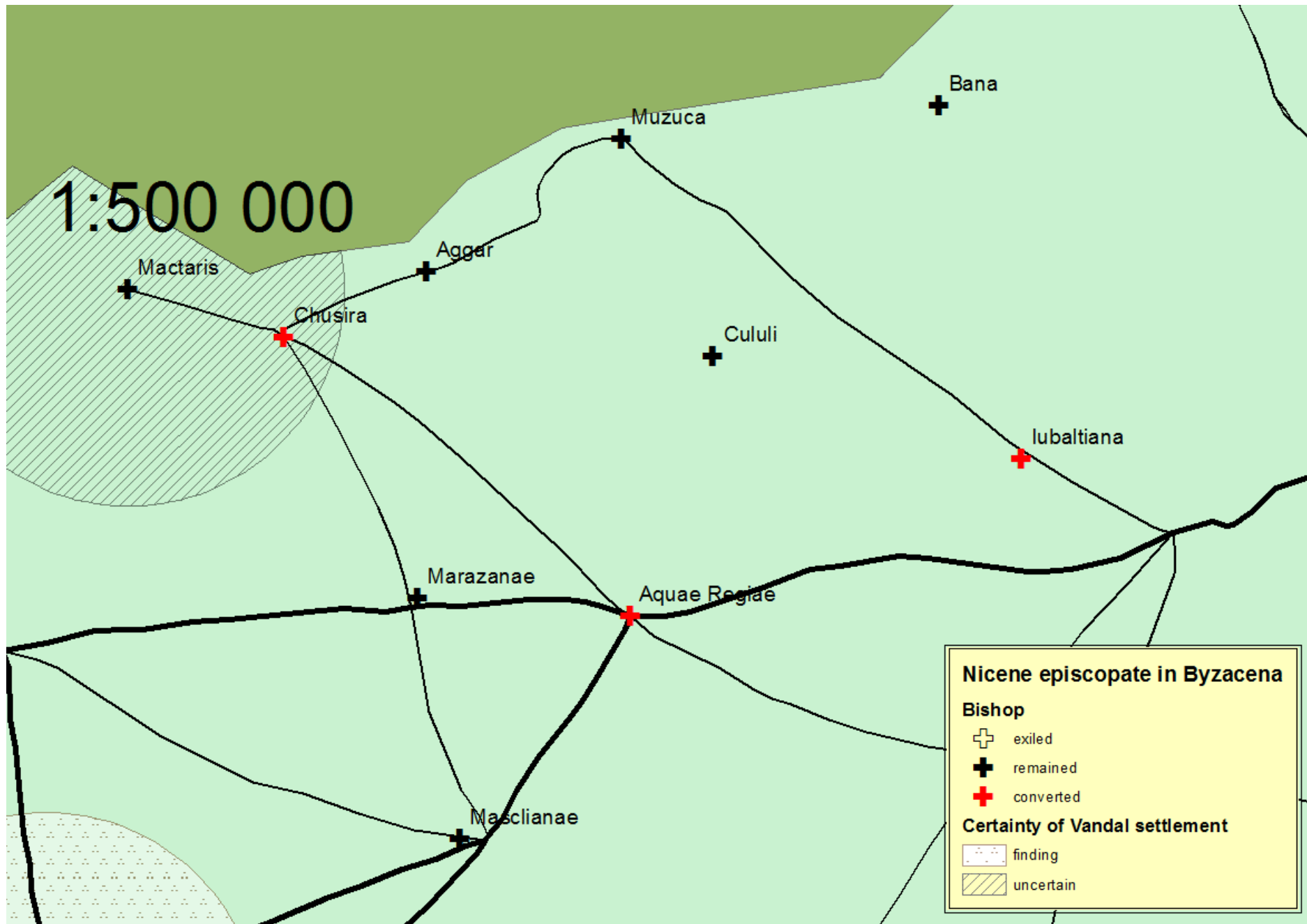
Map 10: Nicene episcopate and possible sites of Vandal settlement in north-eastern Numidia after 484



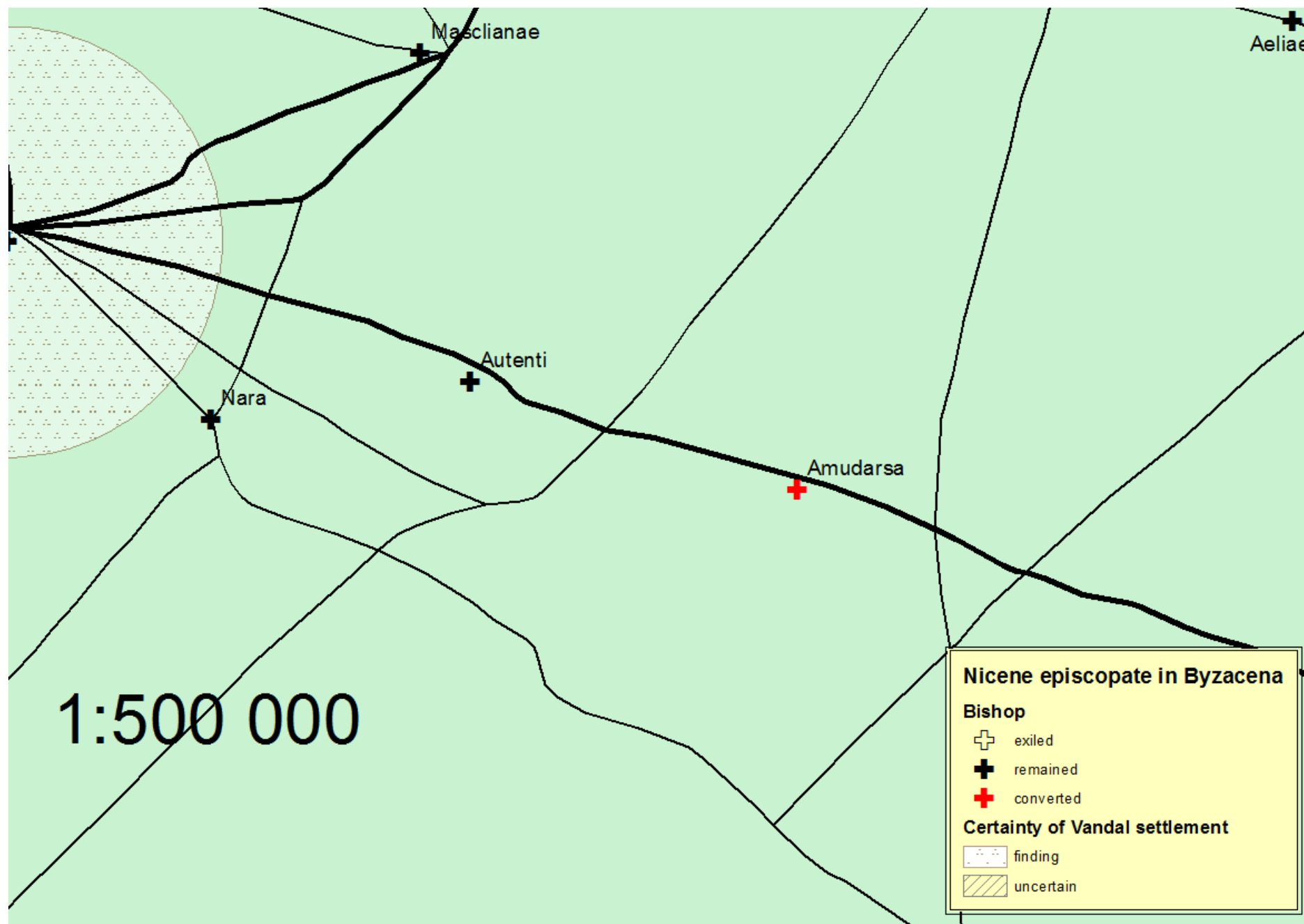
Map 11: Nicene episcopate in Byzacena after 484



Map 12: Nicene episcopate and possible sites of Vandal settlement in northern Byzacena



Map 13: Nicene episcopate and possible sites of Vandal settlement in central Byzacena



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Abstract 1: Senators, bishops, *decuriones* and barbarians, in the 4th to 5th centuries

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A thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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This thesis develops the strand of scholarship on ethnic identity of the Vienna school, by examining relations between Roman and ‘barbarian’ elites within the Roman Empire in the 4th and 5th centuries, studying the impact and role of identities in shaping the political and social realities of the times, while at the same time critically analysing the literary image of these groups and individuals created by Roman authors. The study also explores concepts such as those of ‘boundary’, and ‘intersectionality’.

A survey of the above-mentioned phenomena is the subject of the first part of the thesis: ‘Roman commanders – barbarian warlords’. The second focus of the thesis is on political and diplomatic forms in the emerging sub-Roman kingdoms, which are the subject of the second part: ‘Emperors, kings and *amici*’. The final part, ‘Bishops and women: At the intersection of ethnic, religious and gender identities’, returns to the subject of the impact of identity within the elites, but concentrates on its role for the clergy and women, considering its influence on the Church, and the intersection of gender roles and identities.

Processes of ethnicization were fuelled in different ways: on the one hand, by Roman imperial ideology and the old elites, as a way of controlling groups and individuals by ‘othering’ them; on the other hand, by some leaders of ‘barbarian’ groups (both those politically aligned with the Empire and those who had a more difficult relationship with it), who were interested in limiting the ‘normalisation’ of their own groups or in reifying their differing identity. As imperial power waned and left a vacuum, new opportunities

opened up to barbarians. The new patterns allowed the barbarian and Roman elites to become one, and eventually transform into the aristocracy of the early Middle Ages.

Abstract 2: Senators, bishops, *decuriones* and barbarians, in the 4th to 5th centuries

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The impact of the so-called “Migration Period” [*Völkerwanderung*] on the Roman Empire and its fall has been a topic of lively academic discussions for centuries. In recent decades, the predominant sides of the discussion, labelled as ‘romanists’, who perceived the post-Roman world as demonstrating considerable continuity with the previous era, and ‘germanists’, who claimed that the coming of the ‘barbarians’ meant a clear break with the previous political and social realities, have given way to the views of ‘transformationists’, best represented by the current generation of scholars of the so-called ‘Vienna School’, such as Walter Pohl and his pupils. Taking the view that there was a transformation of the Roman world, rather than its fall and collapse, they have also nuanced the approach towards questions of ethnic identities and their impact on political change within the Empire. In this new approach, ethnic identities became fluid constructs first instrumentalised by the Romans, and only later employed by ‘barbarians’ as a basis for a political identity.

This thesis aims to follow the strain of scholarship of the Vienna school, with its a constructivist approach to ethnicity, by examining relations between Roman and ‘barbarian’ elites within the Roman Empire in the 4th and 5th centuries, studying the impact and role of identities in shaping the political and social realities of the times, while at the same time critically analysing the literary image of these groups and individuals created by Roman authors. The study is also employs non-constructivist concepts, such as the idea of ‘boundary’ introduced by the sociologist Andreas Wimmer, and elements of the intersectional approach.

The timeframe of the 4th to 5th century is chosen to account for the processes of integration of the ‘barbarians’ within the Roman Empire, the creation and recreation of identities and boundaries that would be later employed to shape the post-Roman West, as well as political and social practices produced in the context of the Late Empire. The predominant category of primary sources analysed and interpreted in this thesis are literary sources of various kinds: classical histories, church histories, abbreviated histories, chronicles, hagiographies, letters and orations. They are supplemented by epigraphical, numismatic and visual material when appropriate, but literary sources constitute the main body of the evidence.

A survey of the phenomenon of identity and its impact on the socio-political landscape of the Roman Empire is the subject of the first part of the thesis: ‘Roman commanders – barbarian warlords’. The second focus of the thesis is the political and diplomatic forms in the emerging sub-Roman kingdoms; these are the subject of the second part: ‘Emperors, kings and *amici*’. The final part, ‘Bishops and women: At the intersection of ethnic, religious and gender identities’, returns to the subject of the impact of identity within the elites, but concentrates on its role for the clergy and women, considering its influence on the Church, and the intersection of gender roles and identities.

In the first part of the thesis [Roman commanders – barbarian warlords] I considered individual cases that may support contradictory conclusions. Tribigild’s case suggests that Roman Empire reified the ethnic identity of some of its officers to retain martial characteristics associated with specific identity of soldiers they were to command. Such characterisation could be then made use of in propaganda against those ‘barbarians’ if they turned upon Rome. But the instrumentalisation of ethnicity could be employed by ‘barbarians’ themselves. Tribigild successfully used his function of ‘ethnic officer’ to mobilise support for his own political aims. Gainas acted in a similar manner. The case

of the Alano-Gothic family of Ardabur and Aspar, who came to dominate the politics of the Constantinopolitan court from the reign of the emperor Theodosius II to that of the emperor Leo also demonstrates possibilities of instrumentalising ethnicity. The evidence of the naming practices of the family, marking their differing identity, their marriage alliances with other families of Roman officers of barbarian origin, and their adherence to the Arian creed, give the impression of a deliberate strategy of retaining a group identity distinct from the rest of the elites. Although eventually this family of powerful commanders fell from grace, this strategy possibly allowed them to keep their position for so long, based on the support of other barbarians in the military.

Part Two of the thesis ‘Emperors, kings and *amici*’ focuses on the changed dynamics of the instrumentalisation of ethnicity and the integration of ‘barbarians’ in the Roman Empire in the 5th century – the time of ‘barbarian’ rulers taking effective control over Roman territories. As the power hierarchy became increasingly favourable towards the ‘barbarians’, relations between them and Romans required new modes of interaction and shifted identity instrumentalisation. Romans could either claim that they were ruled by ‘barbarians’ and lament this ‘unnatural’ position, or ascribe Roman traits to their new rulers, sometimes presenting their specific identity as non-barbarian and on a par with the Roman one, at times even showing their rulers as Romans. Those ‘barbarians’, who earlier belonged to the imperial establishment, had already some experience in adapting to socio-cultural practices of Roman elites. Their position required them to engage in the game of *amicitia* and face its many challenges, issues of ethnic boundary being one of them. ‘Barbarian’ rulers tuned into the expectations of their Roman subjects, stressing first and foremost their position as Roman officials and their adherence to the Roman order, mimicking the imperial image of power to appeal to local communities. The final stage of this identity politics – Ostrogothic Italy in the 6th century – has been thoroughly

described by Patrick Amory, but earlier evidence reveals the development of such a model in other regions of the Roman world under ‘barbarian’ rule. The alternative way of ‘accommodating’ different identities was to ‘localise’ the specific ‘barbarian’ one by enriching it with marks of regional identity. Jonathan Conant has shown this was the case in Vandal Africa, where being ‘Vandal’ eventually started to mean being ‘Romano-African’. Although other regions do not produce so much evidence, the adoption of these two models can be seen in shaping the language of identity and political loyalties in the relations between the successor states and the Roman Empire. Barbarian kings either emphasised their submission and service to the Roman ruler (Burgundian Gibichungs) or attempted to establish themselves as independent regional sovereigns, nearly of equal status to the emperor (Vandal Hasdingi), shaping their diplomatic relations in accordance with these perspectives.

The third part of the thesis ‘Bishops and women: At the intersection of ethnic, religious and gender identities’ reflects on less studied groups of ‘barbarians’ and how the intersection of political and social realities, and the cultural discourse of instrumentalised ethnicity influenced their relations with the rest of the Empire’s elite in comparison to those who normally attract attention: military officials, warlords and kings. The first of these groups are the ‘barbarian’ bishops and upper clergy, differentiated from ‘Roman’ clergy, by their linguistic skills and service to non-Roman communities within the Empire. It seems that the majority of cases in which these clerics, and the groups they led, retained a distinct ethnic identity, occurred when their ‘otherness’ in regard to the Romans was reinforced by their adherence to a different religious creed – Arianism. This allowed Gothic bishops to keep their position of the 4th century as leaders of their communities and actors in Christian controversies, instead of dissolving into the imperial Church. This position was further solidified by liturgy and teaching in the Gothic

language. But, contrary to the view held by the major contributor to the study of ‘barbarian’ bishops, Ralph Mathisen, it did not lead to the construction of a formalised ethnic Arian Churches.

This is particularly visible in the 5th century, when successor kingdoms started to shape their religious policies. Upper clergy became partners for the ‘barbarian’ rulers. In their effort to emulate the Roman emperor, the Vandal kings attempted to create their own state Church, treating the Arian creed as its orthodoxy and enforcing it amongst their subjects, in the very same way emperors did. Barbarian Arian bishops and upper clergy played an active role in carrying out this policy, vigorously supporting their king, disputing with the Nicene bishops at councils or enforcing Arianism amongst the population. Although Vandal clergy celebrated liturgy in the Vandal language and in this sense retained a sort of distinction, the very nature of the Vandal kings’ policies, aimed at making Arianism the prevalent creed of the land under their rule, meant that the Vandal Arian Church became increasingly regional – African – limiting its ‘ethnic’ character and claiming a curious sort of regional universalism.

The Arian clergy in other successor states seems to have had a much lesser role to play. The Visigothic and Burgundian rulers showed little interest in regulating their subjects’ religion, possibly preferring not to antagonise the emperor and the local elites. This meant the Visigothic and Burgundian Arian upper clergy’s role was mainly one of seeing to the private religious needs of the court and barbarian soldiers, which translated to limited contact with the indigenous elites. Although they acquired some resources, as the evidence for Arian churches and shrines in Gaul suggested, they were much more dependent on the support of Arian aristocrats than their Vandal counterparts. Nevertheless, there is no trace of this ‘private’ religion having an ethnic character.

Yet another group different from the commanders, warlords and kings were women of 'barbarian' origin. In scholarship, they are usually studied as individual cases. However, taken as a group and compared to males – politicians, military or clergy – this thesis reveals a slightly different set of models of acculturation and integration. Victims of the same xenophobic bias as their male counterparts, they suffered, in addition to that, from a Romano-Greek set of gender stereotypes. Cultural prejudice played a role in relations between barbarian women and the rest of the Roman elite, but it did not stop their integration and acculturation. Being of barbarian background did not hinder one from becoming an empress, nor did it prevent others from carrying out the usual activities of Roman ladies of the upper strata: funding churches, distributing alms, establishing patronage over individuals and communities, or managing their estates. They could play a role in the diplomacy of the time, complement the position of their royal husbands in relations with the local elites, and shape the image of the dynasty. Yet, unlike men, they could only become independent actors once they possessed resources and networks within the Roman Empire. Newcomers into the Roman Empire were wholly dependent on their male kin and husbands, who made careers in the imperial service by offering their military expertise. Only women born and raised in the Empire could become more independent, and then only within the model of the Roman aristocratic lady, which meant their position was far more alike their female Roman counterparts than their male 'barbarian brethren'. Their gender identity had a greater impact than their ethnic one, even with the intersection of these identities resulting in a different set of privileges and penalties (assets and limitations) connected to different resources and networks tied to their identities.

The integration of the barbarians within the elites of the Roman world was a diverse and lengthy process. Different models of integration were adapted over time. It

seems at first the route of acculturation was a more prevalent choice for barbarians closely associated with the imperial apparatus, giving at the time better chances for promotion and imperial recognition. On the other hand, the leaders of the independent war bands more often stressed their distinct identity, when faced with the indifference or hostility of the imperial authorities. Processes of ethnicisation were fuelled at different times: on the one hand, by the Roman imperial ideology and old elites, as a way of controlling groups and individuals by 'othering' them; on the other hand by some leaders of 'barbarian' groups (both those politically aligned with the empire and those who had a more difficult relationship with it), who were interested in limiting the 'normalisation' of their own groups or in reifying their differing identity. This was a way to retain the coherence of the group, and in turn the social and political position that depended on their hegemony over it. As imperial power waned and left a vacuum, new opportunities opened to barbarians, now in the positions of rulers and kings. It became possible for Vandals to remain Vandals, yet become Romano-African, and for Burgundians to stay Burgundian yet become Gallo-Roman. These new patterns allowed the barbarian and Roman elites to become one, and eventually transform into the aristocracy of the early Middle Ages.